Crossing the threshold of Iranian TEFL

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Abstract

Teaching English in an Iranian and Islamic culture poses complex questions for both teachers and learners. In this paper, the authors intend to shed light on what it means to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) in an Islamic-Iranian context. Having reviewed the colonial and postmodern views of English language teaching, the authors took a look beyond the current state of TEFL in Iran, which is marked by its continuing global tendency, and into the future with an emphasis on the importance of including the local specificities of the Iranian culture and religion. The status of the TEFL in Iran and the direction it should take in the future are accompanied by offering some solutions to inherent problems. *Iranian TEFL* is introduced as the successful assertion of Iranian local culture against the cultural and ideological domination of the West, which can be an antidote to the harshness of all marginalizations Iranians have suffered for centuries.

Keywords: globalization; colonialism; postcolonialism; linguistic imperialism; postmodernism; localization; Iranian TEFL.

Introduction

The English language teaching (ELT) profession has been developed by the globalization of the English language. Due to the spread of the English language as a lingua franca throughout the world, English proficiency has been considered a key priority for progress in different areas such as science, technology, finance and business in order to facilitate international communication. Based on the results of a survey reported by the British Council in 1995, over ninety percent of the English language teachers around the world who participated in the study believed that the English language will, in the future, be the dominant language in world media and that

it will be the world's language for the next twenty-five years (Crystal, 2003).

In one sense, globalization refers to the flow of information, along with educational and expert access as well as communication across borders (Wong, 2007). Consequently, globalization has undoubtedly facilitated the transmission of knowledge throughout the world the outcome of which has mostly been observed in the context of education (Carnoy, 2005). It is beyond any doubt that in this process, the English language _ as an international language _ plays a pivotal role. Despite its wonderful appearance, however, globalization is regarded as the agent of social inequality (McMichael, 2008). Most importantly, it has a propensity for the homogeneity of cultural norms and values (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). That is to say, the foreign countries are supposed to give up their own cultural values and adopt the American way of life. That is why globalization, in Giddens' (2000) words, is almost equal to westernization or, more specifically, Americanization.

When it comes to English education, globalization directly influences the form of English and the method through which it should be taught in foreign countries. As Matsunuma (2011) has recently put it, the education system whose obligation is to close the gap between the developed and developing countries, is ironically making the gap wider. She further argues that English language teachers need to face the reality that "not only is the English language itself an obstacle to some learners but also technological access and cultural innuendos within curriculum have created, arguably, a silent form of virtual imperialism" (p. 36).

In the following paragraphs, the ELT field will be discussed with regards to the colonial and postmodern eras, along with the need for the localization of English, granted the fact that the cultural identities of the English language learners around the world must be respected, embraced, and accepted as legitimate. Next, the authors will refer to the EFL context of Iran, and via discussing some inherent problems which, if not resolved, may put the cultural and religious identities of Iranian learners of English in jeopardy, will further argue that the field of TEFL in Iran is in urgent need of critical reconsiderations.

Colonialism and English Language Teaching

The English language has become a global language due to its colonial and imperialist history (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). In fact, the spread of English has been orchestrated first and foremost by the professionals in Core countries such as the UK, USA and Canada (Phillipson, 1986). In his attempts to demonstrate linguistic (or language) imperialism, Kachru (1985) proposed a concentric model of global Englishes including three circles, namely the inner-circle whose ownership is taken solely by the native English-speaking countries, the outer-circle which comprises countries that use English as an additional language, and the expanding-circle which involves those countries which need English for international communication. He further argued that the nexus between these concentric circles reflects an unequal state of power, and that such a relationship negatively influences the cultures of those societies in which English spreads.

In addition, Phillipson (1992), whose aim was to preserve minority languages, has questioned the economic, linguistic, and cultural motives of the ELT profession. He has shown concerns about the fact that English-speaking professionals view the ELT field as a business whose aim is to provide significant economic gains for their countries' industries to such an extent that it makes us cast doubt upon the identity of the ELT field as to whether it is really a profession or an industry. On the other hand, these professionals do not seem to be much worried about ethical language teaching, i.e. language teaching aimed solely at empowering learners; they merely intend to improve their trade and protect investments overseas.

In another vein of argument, Kachru (1988) contends that the English-speaking countries such as, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada have always wanted to maintain the gap between the colonizer and the colonized countries (those nations outside of the English-speaking countries such as, Iran, Malaysia, India, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, to name just a few). That is to say, the English language was considered a tool of power in the hands of colonizers not only to further marginalize and bulldoze the peripheral countries but also to stereotype, dehumanize and treat them as undistinguishable masses (Said, 1978), the acts which were condemned by many prominent critics (e.g., Ashcroft, 2001; DeGraff, 2005; Hornscheidt, 2008; Kachru, 1996; Karmani, 2005; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992).

In the case of English language teaching, the English-speaking professionals have gone too far in constructing images of the non-native learners of English. These images have now become stereotypes for the whole populations of the periphery countries. For example, Malay people are depicted as merely good imitators who lack originality in thought and culture (Alatas, 1977). Arabs are also seen as dogmatic, narrow-minded people (Porter, 1994). Moreover, Chinese students' resistance to informal class discussion is interpreted as their backwardness (Pennycook, 1994). Unfortunately, these biased stereotypes have been overgeneralized to all Asian students to such an extent that they are generally thought to be lacking the skills for evaluation and critical thinking (Samuelowicz, 1987). It has also been argued that Asian learners are not willing to take part in class discussions (Devos, 2003; Liu & Jackson, 2008). Besides, unfair evaluation of international students merely on the basis of their non-native accent can lead to these learners being granted lower grades in most classroom activities (Munro, Derwing & Sato, 2006; Nakane, 2006).

Pennycook (1994) finds part of Phillipson's (1986, 1992) argument about the notion of "English linguistic imperialism" convincing that ELT is an outcome of imperialism due to its intact representation of the values and beliefs of the Core countries. To give but one example of Phillipson's English linguistic imperialism, it might be useful to return to Daniel Defoe's (1910) *Robinson Crusoe* in which Crusoe sought to teach Friday, a black slave, "everything that was proper to make him useful, handy and helpful" (p. 195). Therefore, instead of teaching Friday's own language, Crusoe made every attempt to teach him the English language, the fact that is exemplary of the global spread of English,

along with its political, economic, and ideological implications.

As shown above, English language teaching has been a tool in the service of colonizers for a long time. Not surprisingly, ELT theories and practices also represent aspects of the dominant, i.e. Western, culture. Accordingly, in a propensity to marginalize other languages as well as their cultures, Western teaching methods are also deemed to be superior to other traditional ones (Ha, 2004). From a traditional, colonialist perspective, the native English-speaking teacher is regarded as the best English language teacher, and monolingual instruction as the best form of teaching the English language. This is in line with Said's (1993) remarks that imperialism should be examined not only in relation to material exploitation and control but also in terms of cultural practices, theories and attitudes. Such exploitation in Freire's (1985) words is called 'cultural invasion' in which "invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression" (p. 133).

Simply put, a great part of linguistic imperialism involves cultural imperialism. That is to say, the spread of English around the globe has brought forth the idea that the Western culture is superior to the culture of the periphery countries, as are the theories of English language teaching they tend to prescribe. Such a view of culture is endemic to a great deal of the ELT profession. Hence, as Phillipson (1992) puts it, the English language imperialism still continues in the sense that the linguistic and cultural realms of the Periphery countries are being controlled by professionals in the Core countries. For example, the English language in India is said to be a "means of continuing the suppression of Indian thought, and of preserving an alien, elite culture" (Tully, 1997, p. 157).

A major drawback of such linguistic and cultural domination is ESL/EFL learners' loss of identity. This unfortunate phenomenon is still prevalent in English language classrooms when learners are asked to assume English names. According to Pennycook (1998), renaming learners is a sign of disrespect, contempt and insensitivity to the different linguistic, historical and cultural backgrounds the learners bring to the language classrooms. The same ethnocentrism is observed in Defoe's novel "Robinson Crusue" when Crusoe shows a sort of indifference and disrespect to Friday's identity by renaming him and asking the black man to call him 'master'.

English Language Teaching in postmodern era

However, the time finally arrived when the political, social, economic and ideological domination of England, as one of the largest colonizers and imperial powers in the world, began to diminish thanks to the emergence of Postcolonialism as a liberation movement. Postcolonialism significantly delegitimized authority and opted for a more egalitarian society (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). When it comes to SLA, the aim of Postcolonialism is to decolonize the colonized ELT (Bressler, 2007).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Postmodernism, along with its elements of subjectivism, constructivism, relativism, localism, and pragmatism, cast doubt upon the credibility of the mainstream Western scientific practice (Kuhn, 1962). Accordingly, during the postmodern era of ELT, the idea of method which was associated with colonialism was put into serious question by many prominent critics such as Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2003), Pennycook (1989), Prabhu (1990), Richards (2003), and Stern (1991). These critics denounced the idea of method on the grounds that, in Brown's (2000) words, it tended to introduce a set of specified classroom techniques to be prescribed for a wide variety of contexts and audiences around the world.

Most importantly, Kumaravadivelu (2003) regards the concept of method as a way of marginalization in the sense that it "valorizes everything associated with the colonial Self and marginalizes everything associated with the subaltern Other" (p. 541). From the theorizer's point of view, each teaching method, be it a language-centered, learner-centered, or learning-centered one, is a composite of theoretical principles and classroom procedures. From the teacher's point of view, on the other hand, none of these methods can be realized in the emergent classroom conditions (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) because they are not informed by actual classroom experience but are awkwardly imported into the classroom (Nunan, 1991; Pennycook, 1989; Richards, 1989).

Therefore, Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2003) encourages the practitioners of the ELT field to find an organized, meaningful, and relevant *alternative to method* instead of an *alternative method*. He further argues that in order to decolonize the English language teaching, there is a need to shift from the notion of method to the notion of postmethod. Inspired by Widdowson (1990), who believed that the connection between theory and practice can only be realized through the immediate act of teaching, Kumaravadivelu (1994) introduces the idea of "principled pragmatism" whereby classroom learning is supposed to be shaped and controlled by teachers as a result of their sense of plausibility, or their subjective understanding of their own teaching (Prabhu, 1990). Such understanding should therefore be sensitive to English language practitioners', and not theorizers', local needs.

Another contribution of Postmodernism to the ELT field was that native speakers were no longer considered the sole owners of the English language and native-like pronunciation was no more considered to be the only English proficiency benchmark. For this reason, learners were allowed to violate the British and American pronunciations and structures unless these violations made their language unintelligible. Accordingly, many scholars (e.g., Swales, 1993; Walker, 2001; Widdowson, 2003) contend that there is no longer any particular distinction between the native and non-native speakers of English, and that non-native speakers have now taken the ownership, through appropriation, of the English language.

Moreover, during the postmodern era of ELT, the idea of *World English* was replaced with the notion of *World Englishes*, with an emphasis on the inclusivity and pluricentricity of new varieties of English

(Kachru, 1982). To rest solely on the Standard English was, as Kachru (1990) states, inadequate. Hence, instead of adhering to the norms of one global language, i.e. British or American English, learners were allowed to use varieties of the same language. Therefore, in the process of learning English as an international language, learners were not necessarily recommended to internalize the cultural values of English native speakers (Smith, 1976). Moreover, in this process, the ownership of the English language became de-nationalized (Smith, 1976; Widdowson, 1994). Last, but by no means least, learning the English language entailed enabling learners to communicate their ideas and cultural values to others (Smith, 1976). In this way, the juggernaut of the Standard English was bound to diminish due to the emergence of other language varieties.

As Widdowson (2003, p. 46) puts it, "the point about the control of people by language is that it is bound to fail because as soon as the language is used it cannot be kept under your control. People appropriate it." That is to say, the English language is not a set of stable forms or norms; rather, it is a language which can be employed in diverse ways for different purposes. The ESL textbooks which allocate units to the variations and adaptations of the English language are but some examples in this regard. In fact, postmodernism may be regarded as the cultural crisis of the Western countries in the sense that they are not the unchallenged center of the world any more, and that other cultural possibilities are increasingly being generated and introduced to the world (Young, 1990).

Postmodernism seems to have influenced the ELT profession in other ways as well. For example, the teacher-centered instructivism of the modern era was replaced by learner-centered constructivism (Cahoone, 2003). Moreover, more importance was attached to the styles and strategies of individual learners and teachers (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Reid, 1987) thanks to Gardner's (1983) proposal of the diversity, and not unity, of intelligences. There was also another line of argument, namely chaos/complexity theory, which Larsen-Freeman (1997) applied to TESOL, and maintained that second language learning is a complex, dynamic, non-linear, emergent, unpredictable and self-organizing system. Finally, as another element of Postmodernism, the emergence of critical theories (Pennycook, 1999) is, as Kumaravadivelu (2006a) says, concerned with "connecting the word with the world," "recognizing language as ideology, not just as system," "extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use," and "creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners" (p. 70).

To summarize thus far, English is no longer the property of the Core countries; rather, it is now the property of whoever chooses to speak it (Pennycook, 1998). Even the universality of Western teaching methodologies has been discredited by many scholars such as Ellis (1996), Kramsch and Sullivan (1996), Pennycook (1994, 2010) and Phillipson (1992).

Localization in English Language Teaching

Although one liability of Postmodernism was to liberate the colonized countries from the confines of the Core countries, it seems that the effects of colonialism on colonized nations still linger today (Pennycook, 1998). A major part of these effects are cultural issues which, Pennycook believes, have survived colonialism and still live on in many forms today.

In the context of language teaching, a composite of sociopolitical and historical factors is involved in shaping a learner's self-identity and voice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b). As Weedon (1997) has correctly pointed out, language is "the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21). This seems to be even more applicable to L2 learning where languages and cultures come into a close contact. Norton (2000) maintains that this contact between the cultures of two languages can lead to identity conflicts among learners. Therefore, there is always a danger that language teachers might ignore the sociocultural conditions that form learners' identity in the classroom.

Accordingly, Pennycook (1998) calls for a movement towards the de-colonization of the English language, seeking alternative possibilities which, he states, "need to be in our classes, our English classes, our linguistics and applied linguistics classes, our ESL classes, our teaching materials. We need to work in and against English to find cultural alternatives to the cultural constructs of colonialism; we desperately need something different" (pp. 217-8). Deeply inspired by Foucault's (1973) concepts of discourse and power, Pennycook further warns us that the unequal status of the colonizer and the colonized will persist, unless ELT professionals in Periphery countries try their best to separate the discourses of colonialism from the English language and to introduce alternative discourses around the world.

Having denied both the total efficiency of the Western ELT and the total inefficiency of its Asian version, Pennycook (1994) suggested that "perhaps language – and particularly English as an international language – should also be replaced by a vision of powerful discursive formations globally and strategically employed" (p. 64). That is to say, English language teaching professionals around the world should appropriate the language, along with the materials for teaching the English language, to the local specificities and the situated conditions of their own countries.

This is quite in line with Giroux and Aronowitz's (1991) statement which refers to teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' rather than merely professionals whose first and foremost job is to transfer a body of knowledge to students. Teaching should thus involve, among other things, teachers' political engagement, and curriculum development should be concerned with issues which are socially relevant to particular groups of students (Pennycook, 1994, 2010).

In a similar manner, Kumaravadivelu's (2006b) first pedagogic parameter, namely

the parameter of particularity, states that any postmethod pedagogy "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural mileu" (p. 171). Put another way, advancing a location-specific pedagogy which is based on a clear understanding of linguistic, sociocultural, and political localities of particular students is of prime importance to any postmethod pedagogy. Such an attempt necessarily entails a critical understanding, on the part of English language teachers, lesson planners, materials developers, and policy makers, of the local conditions of learning and teaching. Teachers' understanding of local conditions matures over time as they practice, either individually or as team work, observing and assessing their teaching acts, while trying to figure out solutions to inherent problems.

As stated above, drawing on Pennycook's (1989) words, there is a need in ESL/EFL teacher education "to validate other, local forms of knowledge about language and teaching" (p. 613). Most importantly, learners' local culture and the culture of their learning style should be respected in English language classes (McKay, 2000). English teachers are also recommended to help learners reflect on their own culture whilst learning the English language. For instance, Canagarajah (1999) reported that, motivated by their own cultural and historical backgrounds, English learners in Sri Lanka refused to accept the English language and culture as depicted by the West. Rather, they adapted the language to their own aspirations, needs, and values through re-writing and re-interpreting the content of their Western-produced textbooks. As a case in point, they included their comments and graphics in the margins of their ESL textbooks which Canagarajah regarded as an archetype of "the strategic ways by which discourses may be negotiated, intimating the resilient ability of human subjects to creatively fashion a voice for themselves from amidst the deafening channels of domination" (p. 197).

Many scholars from different parts of the world have thus called for the localization of English language teaching; among these scholars are Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) and Ellis (1996) who have appreciated the works of those language teachers from periphery regions who have been teaching English effectively without blindly following Western teaching standards. Similarly, some countries have made attempts at influencing the English language by their local cultures and languages through acculturation and indigenization, and in this way, they have developed their own varieties of English (Kirkpatrick, 2007). These new varieties are regarded as forms of a nativised English which, in Pishghadam and Saboori's (2011) words, best suits their local context of language use, represents their culture and nationality, and helps them express their own experiences and ways of thinking.

The current status of TEFL in Iran: A call for localization

Iran has been marginalized like any other country of the Periphery. Its subjugation has recently been intensified due to the political sanctions imposed by the West. Not surprisingly, the practice of TEFL in Iran has not been able to leave this predicament

untouched. Although a great part of this marginalization may be due to the political issues between Iran and the West, it may not, however, be the best option for us to point a blaming finger solely on the Core countries for the marginalization of the Iranian culture or the loss of Iranian EFL learners' identities, because language institutes in Iran are themselves very much responsible for such marginalization and identity loss. Regrettably, it seems that these institutes are indirectly smoothing the way for the maintenance, via the legitimation, of the status quo, i.e. the dominance of the Western culture in an Iranian and Islamic context, under the guise of competitiveness and professionalism.

One of the most unfortunate facts about the current status of TEFL in Iran is that Iranian English language teachers place a very high premium on acquiring and conforming to the Standard English which is often regarded as a key criterion for the recruitment of English teachers by most language institutes. Likewise, learners of English are often obsessed with imitating a particular variety of English, either British or American English, because the more native-like they are, the more proficient they are considered to be (Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011). Javdani, Mahboudi and Ghafoori (2009) reported how English language learners in Iran show positive attitudes towards the American culture, while trying to act like native speakers of English. In a similar vein of argument, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) maintain that, contrary to the Bakhtinian beliefs, when two cultures come together, there is no guarantee that the two cultures be automatically enriched. As Pishghadam (2011) points out, English language learning classes have the potential to be the sites for developing the cultural and national identity of language learners. Therefore, English language teachers play a pivotal role in shaping learners' national and cultural identities. However, if they are not well-trained enough to cope with cultural issues, cultural derichment is inevitable. Moreover, in their attempts to study the relationship between mimicry of the native-like accent and Iranian EFL learners' deculturation, Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2008) found out that there was a negative relationship between accent and culture in the sense that the more the learners tried to mimic the native-like accent, the more they were alienated from their home culture (Persian culture). This does not at all mean that aiming a high English proficiency (i.e. Standard British or American accent) could lead to marginalization and cultural derichment; for these things, by themselves, may not necessarily hurt students' culture and identity. What the authors *do* intend to convey is the fact that this way of learning English limits people's creativity in using the language and does not let them express their way of thinking and present their culture through language; rather it makes them turn into a tool for it, which is similar to what has been done through linguistic imperialism.

In another vein of argument, from a critical discourse analytic perspective to analyzing the culture of Iran in English language textbooks, it can be easily discerned that Iran is now experiencing an unprecedented era of marginalization more than any other country of the Periphery. For instance, in a recent series of English textbooks, namely World English 3/the Middle East edition (Johannsen & Chase, 2011), designed specifically for the Middle East region in

which Iran is one of the most important countries, there is *no sign* of Iran in texts, maps and pictures in terms of its people, culture, religion, history, etc. as though Iran has been an ethnic minority not worthy to be mentioned at all. This is in line with Fairclough's (1995) notions of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* in the sense that, in this series of English textbooks, Iran and Iranian people are in the background while other countries in the Middle East are in the foreground. On the other side of the coin, no exaggeration, it seems that without Iran, the puzzle of the Middle East is incomplete. As a case in point, there are different historical and monumental places in Iran such as, to name just a few, Persepolis/Pasargad in Shiraz, Hegmataneh in Hamadan, Mosques with unique architectures in Isfahan, the Burnt city in Sistan o Balouchestan, and the Castle of Falakol Aflak in Lorestan, which may be interesting and fascinating not only for the Middle East residents but for all people around the world.

Hence, it may not be unfair to suggest that what can be seen from the current practice of TEFL in Iran is reminiscent of colonialism and the global conditioning of the modern era. Teaching the English language to learners who bring with themselves a confluence of political, social, historical, cultural and religious backgrounds to the ELT classrooms may not be fully accomplished through mere exposure and blatant ballyhoos of the Western culture which is prevalent in the *market* of their English teaching materials. Hence, it is recommended that Iranian professionals within the field be cognizant of their dual role in the alleviation or maintenance of the unfortunate loss of identity among Iranian EFL learners.

It is therefore suggested that ELT professionals in Iran not lose sight of the real localities of the Iranian culture. It may be implied that a shift from seeing learners as followers of Western norms and values, which is seemingly the current practice of TEFL in Iran, to seeing them as socially, culturally, religiously and historically located individuals, which is the future direction that TEFL in Iran should take, needs to be a mandate for Iranian English teachers, materials developers and policy makers. As is clear from recent research on teaching English in Iran, we need to take a look beyond the current state of TEFL in Iran and into the future, with an emphasis on the importance of including the local specificities of the Iranian culture and religion, coming up with a new notion, i.e. Iranian TEFL, which reflects not only the Iranian people's Islamic thesaurus, as part of their religious identity, but also their cultural, social, and historical perspectives.

For this reason, it is suggested that language teachers in Iran pay greater attention to the extent to which Iranian EFL learners, out of individual and social interest, reshape the resources which are available to them, becoming, in this process, not mere imitators of Western way of life but constructors of their own English varieties through which they become capable of expressing their unique ways of thinking and presenting their local cultures. Similarly, another obligation would be to make attempts at fostering the development of local teachers who have a high degree of knowledge regarding Iran's local conditions and Iranian EFL learners' local needs.

If TEFL in Iran thus wants to liberate itself from the bonds of Western domination, it must first recognize its purpose within the context of the Iranian culture. First and foremost, elements of the Iranian culture, history, religion, values, customs, etc. should be outlined *exclusively* by Iranian, not Western, ELT professionals. Next, it is recommended that new English textbooks be designed by teams of native and non-native experts within the ELT field. That is to say, taking a Kachruvian approach, there should be more communication between the ELT professionals in both the Core countries and Iran to better understand the pragmatic needs of the Iranian English learners. The design of these textbooks should be informed by what Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) refer to as *life syllabus* which highlights the importance of enhancing learners' life qualities, say cultural identity (as it is the primary concern of this paper), in ELT classes alongside their language proficiency.

Concluding remarks

In this paper the authors have tried to show how the West has made every effort to ensure that the English language in its pure British and American forms, along with their specific ideological, cultural, and attitudinal views, are kept as uncontaminated as possible by other localities. Be that as it may, the continuing global tendency of TEFL in Iran is making matters even worse.

The authors have also attempted in this text to discuss what it means to teach English as a foreign language in an Iranian context and to remind the Iranian professionals within the field of their national commitment. Having considered the colonial and postmodern views of English language teaching, it was argued that, regrettably, TEFL in Iran still lives in the modern era and that the ELT professionals in Iran are themselves very much responsible for the marginalization of Iran by showing positive attitudes towards the American culture. It also seems that most of the Iranian learners still try to conform to the Standard English, as the *prestige* language, and tend to consider it superior to other varieties; accordingly, they try their best to strictly imitate either of these varieties in every way possible.

The authors further argued that there were obvious dangers with this for, as they saw in the discussion of the current practice of TEFL in Iran, the more the learners tried to achieve a native-like mastery of English, the more they were alienated from their own home culture. This deculturation, in turn, was found to lead to learners' loss of identity. This potential problem is accentuated by the fact that the West is working side by side with the Iranians' self-marginalization, to further subjugate the national, religious and historical identities of Iranian people.

As it was pointed out, language learning for Iranians cannot be something simply found in Western-produced textbooks but should be nationally and culturally accomplished and struggled over. It was therefore suggested that we take greater control of what takes place in the Iranian context of English language teaching. Though it is the fashion of Western countries to denigrate other, not prestigious, English varieties, the progress of the *Iranian TEFL*, i.e. the successful assertion of Iranian local culture against the cultural and ideological

domination of the Core countries, can be an antidote to the harshness of all marginalizations Iranians have suffered for centuries. A crucial part of our argument was thus the attempt to show the significance of going beyond the simple representation of Western cultural values in an Iranian context.

Due to the emancipatory potential of Iranian TEFL and its contribution to the betterment of language teaching in Iran, it is thus recommended that further research into the application of Iranian TEFL be carried out, and that, having sought consultations from teams of native English and native Iranian experts in the field, this research should lead to the construction of a national language curriculum which is domesticated to reflect the real localities of the Iranian culture. This curriculum would then be appropriate to the local needs of Iranian EFL learners, and would consider language-related components as well as learners' specific sociocultural, historical, and religious identities.

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