The Ideological Work of English Teaching

This special issue of *Changing English* seeks to explore how the word 'ideology' might strategically be deployed to open up critique within our current policy environment at both a national and a global level. We know that the word has accrued multiple negative connotations since it was coined in the late 18th century, to the point where Raymond Williams was prompted to speculate whether it might not be better for those committed to progressive social reform to abandon it altogether (Williams, 1977, p.71). Williams's doubts about using the word relate to the way it has been employed to diminish the significance of ordinary people's views and values in relation to the so-called 'material' process of history. He argued the importance of reaffirming the centrality of a 'practical consciousness' (p.70), in which people were able to reflexively engage with their 'conceptions, thoughts, and ideas' as the products of the social activities in which they were engaged.

We are anticipating that contributors will in various ways situate their work in relation to the debates that have surrounded the word 'ideology' since it was first used. But rather than providing an historical overview of various theories of ideology over the past two centuries, we expect that – taken together – the essays in this special issue will inquire into the potential of this word to open up new dimensions of language and experience, new ways of seeing educational institutions and English classrooms, that currently receive little or no emphasis within our existing policy environment.

The word 'ideology' does not exist in the lexicon that educational systems make available to educators in order to give an account of their work. If it is used, it is invariably in the negative sense, in juxtaposition to 'science' (specifically a positivist science that prioritises measurement) and 'common sense' (reflected in policy initiatives to diminish the role of teacher education and so-called 'theory' in the induction of beginning teachers in preference for the nuts-and-bolts 'reality' of school settings). We are inquiring into the value of using the word 'ideology' vis-à-vis such mindsets.

We are anticipating that contributions might engage with two broad areas of inquiry within the field of English language education:

- We firstly have in mind the large claims made on behalf of 'global English' to create a world in which English functions as a lingua franca that facilitates communication between culturally and linguistically diverse communities around the world (cf. Clyne and Sharifian, 2008; Canagarajah, 1999). Can such a project be disentangled from the globalising ambitions of neoliberalism? What will be the fate of other languages and cultures in a world where English is dominant? Does a concept of ideology enable us to puncture the illusion of the benign effects of English as a global language?

- We are also seeking to understand how ideology might be applied to open up critique within national settings that have been radically reshaped by neoliberal reforms. The impulse behind those reforms is typically constructed as a humane desire to improve the literacy levels of students in order for them to surmount their social and economic disadvantage, ensuring that 'no child is left behind' and that everyone can partake of the benefits of the economy (cf. Doecke and Pereira, 2012). Yet the fact that such attempts

to raise literacy levels typically take the form of standardised testing that radically alienates whole cohorts of students raises questions as to the intent of those reforms.

At both the global and the national level such rhetoric is the common sense of our era, a set of practices and values that cannot be questioned, when the challenge becomes one of finding ways to think and speak differently, in order to imagine other futures than those that governments impose on us.We are asking whether it is possible for educational practitioners to speak a language that involves words like 'criticality', 'politics', inequality', 'power relations', 'class structure, 'dominance', 'struggle', 'resistance', 'praxis'.

Bahktin famously declared that words 'sparkle' with ideology (Bahktin, 1981/1987, p.277), celebrating the way that new words and phrases reflect new understandings, new ways of being in the world. We are asking whether the word 'ideology' itself might likewise be reappropriated and made to 'sparkle' within our current historical moment, providing a means to think and speak differently, and indeed to see schools and classrooms differently from the ways of seeing that neoliberal reforms have forced us to habitually employ, when educators and researchers reduce classrooms to sites where everything can be measured and regulated, where so-called 'measurement' experts are constructed as having the capacity to understand what is happening in a way that ordinary classroom practitioners do not.

We are seeking contributions from English language educators working in both Anglophone settings and settings where the globalisation of English is having an impact on the way people talk about and understand their work.

Brenton Doecke, Deakin University, Melbourne Australia
Seyyed-AbdolhamidMirhosseini, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran
Ali Said Mohamed Al-Issa, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman
John Yandell, UCL Institute of Education, London, England

Due Dates:
1st September 2018 Submission of Abstract
20th September 2018 Notification whether Abstract has been accepted
20th December 2018 Submission of draft
31stJanuary 2019 Feedback from Reviewers
1st April 2019 Submission of final version

References
Bahktin, M.M. (1981/1987), *The Dialogical Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson, Austin: Austin University Press.
Cangarajah, A.S. (1999), Interrogating the 'Native Speaker Fallacy': Non-Linguistic Roots, Non-Pedagogical Results. In Braine, G. (ed.), *Non-Native Educators in English language Teaching,* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp.77-92.
Clyne, M. and Sharifian, F. (2008), English as an international language: Challenges and possibilities. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31 (3), pp.1-28.
Doecke, B. and Pereira, I. (2012), Language, Experience and Professional Learning: What Walter Benjamin Can Teach Us. *Changing English*, 19 (3), pp.269-281.
Williams, R. (1977), *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.