TESOL AND MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract*: The work aims to present how political interference of Western countries, mostly U.S, effects on ELT industry in Arab-Muslim world after 9/11 attacks, and what role TESOL plays in "less Islam- more English" era. Additionally, it highlights that Anglo-Western approaches still present their view on second-language pedagogy in Muslim educational context from uncritical perspective.*
Key words: *ELT, political interference, cultural background, unbiased, curriculum, neutral approach*

English as a language started to be widely learnt and taught as a result of globalization and technological   progress. Many people are aware of the value that English language has in today's world. For that reason, the demands for learning it are increasing every day. Accordingly, EFL /ESL instructors and experts play crucial role in establishing this proficiency in learners L2. To do it they should equip not only with subject knowledge itself , but also an awareness of different factors which significantly influence foreign language learning. Nowadays, authorities of several Islamic countries justify learning EL for political reasons, and stress its crucial role in spreading Islam and accessing oversea technology. On the contrary, after 9/11 attacks Western politics blamed Islam, madrassahs and Arabic educational curricula for "promoting" intolerance and anti-Western attitude in students.   Reform campaigns, funded by U.S language-education system, under the mask of "educational aid project" have been encouraging attempts   reform and modernize Arab and other Muslim countries' curricula. Here Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A.D. (2010) question the role of TESOL professional in growing tendency of "more English and less Islam" in Arabian Gulf regions.

According to Karmani (2005) such opinions stem from TESOL''s   pre positivistic-experimentalist epistemological movement and disconnection of second-language education from sociopolitical, socioeconomical and socioreligious   interests (cited in Lazaraton, 2000). As the result of such mainstream in TESOL circles of Arabian Gulf region ELT approach with secular based curriculum is emerged in conservative Islamic context. However, spiritual, political and scientific branches of knowledge are integrated with each other, and the author cites some evidence from Hadith.

Zughoul, M. R. (2003) opposes TESOL professionals being busy with fixing strict borders between Islam, politics and English. The author suggests these specialists considering the fact that both religion and language can be very powerful linguistic or political tool to dominate in Arab-Muslim world. He points out that both language instructors and EL learners may benefit from analyses of issues related to political interference in language classes. He also states that local teachers and students should adopt critical education practices in the field of TESOL in which SLA happens to be effective, contextualized and purposeful. Regarding classroom application of the topic covered in Mahboob, A., & Courtney, E. (2018) it is necessary to consider target students' proficiency levels, cultural background and other contextual factors which may effect on instruction outcomes.

As for ELT instructors teaching integrated skills courses for students with muslim oriented cultural background , they might modify cultural sensitive or biased topics according to their learners needs. For these reasons several modification could be applied in teaching EL and pragmatics so that to design classroom setting that values learners' diversity and inclusion (Mahboob, A., & Courtney, E., 2018).The following modifications can be presented in this part of the paper. Application of Communicative Language Teaching in teaching content could result in positive washback as this approach emphasizes learning L2 for the purpose of meaningful communication in given

context. Pragmatic competence is considered as a subpart of communicative competence, and tasks/activities which promote both L2 acquisition and pragmatics should be implemented. The following activities are samples of such tasks:

"Corner talk"- Teacher prints out 4 *quotes/opinions/pragmatic norms/ taboos/ facts* about pragmatic norms in particular religions. Printed papers are stacked near the classroom corners. Students mingle, read all papers, and then choose one of the "corner" quote. Then they present or justify their opinions on chosen quote. Other students support or oppose to presented idea.

Project/ Poster presentation- Students are divided into small groups of 4-5. They are aligned with particular topics, and provided with enough time to conduct small-scale research on provided topic. Data collection for projects/posters facilitate learning process as they search, read and analyze different sources related to other cultures. Accordingly enhanced awareness on other cultures assist them to develop pragmatic tolerance, and further avoid pragmatic failure. Possible topics of Project/ Poster presentation: *differences between conservative and liberal Islam; taboos in religions; the role of English in multicultural world and etc.*

Instructor may also present authentic YouTube or other video materials on *religious and cultural holidays/ do's and don'ts/ facts and myths* and etc. Students watch provided videos and do follow-up exercises such as KLW chart completion or mind mapping. Then they discuss it in pairs and as a whole group.

Role-plays. Teacher could prepare role-play cards in which there are prompts related to cultural background of role-play characters and context. Task instruction might include performing speech acts in a particular culture *(e.g, giving compliment in Islamic culture, apologizing in Christian religion and etc).*

It is also crucial to mention that when language teachers intend to instruct pragmatics they should know that pragmatic norms may vary depending on

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ethic, regional backgrounds, cultural identities of learners as well as other extra-linguistic factors .They should also account for the scope and educational objectives of curriculum, and the limits of academic contexts in which they are teaching pragmatics (Ishihara&Cohen, 2010, p 24). Mostly, instructors tend to bring their own knowledge, beliefs and practice into classroom setting. If they believe that religion and education should be intertwined to gain best academic achievement then Islam-centered approach might yield positive backwash. "Teachers' beliefs reflect their personal, cultural, educational, and political values and are known to influence and be influenced by a range of experiences in and outside of the classroom" (Ishihara&Cohen, 2010, p 26) TESOL professionals could promote ELT which best suits in given context.

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