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Trans/forming 'The King's English' in global research education: A teacher's tales

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis* I present a simultaneously scholarly and personally reflexive account of my own engagement with the English language, as a learner, a teacher and a researcher. The work represents a collection of first person narrative 'tales' which together constitute a multi-faceted investigation of key issues in the field of academic English as an Additional Language (EAL) for research students, especially in relation to the teaching of writing.

My primary contribution in this work lies in eight peer-reviewed academic papers which have been published in international, scholarly contexts. These papers demonstrate progress in the understanding of transcultural language learning experience for EAL students in Western research degree programs. In combination they move towards potentially transformative social justice issues in applied linguistic and pedagogic theory, as well as in the practice of teaching English with these students.

In the 'contextual statement' or dissertation* which frames the papers I take an autoethnographic approach in order to realise aspects of my developing subjectivity as a teacher, and as the researcher of the published papers. Through story I interrogate my life and my relationships with English, my first language, as I grew to be a teacher and researcher with people from many different first languages and cultures. Finally, by exploring how I and other research EAL teachers struggle to position ourselves within the competing claims of professional responsibility to meet students' demands, and ethical responsibility to address the global spread of the English language academy, I argue that the time is now ripe for us to trans/form our notional constructions both of what 'Englishes' actually are today, and of the pedagogies that we design for teaching them in research contexts.

Taken as a whole the thesis creates a developmental, imaginative reconstruction of the lived experiences of one academic EAL teacher in research education. Through this collection of 'tales' I present insights from some of my own deeply personal locations with the goal of furthering dialogues with teachers as well as researchers in EAL, and with a firm commitment to privileging global negotiation and 'connection' in the development of research English pedagogies.

* See Glossary