

A review of the issues in language teaching

Zahra Pourtousi^{a*}, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Department of English, Tehran, Iran

Suggested Citation:

Pourtousi, Z. (2022). A review of the issues in language teaching. *International Journal of New Trends in Social Sciences*. 6(2), 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.18844/ijss.v6i2.7594>

Received June 22, 2022; revised September 10, 2022; accepted November 04, 2022.

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of. Prof. Dr. Ana Campina, Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal

©2022 Birlesik Dunya Yenilik Arastırma ve Yayıncılık Merkezi. All rights reserved.

Abstract

Due to the complexity of learning a new language, there are different aspects that need to be taken into consideration while teaching language, especially the English language. Due to the necessity of ascertaining the views of people towards English language teaching, this research aimed to review and summarise most of the theories and models related to the issues of teaching and learning English. In the current paper, the views of different scholars are discussed varying from cognitive views, sociocultural views, identity views and so on. Based on the results of the study, it was found that technological advances bring about huge changes to the educational contexts and one of the reasons behind such advances is the COVID-19 pandemic. Some other researchers connect other aspects to the issues in ELT such as aspects of a good teacher or technological advances. This paper presents some of the issues.

Keywords: Cognition, education, language, teaching, technology;

* *ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Zahra Pourtousi, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Department of English, Tehran, Iran

E-mail address: pourtoosi@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Richards (2015) regarded the English language as an international language that is involved in the language teaching industry, and also the results of second language learning, cognitive science and psychology affected English language teaching. Moreover, Ushioda (2013) mentioned that in the globalisation era, English and its related issues are associated with education, curriculum, language teaching and student motivation. Based on Richards' (2015) study, English language teaching refers to what we know regarding second language learning. Brown (1941) also stated that first language acquisition had an impact on ELT.

Yorio (1976) provided a classification for learner variables, which are age, cognition, native language, input, affect and education. Lightbown (1985) mentioned that the second language hypothesis that could be brought to classroom teaching had 10 parts, including time, fossilisation, complexity, meaningfulness, error treatment, metalinguistic knowledge, practice, order, interlanguage and acquisition. Ellis (2007) viewed language acquisition based on his observations as follows: input, output, L1, instruction, frequency, implicit learning, variability, sequence, emergentism and subsystems. Furthermore, out of these elements, Brown (1941) proposed principles of SLA, including L1 acquisition, age, neurolinguistics, individual differences, strategies, sociolinguistics, communicative competence, learner language and instruction. These principles are all based on different perspectives that Brown (1941) divided into six parts, including the maturation-based approach, cognitive models, sociocultural views, identity approaches, ecological view and DST, similar to the study of Qu (2022).

1.1. Purpose of the study

Due to the necessity of ascertaining the views of people towards English language teaching, this researcher aimed to review and summarise most of the theories, and models related to issues of teaching and learning English.

2. Materials and methods

This study uses the literature review method to arrive at the conclusion for this study. English learners formed the population of the study. Data for the study were acquired from previous literature, and through the use of content analysis, the findings were analysed and discussed.

3. Results

Different categories are mentioned by different scholars. Two of the main scholars discussing issues in ELT include Brown (1941) and Richards (2015). Moreover, the view of other scholars is also discussed in the paper.

3.1. Maturation-based approach

The divisions of the maturation model are as follows: First, Krashen and Terrell's (1983) hypothesis known as the acquisition learning hypothesis affects some ELT methods. Five hypotheses are based on this theory, including the acquisition/learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis.

In this regard, the second part is universal grammar, which refers to the innateness of language learning that was first proposed by Chomsky (1968), and it is believed that principles and parameters are universal in the process of learning a language. Finally, emergentism, proposed by O'Grady (2012) and Ellis (2007), was in opposition to UG. Recent studies addressing similar ideologies include MacWhinney (2019) and Zhong (2020).

3.2. Cognitive models

Regarding the cognitive models, it includes an attention processing model (Mclaughlin, 2014), implicit and explicit processing, and systematicity and variability of interlanguage (Preston & Bayley, 1996).

3.3. Sociocultural views

Sociocultural views consist of two concepts; first, the ZPD or zone of proximal development proposed by Vygotsky (1978), indicating the current and the next level of performance in language learning while the learner is engaged in communicating with a more developed learner. Second, the interaction hypothesis proposed by Long (1985).

3.4. Identity approaches

Norton (1997) is considered the main scholar in identity. She focused on identity and other aspects such as language, language learning, social change (Norton & Toohey, 2011), imagined communities and motivation (Norton & Mckinney, 2011). Norton (1997) mentioned that she uses the term identity to refer to how different individuals perceive their relationship to the globe and how each of them perceives their opportunities and possibilities. Also, based on Yazan (2019), identity is cultural and social roles that teacher-learners have while they have interactions with the learners.

3.5. Ecological view

Ecological views refer to sociocognitive by Atkinson (2010) and skill acquisition theory proposed by DeKeyser (2020). The ecological factors regarded by Jacobs and Goatly (2000) are social issues that are required to connect learning with the outside of the classes.

3.6. Dynamic system theory

Chaos complexity theory is also called dynamic system theory (DST). Larsen-Freeman (1997) stated that the chaos complexity theory is a paradoxical term referring to the idea that complexity is obtained by chaotic situations, and therefore, the cause-and-effect relationships are a complicated issue. Also, Larsen-Freeman (2012) mentioned that different systems usually include a large number of components, interacting and giving rise to a different order of complexity at a higher level.

Regarding the features of DCT, researchers provided some aspects; therefore, the main aspects of complex nonlinear systems are to be 'dynamic, nonlinear, chaotic, unpredictable, sensitive to initial conditions, open, self-organising, feedback sensitive and adaptive' (Larsen-freeman, 1997, p. 142).

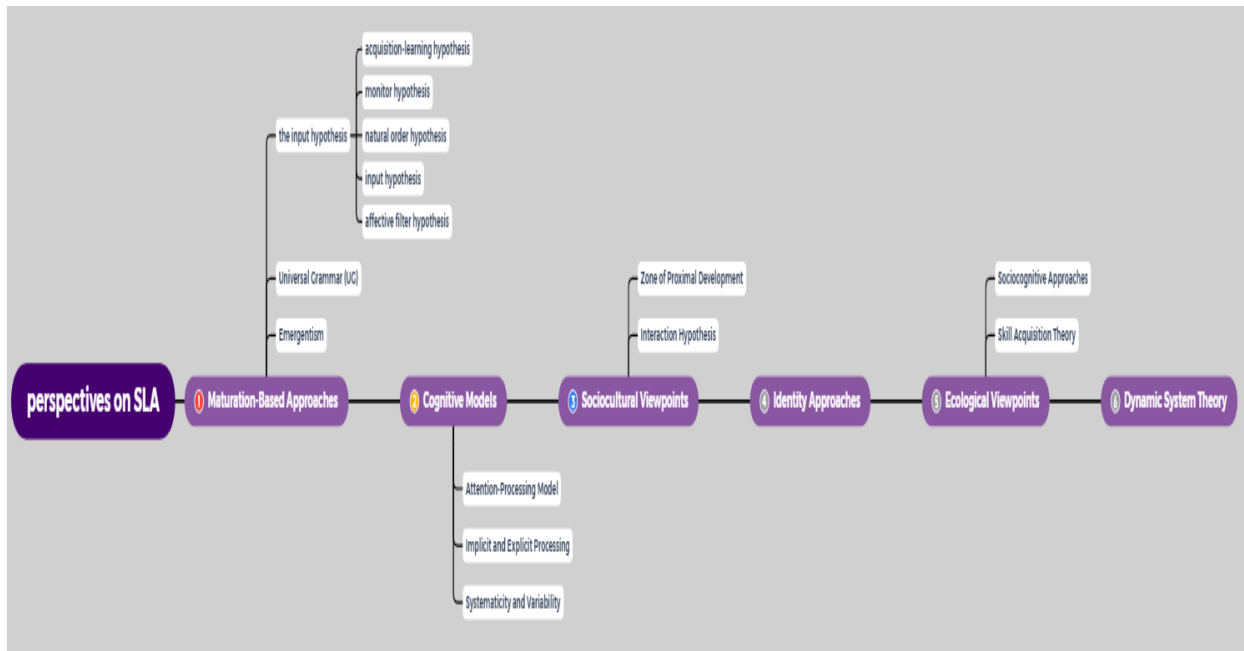


Figure 1
Summary of the Perspectives on SLA Based on Brown (1941)

Richards (2015) divided English language teaching issues into four different parts. The first part is English language teaching today, the second one is facilitating student learning, the third part is language and the four skills, and finally, the fourth part is the teacher’s environment. The summary of the issues in the view of Richards (2015) is shown in Figure 2.

3.7. English language teaching today

Regarding the first issue in language teaching, three theoretical traditions matter, which include behaviourism, cognitivism and socioculturalism. Moreover, the language teaching methods which are grounded in the theories are also a part of this issue. Furthermore, teachers are also needed to different skills, so Richards (2015) overviewed various aspects of a successful English teacher. The basic requirement is specialised knowledge. After that, a teacher needs to have high proficiency and fluency, a sense of identity, teaching skills, class routines and, finally, high ability to engage in a learner-centred method of teaching.

Richards (2015) also focused on the competencies, knowledge and skills that teachers must acquire. Moreover, the teachers’ proficiency can be considered a significant element affecting the teaching. He also mentioned that language matters for the teacher to teach effectively. Proficiency can affect the interaction in teaching. Therefore, the conclusion drawn by the author is reconstructing teachers’ professional identity by their engagement in finding two aspects of teaching which are the belief system and the teaching practices.

3.8. Developing student learning

Richards (2015) also emphasised the learners’ factors, including their age, identity, motivation, learning styles, anxiety and confidence. Regarding different age groups, it includes adults, teenagers and young language learners. In other words, how the teacher understands how the learners of a specific age group learn and what method, approach and technique is suitable for them. For instance, the author

stated that teachers require specific qualities to make the situation suitable for the learners to learn regarding their age groups.

Motivation refers to the learner's tendency to learn more and commit to language learning. Ushioda (2013) considered motivation as an important element and a key variable in learners' success. Anxiety, on the other hand, affects the tendency to use and learn the language. Also, based on Burns and Siegel's (2018) study, the anxiety-provoking skill for learners is speaking when they learn another language, so learners need to learn knowledge of the language, discourse and communication strategies.

Learning styles refer to the individuals' natural ways that they process new skills and information. Therefore, they have different strategies to use consciously for learning. Confidence is very significant in language classes, meaning self-assurance in language learning; therefore, the teachers must boost learners' confidence to achieve the language learning goals in the class. Concerning identity, it could be a struggle for the learners, and they may stay silent to protect their identity (Bayazit et al., 2018). Furthermore, in a particular context, they may be considered a poor language learner although they have motivation.

3.9. Language and the skills

Teaching and assessing language systems refer to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse and pragmatics. Moreover, the four skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. Richards (2015) explained that the pedagogical views referring to language skills and language systems could be developed, and therefore, they provide the ground for different views. This part focused on how the pedagogic views regarding the two mentioned aspects of teachers can be enhanced. Pragmatics and discourse analysis could be beneficial for teachers for preparing effective English language users as an international language (Celen & Seferoglu, 2020).

Based on the aforementioned issues, Richards (2015) mentions that the teachers have new roles in their classes, such as class researchers, material developers, course designers and so on. Furthermore, the coursebook used in the class must contain four skills and focus on all of them, provide schemata, and provides a range of activities from vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, which all lead to learner motivation.

3.10. Teacher's environment

Regarding this issue, it is mentioned that language teachers need to develop their roles and responsibilities to find their profession a rewarding one. So, what is needed in this part is developing long-term goals. Moreover, Richards (2015) also emphasised on new roles of language teachers. In this regard, teachers have various roles, such as team leader, teacher trainer, mentor, course developer, material developer, researcher, assessor and so on.

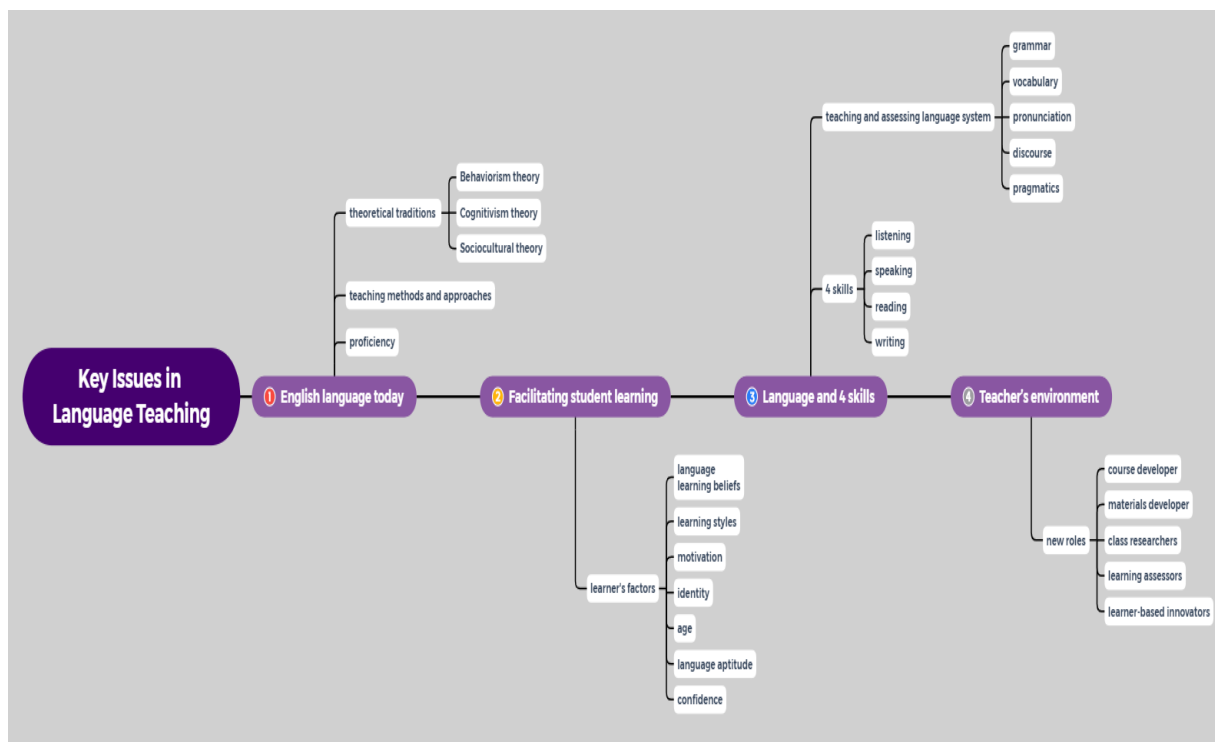


Figure 2

Summary of the Key Issues in Language Teaching. Source: Richards (2015)

3.11. Language imperialism

Also, another issue that affects teaching English is language imperialism (Cardoso et al., 2022; Yusny, 2013). According to the author, Indonesia has never been regulated under British colonial, and therefore, English has never been spoken widely in society, but it is taught in schools.

3.12. Technological aspects

Waters (2012) concluded in his paper that electronic technology has led to new shifts and issues in the upcoming years, and web-based teaching could be increasingly applied. Although the paper was published in 2012, and somehow what he suggested came thoroughly true during the COVID-19 pandemic, and due to the necessity of online classes, many researchers tend to focus on similar topics (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Almanthari et al., 2020; Baber, 2020; Khalil et al., 2020; Mahmood, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Subedi et al., 2020; Toquero, 2020). The growth of technology and its necessity could also be found in research articles published even before Waters' paper (Jarvis, 2005). Besides, technological advances have become widespread recently and also provide researchers with different calculation methods in their study (Pourtousi et al., 2021; Uzunboylu et al., 2019).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study would like to draw attention to some practical issues. It is the responsibility of language teachers to prepare their students to deal with various environmental and social problems. Therefore, language teachers must follow active rather than passive learning, use student-centred instead of teacher-centred methods and, finally, consider language as a way of communication rather than mere structures and forms. Besides, the increase in web-based language

teaching and learning changes in ELT in the present and even in the future, so English classes are not going to be the same as in the present.

Furthermore, it is stated that language teaching must be based on the context and needs of the learners, and therefore, language is viewed as a context-informed activity that needs to look beyond it. In this regard, effective and successful language teaching has two sides, including organisational and pedagogic problems.

References

- Adnan, M., & Anwar, K. (2020). Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Students' perspectives. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology*, 2(1), 2–8. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ed606496>
- Almanthari, A., Maulina, S., & Bruce, S. (2020). Secondary school mathematics teachers' views on E-learning implementation barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of Indonesia. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 16(7), em1860. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1272650>
- Atkinson, D. (2010). A sociocognitive approach to second language acquisition: How mind, body, and world work together in learning additional languages. *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 143–166). <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203830932-12/sociocognitive-approach-second-language-acquisition-mind-body-world-work-together-learning-additional-languages-dwight-atkinson>
- Baber, H. (2020). Determinants of students' perceived learning outcome and satisfaction in online learning during the pandemic of COVID19. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 7(3), 285–292. <https://doi.org/10.20448/JOURNAL.509.2020.73.285.292>
- Bayazit, A., Bayram, S., & Cumaoglu, G. K. (2018). Investigating the relationship between task complexity, cognitive ability, and disorientation in hypertext navigation. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 10(4), 286–298. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v10i4.4088>
- Brown, H. D. (1941). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Burns, A., & Siegel, J. (2018). Teaching the four language skills: Themes and issues. *International perspectives on teaching the four skills in ELT* (pp. 1–17). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63444-9_1
- Cardoso, P., Duarte, M. E., Pacheco, L., & Janeiro, I. N. (2022). Life design group-based intervention fostering vocational identity, career adaptability, and career decision-making self-efficacy. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 17(SI.1), 1453–1467. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17iSI.1.6674>
- Cates, K. A. (2002). Teaching for a better world: Global issues and language education. *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, 5, 41–52. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.460.5129&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Celen, F. K., & Seferoglu, S. S. (2020). Improving the use of ICT through online professional development platform based on metacognitive strategies. *Global Journal of Information Technology: Emerging Technologies*, 10(1), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjit.v10i1.4747>

- Pourtousi, Z. (2022). A review of the issues in language teaching. *International Journal of New Trends in Social Sciences*, 6(2), 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.18844/ijss.v6i2.7594>
- Chomsky, N. (1968). *Language and mind*. Harcourt Brace.
- DeKeyser, R. (2020). Skill acquisition theory. *Theories in second language acquisition* (pp. 83–104). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429503986-5/skill-acquisition-theory-robert-dekeyser>
- Ellis, N. (2007). The associative-cognitive CREED. In B. VanPatt (Ed.), *Theories in second language acquisition*. Erlbaum.
- Jacobs, G. M., & Goatly, A. (2000). The treatment of ecological issues in ELT coursebooks. *ELT Journal*, 54, 256–264.
- Jarvis, H. (2005). Technology and change in English language teaching (ELT). *The Asian EFL Journal*, 4(4), 213–227.
- Khalil, R., Mansour, A. E., Fadda, W. A., Almisnid, K., Aldamegh, M., Al-Nafeesah, A., Alkhalifah, A., & Al-Wutayd, O. (2020). The sudden transition to synchronized online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia: A qualitative study exploring medical students' perspectives. *BMC Medical Education*, 20(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-020-02208-z>
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Pergamon.
- Larsen-freeman, D. (1997). Chaos/complexity science and second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 141–165.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2012). Chaos/complexity theory for second language acquisition. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0125>
- Lightbown, P. M. (1985). Great expectations: Second-language acquisition research and classroom teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 173–189. <https://tinyurl.com/mr3tu79e>
- Long, M. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. Gass, & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition*. Newbury House.
- MacWhinney, B. (2019). *Emergentism. Cognitive linguistics-key topics* (pp. 275–294). <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110626438/pdf#page=281>
- Mahmood, S. (2020). Instructional strategies for online teaching in COVID-19 pandemic. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 3, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.218>
- Mclaughlin, B. (2014). 'Conscious' versus 'Unconscious' Learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(4), 617–634. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2307/3587111>
- Mishra, L., Gupta, T., & Shree, A. (2020). Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100012>
- Norton, B., & Mckinney, C. (2011). An identity approach to second language acquisition approach to second language acquisition. *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 85–106). Routledge. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/70fd/90bbc59f14ecc8090ecf876804d7ea18817e.pdf?_ga=2.189888360.2115008290.1564851665-2076650727.1564851665
- Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 409–429.

- Pourtousi, Z. (2022). A review of the issues in language teaching. *International Journal of New Trends in Social Sciences*, 6(2), 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.18844/ijss.v6i2.7594>
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching*, 44(4), 412–446. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000309>
- O’Grady, W. (2012). Language acquisition without an acquisition device. *Language Teaching*, 45(1), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144481000056X>
- Pourtousi, Z., Khalijian, S., Ghanizadeh, A., Babanezhad, M., Nakhjiri, A. T., Marjani, A., & Shirazian, S. (2021). Ability of neural network cells in learning teacher motivation scale and prediction of motivation with fuzzy logic system. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 9721. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-89005-w>
- Preston, D., & Bayley, R. (1996). Variationist linguistics and second language acquisition. In *Handbook of second language acquisition*. Academic Press.
- Qu, L. (2022). *A culturally adapted telehealth intervention for parents of children with autism in China* [Doctoral dissertation]. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/172711>
- Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Subedi, S., Nayaju, S., Subedi, S., Shah, S. K., & Shah, J. M. (2020). Impact of E-learning during COVID-19 pandemic among nursing students and teachers of Nepal. *International Journal of Science and Healthcare Research*, 5(2), 68. www.ijshr.com
- Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine context. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1263557>
- Ushioda, E. (2013). *Motivation and ELT: Global issues and local concerns. International perspectives on motivation*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137000873_1.
- Uzunboylyu, H., Ozcinar, Z., Kolotushkin, S., Kalugina, O., & Zulfugarzade, T. (2019). Research and trends in technology and gifted child: Results of a content analysis. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 14(22), 56–69. <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/217152/>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Harvard University Press.
- Waters, A. (2012). Trends and issues in ELT methods and methodology. *ELT Journal*, 66(4), 440–449. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccs038>
- Yazan, B. (2019). Toward identity-oriented teacher education: Critical autoethnographic narrative. *TESOL Journal*, 10(1), e00388. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/tesj.388>
- Yorio, C. (1976). Discussion of explaining sequence and variation in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 4(1), 59–63.
- Yusny, R. (2013). ELT in Indonesian context: Issues and challenges. *English: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 1(1), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v1i1.140>
- Zhong, L. (2020). Taking emergentism seriously. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 98(1), 31–46. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00048402.2019.1589547>