

3.1.1 Instructional context

Transcript

Slide 1

Welcome to this sub-section on Instructional Context. In this sub-section, we will consider your own special situation for English teaching.

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Unlike in the section on Establishing Context, however, we take a closer or narrower look at the context for English Education where you are. Like the picture in this slide, we will focus our gaze to explore factors that influence how the teaching and learning of English is understood in your instructional or teaching context.

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In this section, we will begin to create a map of your instructional context. It may help to think of this map as reflecting the landscape in which you relate to and navigate different ideas and thoughts in teaching English.

The goal of creating this map is to provide an overview of your instructional context in which you can:

- explore how open your context is to including or incorporating ELF-aware thinking and teaching,
- to determine how much space or room you have to expand your teaching to include ELF-aware instruction.

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Instructional contexts – like many other types of contexts - are influenced by the experiences, attitudes and beliefs of key or influential stakeholders. In instructional contexts, these key stakeholders can include anyone who has an impact on the understanding of “valid”, “correct” or “good” educational purposes, or aims, teaching methods, means of testing, etc.

These stakeholders can include – but are not limited to:

- government and private organizations,

- educational policy-makers f. ex., educational and school authorities who either write educational policy or are asked to implement educational policy,
- testing organizations or test-makers,
- materials developers for example those who create textbooks used in the classroom,
- teachers in the classroom,
- teacher educators,
- parents, and
- anyone else actively involved in influencing educational purposes and goals in your context.

As you can see, instructional context can and is influenced by stakeholders who may have different interests in what is taught and how.

In this section, we will explore **the attitudes and beliefs** of only a few of these stakeholders.

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In this module, we have chosen to look at only some of the stakeholders in your context. You will explore how **local policies, professional cultures, and classroom materials** influence your teaching of English where you are.

This exploration will help make clear the landscape in which you teach or your instructional context teaching and to help you begin to formulate a context-appropriate plan for including more ELF-aware teaching in your classroom.

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To be specific, we will begin by exploring the attitudes and beliefs of: policy makers English teaching professionals and materials developers.

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To prepare for this process, you should create the following table. Using the table on the slide, create a similar table with columns entitled “Policy makers”, “Teachers and Professional cultures”, and “Instructional materials”.

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In this first activity, we will explore the beliefs and attitudes of policy-makers as we find them in the relevant policy documents that define “English” for teaching and learning.

To do this activity, you will need to collect or gather any **relevant** policy documents that describe the purpose of English teaching in your classroom.

These documents could include - but are not limited to -: curricula documents, subject syllabi, program descriptions, proficiency descriptors or testing scales, or any other official documents that define the purposes or direction of your English teaching.

Often these comes from state agencies – such as Ministries of Education – but, if you are teaching in a private language school, program descriptions or proficiency scales may be more relevant in defining what your teaching is meant to achieve.

Pause the presentation now and once you have collected the necessary documents, go on to the next slide.

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Now, read through the documents you have collected and note any **important points** you discover **about how “English”** and **the purpose(s) of learning English** are described.

Once you have done this, review your notes and circle what you think are key words and phrases

Now list these key words and phrases in the table in the column “POLICY MAKERS” on the left.

Now, read through the documents you have collected and note any **important points** you discover **about how “English”** and **the purpose(s) of learning English** are described.

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Now list these key words and phrases in the table in the column “POLICY MAKERS” on the left.

Please hold on to your policy documents, as we will ask you to look at them again in this sub-section.

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Before we move on, it is a good idea to take a brief moment to consider some traditions of English as **foreign language teaching** as it has been understood in **non-native speaking context**.

For much of its history, English education in non-native speaking contexts has been referred to as **foreign language teaching**.

This tradition has promoted different underlying ideas. For example, it reflects

- a 20th century understanding of the connection between a nation and a national language. You can see this in the examples here, and the idea that “French” is the language of “France” or “Italian” is the language of “Italy”, even though we know these languages are also spoken other places in the world (for example, French is also spoken in Canada and Haiti).
- A natural consequence of understanding language as tied to nation is the view that native-speaking nations **owns** these languages
- and, as the owners, native-speaking nations provide the standards for **accuracy and appropriateness** for non-native speakers.
- Finally, a traditional view of foreign language teaching views “nativeness” or the ability to use the language like native speakers as the targeted goal and outcome of teaching.

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The traditional way of thinking about foreign language teaching reflects certain assumptions about the teaching and learning of English.

For one, there is the idea that English is owned by its native speakers and the goal for non-native speakers is to sound and behave like native speakers.

This assumes that all English native speakers are very alike or even the same in their pronunciation, ways of using English, and how they behave.

Finally, as nation and language are seen as intricately connected, the systems of language and culture (for example, English language and culture) are seen as separate from other systems of language and culture (like Italian language and culture). Assuming this separation preferences a practice where teachers are encouraged to compare the ways of life and the shared values of one society – for example, the local society or the “we” and “how we do and think” – with the society that “owns” the foreign language – for example, native-English speaking countries or societies as the “them”.

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We would now like you to go back and review your notes on the policy documents you have chosen. When looking at your notes, consider how prevalent foreign language thinking is in the policy documents for English education in your context.

Now draw a line under the notes you have in the column “Policy Makers” so far. Under this line, add your thoughts and reflections about the degree to which your policy documents reflect foreign language thinking about teaching English in your context.

Feel free to use the previous slide on the assumptions of foreign language teaching as you do this. Uncovering assumptions and beliefs is not easy work, so pause the presentation now and make sure to give yourself ample time to think about and consider your chosen policy documents.

Once you have added your thoughts to the “Policy maker” column, please move on to the next slide.

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Analysing policy documents is a good first step in developing a context-appropriate plan for incorporating more ELF-aware teaching into your classroom teaching.

Analysing these documents – be it curriculum, syllabi, program descriptions, etc. – is useful for identifying the tensions between different or competing aims for English language teaching.

It can also reveal areas or spaces for changing current practice.

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Policy documents **alone** do not determine what happens in the English classroom. A second area which is it useful to explore in is how professional English teachers are viewed and what is expected of “good” English teachers or “good” English teaching practice in your context.

This will involve looking more closely at the attitudes and beliefs of the English-teaching profession and English teacher education where you are.

These attitudes – just like those of policy-makers - **also** open or close the **opportunities you may have** for including ELF-aware teaching in your classroom.

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The tradition of foreign language teaching for English in NNS contexts has also influenced how we think about **teachers of English**.

“**native-speakerism**” (Holliday, 2006) is a way of thinking about teachers that clearly distinguishes between NS and NNS teachers. This way of thinking gives the false perception that NS-teachers are somehow superior to NNS-teachers. Native-speakerism is a way of explaining attitudes and beliefs that see the native speaking teacher as:

- unproblematic

- representing Western culture and English language ideals
- bearers of appropriate teaching methodology
- Non-native speaking teachers, on the other hand, are thought of as:
 - generalized
 - problematic
 - in need of monitoring and correction

Notice how the ideas of native-speakerism reflect the assumptions of **foreign language teaching** and a preference for native-speakers and native-speaker ownership of the language.

Like the assumptions of foreign language teaching, native-speakerism promotes the idea that English is owned by native speakers and that these native speakers pass English down from generation to generation in some sort of standard form. This– as van Leeuwen so clearly states – hides the fact that much of the English we recognize as standard is English that is “strongly policed by authorities, educational institutions, academies, publishing houses and so on” (van Leeuwen, 2009: 218).

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You should now take a moment to follow the link for the video: [The "Best" English Teachers](#).

As you listen to this video, note which characteristics are being used to define these English teachers as «best».

Add these characteristics to the column “Teachers and Professional Cultures” in the table.

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We would now like you to draw a line under your notes in the middle column.

Take a moment now to consider English teachers in your own context. Think about what characteristics describe «the best» English teachers in your context and write these below this line.

The notes in this column should now give you some ideas about the attitudes and beliefs about what a “good” teacher of English should be like or how they should behave. This is part of your professional identity or part of your professional culture for English teaching in your context. The attitudes and beliefs you have listed for your own context may or may not match those you noticed in the video.

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The last step in mapping our instruction context will be to look more closely at materials developers.

As much of the discussion about including ELF-aware teaching in the classroom has been tied to adopting a «with/within» approach, it is useful now to consider where ELF-inspired materials are integrated into current teaching materials or not.

Before you move to the next slide, you should collect either:

- the teaching resource you use most in your classroom (for example, a textbook or a workbook), or
- an assortment of teaching resources that you use often in the classroom.

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We will now take a close look at these materials and to what degree they reflect a “with/within” approach to ELF-aware teaching.

To do so, you should consider to what degree these teaching materials:

- include **English as a lingua franca** as a way of describing English
- include a discussion of the role of intelligibility in communication
- include intercultural encounters with people all over the world, including non-native speakers in interaction with one another
- include a balance of NS, as well as NNS, cultural representations
- include global issues explored from different cultures through English
- include texts from English-language media not sourced from English-speaking countries
- include texts from well-known NNS who are successful internationally
- include learning activities encouraging learners to explore the use and practices of speakers and users of English in NNS-contexts

Really look at your instructional materials and examine to what degree they include these different ways of thinking and using English or not. As you do so, make sure to note down what you see or do not see across the different materials you use often.

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Using your notes about instructional materials, summarize what you have discovered under the column «INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS» in your table.

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It is now time to step back and “take stock”. **“To take stock”** means **to think carefully about a situation** in order **to form an opinion**. The opinion you come to as part of this process **will** then **inform your decision about what to do next**.

By filling out this table, you have created an initial **«map» of your local instructional context** and the attitudes and beliefs the different attitudes and beliefs present in English policy, the English teaching profession, and English classroom materials in your context

Now it is time to think carefully about the extent to which you find a **“with/within” approach** that includes ELF-awareness **in your local instructional context**.

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You should now refer to the Forum Discussion on the main page where you will share your thinking about your instruction situation and discuss your opinions about this situation and what you would like to do next.

If you find it difficult to get started, you could consider such questions as:

- To what degree do you find **a balance between foreign language thinking and ELF-awareness** in your instructional context?
- What did you find **surprising** about your local context or something you had not considered before?
- Did you find that thinking across English teaching policy, the English teaching profession, and English instructional materials **aligned** or **agreed**, or not? If not, what **disagreements or tensions** did you find?
- Finally and most importantly, based on what you have seen, what **space or possibilities** do you see for integrating more ELF-aware teaching and learning in your own instructional context?

Please make sure not only to share these reflections in the Forum Discussion, but also to respond to at least two other teachers working in different contexts.

Remember, the goal of this subsection has been to create a map of your instructional to determine how open your context is to including ELF-aware thinking and teaching – and then to determine what possibilities may be available to you to include ELF-aware instruction in your own teaching.

This **concludes the sub-section on Instructional Context**.