

As línguas estrangeiras no ensino superior: balanço, estratégias e desafios futuros

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THE PLACE OF ETHICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

For those involved in human research, ethics plays an important part of the research process at the level of seeking approval for research projects from institutional review boards or following the prescriptions of codes of practice of professional and disciplinary associations. Ethics, however, can extend beyond protocols and regulations playing a role in the day-to-day decision making process of doing research and being a teacher. Ethics has a far broader role for an academic discipline as it can be used to address questions regarding the scope, nature and purpose of a discipline. This paper will examine ethics in second language education from the perspective of both research and practice. Ethics has often played a peripheral role in second language education even though it plays a fundamental role within other disciplines in terms of research and practice, e.g. psychology. It will be argued that the causes of this peripheral position have to do with its relationship to applied linguistics and linguistics. I will then go on to discuss the value and importance of ethics particularly in light of the complexity of foreign language teaching and learning in Europe.

Keywords: ethics, second language education, applied linguistics, linguistics, research

1 INTRODUCTION

My own interest in ethics in second language education derives from the problems and issues I faced as a postgraduate researcher and from my research interests in the socio-political dimensions of the profession (Anderson, 2003a; Anderson, 2003b). For those involved in human

research, ethics plays an important part of the research process at the level of seeking approval for research projects from institutional review boards or following the prescriptions of codes of practice of professional and disciplinary associations. Ethics in social research has become a procedure of recognising consensual standards and judging examples of social research according to these standards. Ethics, however, extends beyond protocols and regulations playing a role in the day-to-day decision making process of doing research being a resource to the researcher to deal with the dilemmas and complications that doing second language education research can produce. Taking into consideration that research ethics concern how researchers conduct themselves during the research process (e.g. how the researched are treated and the integrity of the work carried out); concerns the consequences of the research; and concerns the researchers' responsibility towards society (Kimmel, 1988, p. 40-41), I would argue these ethics can be more broadly applied to the practitioners of second language education (i.e. teachers and education managers). The role of ethics extends beyond the practice of teaching and research to considering broader questions regarding the scope, nature and purpose of a discipline and its profession; questions that engender epistemological, ontological and political self-reflection (Magnan, 2005).

This paper explores the multi-dimensional role of ethics for a profession by first exploring the development of ethics in social research, and moves on to look at role of ethics in second language education proposing a model of how this should work. Finally, some examples of the kind ethical issues that second language researchers and practitioners are discussed.

2 ETHICS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

2.1 The Development of Research Ethics

The rise in concern for ethics in academic research can be identified firstly as a response in the natural sciences to the revelations of forced human experimentation during the Second World War which led to the Nuremberg and Helsinki declarations which made the principle of consent by a research subject a necessary prerequisite to any research project (McNamee, 2002, p. 2). Thus notions of an individual's right to autonomy; to not be harmed; to not be coerced or deceived, were to be codified in academic associations and professional bodies' codes of ethics and practice. For the social sciences, it was the publication of research in the 1960s and 1970s that involved deception and potential psychological harm to the researched that raised the profile of ethics leading to restrictions in what researchers can do according to codes of ethics and practice (Punch, 1994, p. 89).

Ethics in philosophy concerns "the system of value and custom instantiated in the lives of particular groups of human beings" (Crisp, 2000, p. 256). In

social research, it is the system of ‘morality’ and the moral principles within the system of morality that is of concern (Sieber, 1992, p. 3; Crisp, 2000, p. 256). This has two dimensions: firstly, what constitutes morality, in terms of notions of good, bad, right and wrong, and whether a specific act is consistent to an agreed notion of right or wrong (Kimmel, 1988, p. 27); and, secondly, the application of morality to moral principles. In other words, meta-ethics provides the grounds for applied ethics: the normative principles that guide professional practice (Kimmel, 1988, p. 42-44; Crisp, 2000, p. 258).

Researchers have drawn on a central debate within ethics concerning the ethical basis on which decisions for specific acts can be made: as viewed from the perspectives of consequentialist ethics and deontological ethics. In consequentialism (also known as teleological ethics), actions are judged ethical on the basis that they bring about the greater good (Kimmel, 1988, p. 44; Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 22-24; Crisp, 2000, p. 258; Murphy & Dingwell, 2001, p. 339; Pring, 2002, p. 118-119). Utilitarianism, most commonly associated with Jeremy Bentham (1988) and John Stuart Mill (2001), argues that the greatest good is the maximising of the welfare and happiness of all. The maximisation of benefits to all is balanced against the harms that an action may cause to individuals. If an action does maximise benefits to humanity or a society, then the harm it causes to certain individuals may be acceptable. What this approach means in practice is that while research may in the long run benefit humanity as a whole and indeed remedy social ills, it may be at the cost to others (Kimmel, 1988, p. 45). Consequentialism therefore may allow deception and manipulative research. Stanley Milgram’s (1974) social psychological research into how people obey those in positions of authority and sociologist Laud Humphreys’ (1970) study of American male homosexual behaviour are commonly cited examples of this. There is then a calculation between harms and benefits and the difficulty here is in deciding how and on what basis such a calculation can be made (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 23). One assumes that for Milgram and Humphreys that the benefits of his research far outweighs the potential psychological damage to the researched and the fact that the researched had been lied to. One way to deal with this problem of harm is to see the greater good including benefits to the researched as well as wider humanity (Howe & Moses, 1999; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001).

In considering the researched in benefit-harm calculations, one begins to edge closer to the deontological ethics which is closely associated with Immanuel Kant (1991). Based on ‘right’ rather than ‘good’, it places restrictions on what one can do in the pursuit of the good (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 22-24; Crisp, 2000, p. 258; Murphy & Dingwell, 2001, p. 339; Pring, 2002, p. 118-119). Deontological ethics stresses that certain actions are right-making while others are wrong-making whatever the consequences (Kimmel,

1988, p. 46). Judgements and decisions regarding what is right or wrong is achieved through rule-deontological theories, that is the establishment of general principles or rules (Kimmel, 1988, p. 46). If one takes the example of ‘tell the truth’, a researcher must always explain to the researched the true purpose of the research even if this will affect the data and therefore the research outcomes. Kant (1991) proposed the idea of *categorical imperatives* being principles of behaviour that define appropriate action in all situations which should be adhered to in relatively similar cases as a matter of duty. The moral justification of an act is upheld if the performer of the act would be willing to have another person act in the same way to them in a similar situation. For the researcher, the researched should not just be a means to an end as they have a worth that is independent of the researcher’s need for them as vehicles for data. For Kimmel (1988, p. 49), Rawls’ (1971) *justice for fairness* theory provides the most useful deontological contribution for researchers in its concern for every person’s right for equal basic liberties. Any research that violates a basic liberty, for example the right of autonomy, can never take place whatever the benefits of such research would be for humanity. Following deontological ethics thus has the potential to place constraints on what the researcher can do as the people being researched takes precedence over the research itself.

Combining consequentialist and deontological ethics presents a potential for conflict as a concern with the consequences of an action could be in conflict with an action that should be enacted as a moral right, e.g. telling the truth (Pring, 2002, p. 118-119). This may not just be a question of the benefits to society of not telling the truth as in Milgram’s research. Telling the truth may not be beneficial to the person being told the truth. A clear example of this is in medical ethics where informing a terminally ill patient how long they have to live may not be to the patient’s benefit. The protection of the rights of the researched may not benefit all the research participants in a research setting. For example, the exposure of professional malpractice or criminal activity by one person would contradict the right to privacy of this particular research participant but such an exposure could be to the benefit to the others in the research setting. Ethical judgements are a balancing act between the creation of knowledge that benefits humanity and the just treatment of the researched. Built into this balancing act is the Western philosophical concern with the protection of individual autonomy whether as a fundamental goal in Kantian deontological ethics or whether from the utilitarian perspective that such protection can only be upheld if it maximises benefits (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 22). These two branches of ethics are hugely influential on the creation of research ethics principles and subsequent research codes enacted by professional bodies and institutional

review boards. Moreover, they can provide the individual researcher with guidance on how to make ethical judgements during the research process.

2.2 Ethical Principles and Practices

With the starting point of individual autonomy, Western research ethics developed principles as core building blocks of ethical practice. In the relationship between the consequentialist and deontological ethics, Murphy & Dingwall (2001) see a synergy rather than a dichotomy. They identify in Beauchamp et al's (1982, p. 18-19 cited in Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 339) four research principles that are a direct link between theory and principle. The principles of *non-maleficence* (avoidance of harm to participants) and *beneficence* (research produces positive and identifiable benefit) are essentially consequentialist; while the principles of *autonomy* (the respect of participants' values and decisions) and *justice* (equal treatment of people) are essentially deontological. These principles when applied to actual research raise a number of issues which from the qualitative perspective of Punch (1994, p. 89) revolve "around issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data." Whilst the potential harm of research in the natural sciences typified in biomedical research may be more obvious, both physical and psychological harm could be a by-product of social research particularly in-depth qualitative field research (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 340-342). Moreover, I would argue that any threat to autonomy (for example deception, invasion of privacy, disrespect of confidentiality, or unequal treatment) is a form of harm even if it may be less psychologically damaging than say psychologically-stressful experiments as exemplified by Milgram.

Autonomy, the first major ethical principle, as a deontological basic liberty sees its assurance through the enactment of informed consent. Informed consent is undoubtedly the central principle of research ethics applied in practice in codes of ethics (Burgess, 1989, p. 64; Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 24; Homan, 2002, p. 24; McNamee, 2002, p. 2). In order for a research project to go ahead, informed consent requires that the research subjects give their *consent* to participate in the research of their own free will without coercion or undue persuasion while being fully *informed* of the nature and purpose of the research as well as what participation in the research will and might involve (Homan, 1991, p. 69; Punch, 1994, p. 90; Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 24). Furthermore, in order to give consent, research subjects must be able to comprehend the *informed* element and are able to make a rational and mature judgements on their consent (Homan, 1991, p. 69). The consequence of this is that potential subjects cannot be accepted for research even if they give consent if they are unable to understand the *informed* element (e.g. children) or if their position puts in doubt their ability to give autonomous *consent*

(e.g. prisoners) (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 25). Although in practice, informed consent is given by others deemed capable of providing *informed consent* to those not able to do so (e.g. children's parents). If consent is not given or if the researched are not fully informed, then to less or greater extent the researcher is performing an act of deception.

The second major principle for research ethics is privacy. Privacy is protected in research practice through the adherence to anonymity (ensuring that identity-specific data is not collected) and confidentiality (ensuring that identity-specific data is not revealed) (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 25). Privacy can be conceptualised as a form of autonomy in the sense that the publication of sensitive data could affect a person's life (e.g. their employment) whilst it can also be conceptualised as an intrinsic value connected to human dignity which is a basic human need (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 25). In research practice however, these differences become less important as privacy in the informed consent process should reveal to the researched how their privacy will and could be affected as well as explaining how their anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 25-26). Thus privacy becomes part of the subject's exercise of their autonomy. The researched gives consent to having aspects of their life invaded by the researcher. The very act of investigating human behaviour is the invasion of the privacy of the investigated.

So far this discussion of principles and practice has focussed on the treatment of the researched by the researcher. Another area to be considered is how the researcher conducts him or herself in their work in terms of the honesty and rigour that is applied to the knowledge-making process and the broader issue of doing research itself. Kimmel (1988, p. 40) makes it clear that ethical problems in social research concern "proper conduct related to the processes and consequences of research and procedure." Such proper conduct, in addition to the treatment of participants, concerns "the responsibility to society, and integrity in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data" (Kimmel, 1988, p. 40). The maintenance of personal integrity is thus the avoidance of research misconduct primarily in such areas as plagiarism, data fabrication, misrepresentation (Howe and Moses, 1999, p. 26-32). On the one hand, this area of research ethics concerns professional conduct and indeed links can be made to the literature on professionalism which deals with how professionals are committed to their work (e.g. Friedson, p. 1994). On the other hand, a 'responsibility to society' suggests that researchers and their disciplines are servants to society in that the work they do should be for society and the knowledge they create should have value for society, while the creation of such knowledge should be carried out with integrity and respect for human research subjects. This responsibility to society goes beyond how research is carried out to a consideration of what kind of knowledge should be created, how should this knowledge be created, for what

purpose, and for whose needs. This is a broader ethics that poses the question of why do we do the research we do. From a consequentialist perspective, it is for maximising benefits to society but does research benefit all in society, and in what ways? Deontological ethics particularly in Rawls' (1971) notion of *justice for fairness* could be possible response to this question whereby research aims to ensure social justice. However, to answer these questions more fully, a political dimension to research ethics becomes evident in considering what research is for as well as an epistemological dimension in considering how one creates knowledge.

2.3 The Institutionalisation of Ethics: Codes of Practices & IRBs

The practical application of ethics is typically seen in a discipline's code of practice. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2015) code of practice is often taken as a model being one of the earliest codes to develop after the second world war (Anderson, 2017). It encompasses both research and practice in the profession in terms of prescriptions of acceptable behaviour. Thus codes of practice can be used as a means to discipline practitioners and researchers who do not act 'ethically' as defined by the profession. One can see in APA principles a clear link to the ethics so far discussed: the influence of consequentialist ethics in beneficence and nonmaleficence; a whole range of deontological concerns in fidelity, justice respect, integrity and responsibility. Responsibility is also part of a broader notion that scientific and professional knowledge produced and used is of benefit not just to individuals but society more generally. Beyond providing guidance to researchers and professionals, codes help to create a research identity and delineate a discipline's boundaries (Coady & Bloch, 1996 cited in Thomas, 2009, p. 499). However, this is always in very general terms. More detailed discussion of a discipline's ethics at all levels reside in explorations at a more academic level in publications and conferences.

The role of institutional review boards (IRBs) is simply for institutions where research is conducted to have ethical protocols that must be adhered to for a researcher to gain approval for their work to be carried out (Kimmel, 2007). IRBs are not locations of complex ethical discussion rather they typically provide a safety check on research to be carried in terms of documentation to be completed by the researcher that is reviewed at a 'board' meeting. They are a safeguard to legal action and/or negative media coverage if a piece of research turns out to be unethical.

2.4 Ethics in Qualitative Research and the Critical Turn

The understanding of ethics in both theory and practice has been challenged since the late 1960s by both the rise of the qualitative research paradigm in social science and the concomitant 'critical turn' (Anderson, 2017, p. 61-62). The

dynamic process of qualitative research means that projects are often in conflict with prescriptions of IRBs (Punch, 1994, p. 89) in the sense that research is cyclical (Spradley, 1980, p. 29) and open-ended (Howe and Moses, 1999, p. 40) leading to research designs being quite different to the original proposal approved by an IRB. Problems also arise because of the nature of field work which requires forming relationships with the researched (Burgess, 1989, p. 60); because of the difficulty of carrying out consistent informed consent in a fluid research setting; because of dealing with findings that reveal unethical behaviour (e.g. criminal activity, professional misconduct); and because of conflicts between the researcher's perceptions of participants' best interest with their own self-perception (Murphy & Dingwall, 1991, p. 340). Codes of practice and IRBs were developed to suit the linear quantitative research design with a researcher-subject neutral distance. Compared to quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers require a far stronger, ongoing ethical reflexivity (Howe and Moses, 1999, p. 40).

Informed consent, deception, and respondent validation are three areas which show that qualitative research does not fit comfortably into conventional ethical practice. Informed consent is built on the idea of agreement being given prior to the research taking place. What is required in qualitative research is more of an ongoing communication (Sieber, 1992, p. 38). Pre-research informed consent does not take account of the participant-researcher relationship (Wax, 1982, p. 44 cited in Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 41) nor the 'open-ended' and intimate nature of qualitative work (Murphy & Dingwall, 1991, p. 342; Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 42). Deception is a particularly grey area within qualitative research which can be considered acceptable from a consequential perspective of the benefits of knowledge creation particularly when revealing unethical behaviour such as racism (Kimmel, 1988, p. 76; Punch, 1994, p. 91). In this case, knowledge creation produces the benefit of social justice (Griffiths, 1998, p. 135-136). The key issue is then how much information about the focus of the research is revealed. To a certain extent many researchers do not reveal very detailed aspect of the research (Homan, 1991, p. 73) and this something that a researcher has to weigh up in doing the research (Punch, 1994, p. 91).

Respondent validation, the process of a researcher revealing their findings to the researched so that they can comment on them (Seale, 1999, p. 61-72), is beyond its validating function (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 373-374) a means of participants being informed of the themes of the research and contributing more directly to them (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 388; Sieber, 1992, p. 39; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280-281). Such a practice can be problematic because a researcher's interpretation of reality may differ from the participants' version (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 342-343). Furthermore, data itself is an abstraction of reality and therefore open to disagreement. Of more concern is that revealing findings to participants within a power dynamic may be used by those with

power over those they have control, e.g. a head teacher over teachers (Burgess, 1989, p. 71-73) while a negative reaction from participants could have a negative effect on any further data collection (Anderson, 2017, p. 69-70).

The critical turn itself has questioned norms in ethics to an even greater extent. Emerging in the 1980s and 1990s and influenced by critical theory, constructivism, post-modernism, post-structuralism and feminist theory, it questioned many of the precepts of the knowledge-making process in social research in terms of the nature of truth, objectivity, power, and the researcher-researched dichotomy (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996, p. 10-22; Lather, 2001). Whilst the critical turn (also known as the interpretative turn) cannot be easily summarised due to its range and complexity, it is built around a rejection of positivism's notion of the separation of fact and value; and the separation between the objective researcher and the researched. From this can be concluded that research cannot be neutral and is value laden; and that the researcher is part of the research, which means that all researchers need to take an ethical perspective of what they are doing, and for whose benefit.

3 THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

3.1 The Peripheral Role of Ethics

Whilst ethics has played a key role in social science research and in the development of discipline-based professions such as psychology, ethics has had a far more peripheral role in second language education in terms of research and practice particularly from the perspective of global spread of English and English language teaching. This is revealed in my examination of how ethics is dealt with in professional and research websites; text books; and journals (Anderson, 2017). In professional and research association websites (British, North American, European and international), ethics is covered to a far lesser extent (and sometimes not at all) when compared to equivalent websites in psychology, sociology and education. A very similar pattern was found with research methods textbooks and discipline handbooks. When looking at journals, I only found three that had devoted a whole or part of a special issues to the subject which again is in stark contrast to other disciplines. In education, for example, there is a great deal published on ethics whether in terms of books (e.g. McNamee & Bridges, 2002; Simons & Usher, 2000; Tschudin, 1994; Burgess, 1989) or in journals (e.g. *Ethics and Education*; *Ethics and Education Research*; *Education, Policy and Ethics*) devoted to the subject.

The treatment of ethics in the second language education literature is not consistent (Thomas, 2009, p. 496). Ethics is dealt with more in qualitatively-oriented work. This very much relates to the aforementioned discussion of the greater sensitivity to ethics in qualitative research and its relationship to the critical

turn and can be seen in critical (applied) linguistics (Block, 2003; Pennycook, 2001; Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 413); a turn that has been particularly felt in TESOL (Anderson, 2003b) while language testing, with its own ethical concerns in practice, has also had a critical turn (Shohamy, 1998; 2001). The qualitative, critical turn has seen ethics gradually play a more important role, which can be seen by the fact there is a tendency for the more recent research methods texts books to cover it and be can be seen by the fact of the publication of the first book devoted to applied linguistics and ethics (De Costa, 2015). Nevertheless, despite these changes, compared to disciplines such as education its presence is still peripheral.

The causes of this peripheral role can be linked to the historical disciplinary link to applied linguistics and linguistics (Anderson, 2017). Linguistics, in the European tradition, has looked to structuralism as its theoretical underpinning where language is dealt with entirely in terms of its internal structure and thus without reference to its cultural, social, historical and political contexts (Pennycook, 1994, p. 121). With the primary focus on language rather the users of language who, for example in theoretical linguistics are reduced to an abstracted ideal (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3), the consideration of ethics has not been a tradition (Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 413). This has carried over into applied linguistics which has been equally supported by positivism as an epistemology dominating how research is carried out (Holliday, 1996; Pennycook, 1994, p. 123-126). The result of this has been a tradition of quantitative research on language and the psycholinguistic determinates of language production and acquisition whose data derives from natural language data and various measures of second language competence and performance (Anderson, 2017, p. 67). Within this research paradigm which manages to separate language from their human users in terms of their identities, cultures and societies, “it is evident that the role and position of the researched is something that needs less consideration” (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the critical turn began to influence applied linguistics in the 1990s (Anderson, 2003b). One shift has been for researchers to rely less on linguistics as a basis for their work drawing on, for example, sociology, anthropology, education, communication, cultural studies and politics. The move has been then to place humans more at the centre of language use, learning and teaching. Ethics now plays two roles. Firstly, in applying issues of language use and learning to the real world, as for example in language education, there is consideration of what happens in these real world contexts is ethical, i.e. what practitioners do in their work. Secondly, what researchers do when the research human beings on their language use and learning is ethical

3.2 A Model of Ethics in Second Language Education

Drawing on what has been discussed so far, it is possible to create a model of how ethics should function in research and practice in a profession-based

discipline such as second language education (figure 1). At the centre there is *ethics* as a field of philosophy which provides the theories and ideas to generate ethical principles for research and practice. These ethical *principles* can be found at the level of institution, discipline, practitioner and researcher.

Institutional Ethics are located in both the professional associations a practitioner and researcher may belong to, and in the actual institutions where they work (e.g. school or university). There is the official production of ethical principles, guidelines and protocols in academic and professional *Association Codes of Ethics*, and in *Institutional Review Board* regulations and practice. *Discipline Ethics* concerns the application of ethical principles to the broader ethical concerns within a discipline such as what constitutes the sphere of activity and knowledge-base of a discipline and its professional practice as; what constitutes appropriate research within a discipline; what makes up its professional standards and so forth. Whilst in *Association Codes of Practice* these norms are explicitly codified, these norms are implicitly codified in the *Qualifications, Training & Accreditation* for its practitioners and researchers; and even more indirectly in the observable artefacts and behaviour of a discipline and profession as seen in its *Material Culture, Documentation & Practices*: in other words, the objects that they make and use, the texts they create and consume; and the professional behaviour of its researchers and practitioners. These elements are themselves discoverable through ethnographic research (cf. Anderson, 2003a).

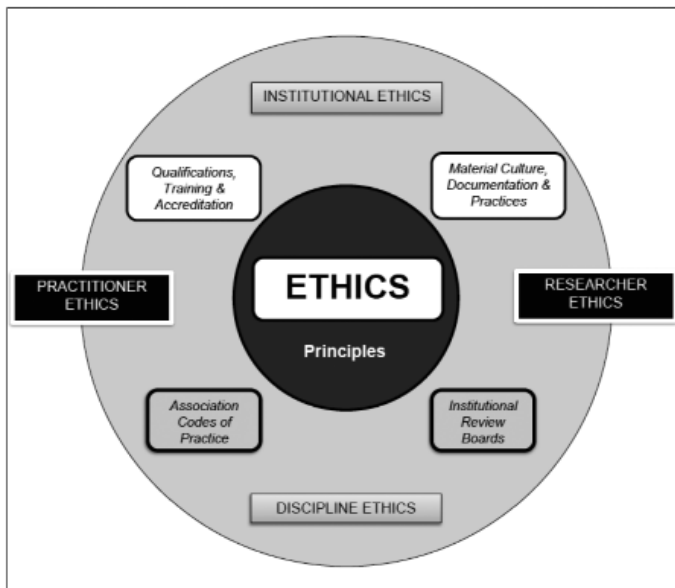


Figure 1: A Model of Research Ethics

Practitioners' and researchers' work is guided consciously and unconsciously by their personal ethics which is influenced by institutional ethics, discipline ethics and broader ethical principles. Thus we have *Practitioner Ethics* and *Researcher Ethics*. On the one hand, institutional and discipline ethics have a very normative influence on researchers and practitioners in that they provide prescriptive rules, codes and norms of behaviour. On the other hand, ethical principles can be used as tools when the researcher is confronted with ethical dilemmas and problems at any stage of the research process seeking possible resolutions through their application. A very similar process can be used by teachers when confronted with ethical dilemmas in their work.

There is no sense of hierarchy or linearity in this model. Each type of ethics in the outer circle, *Institutional*, *Discipline*, *Researcher* and *Practitioner* can draw on each other for their practices, while each of them can draw on the same or different areas of philosophical ethics and ethical principles. For example, a researcher may draw on guidance in codes of practice or from IRB regulations, or may draw on broader ethical debates within the discipline. Similarly, codes of practice may draw on the broader debates in the discipline, IRB regulations, and ethical experiences of researchers in the discipline and practitioners in the profession. Finally, IRBs may look to codes of practice, disciplinary debates, and ethical experiences of researchers at their institution for guidance in the creation or improvement to their protocols.

4 ETHICAL ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The above model indicates how ethics can function, but does not indicate the way in which it functions which may not be harmonious. For example, as already discussed, the prescriptions of IRBs and association codes of practice do not reflect the ethical complexity of the qualitative researcher in the field. What is even more telling is the peripheral role of ethics means that this model is more an ideal than a reality when applied to second language education. This section therefore considers some examples of the kind of issues and questions from my own professional experience as teacher, researcher and teacher educator that illustrate the importance of ethics should have for the profession.

4.1 In Research

My doctoral research demonstrates the struggles that occur in a discipline which does not have a tradition of ethics. This was an ethnographic study on the professional lives of a group of ESOL teachers working at an institution of higher education in the UK (Anderson, 2003a). The study concerned

professionalism in TESOL investigating the teachers' professional practices and their understandings of these practices, and how this relates to the wider professional discourses and cultures of TESOL. While this study did address ethical issues and was a work very much influenced by the critical turn, I lacked knowledge in ethics to deal adequately with some of the ethical dilemmas I faced. Using my thesis as a case study on a qualitative research methods course for doctoral students and staff at my university was a learning process for me as researchers from other disciplines were often quite critical at how I dealt with ethics arguing that their own disciplines are far more rigorous and exacting about the application of principles and procedures. It was in fact this reaction that motivated me to explore ethics further in terms theory, practice and in terms of its peripheral role in second language education.

Ethical principles were applied to the study using literature from outside the discipline to inform the process of gaining access to the field with informal informed consent gained from staff but not students. The problem with informed consent was that there was a high turnover of both staff and students at the research location which made getting continuous informed consent difficult once participant observation had begun. In hindsight, not gaining the consent of the students; not having all the teachers full consent; and not having consent in writing were all examples of inadequate application of ethical principles, which were not identified by my supervisors. Ethical principles also informed how I negotiated data collection in the field respecting participants' autonomy to decide when and where this could take place. Finally, ethical principles were applied to how I managed my relationship with participants in the field. Respect for the participants guided the negotiation of roles as well as the development and maintenance of relationships. This meant respecting their needs and wants; their right to autonomy and privacy; their practices and beliefs; and treating all participants equally. Although, underlying this is the simple problem that not all the participants gave full informed consent.

The major ethical dilemma, however, was an outcome of the relationships I had developed with the participants. Having interpersonal relationships with participants is an ethical conundrum in the sense that developing 'friendships' in the field is a strategy, a way to extract information (Crick, 1992, p. 176-177) so could be considered as manipulative (Murphy & Dingwell, 2001). The dilemma was in how I dealt with communicating the themes of the research to them. I had abandoned my initial plan to use respondent validation because at that stage of the research, my initial data and findings were the beginnings of a critique of the profession's discourse and culture. Avoiding the emergent themes was something I also did when

giving the aims of my research to the participants at the beginning of each piece of fieldwork. Whilst I made it clear to them what my general aims were, as the focus shifted I did not specify that it was emerging into a critique of the professional discourse. I was also evasive when participants asked me about the themes of my research in the field.

My rationale for avoiding explicitly communicating the research themes was that as this critique was still in its nascent stages, I was not particularly confident at the time of articulating the things I found wrong with the profession that were being revealed in the findings and my reading. For the teachers in respondent validation, such data and/or findings could have been interpreted as critical of their practices and beliefs. Beyond the fact that this could have led to a defensive reaction when giving their responses, I was extremely concerned that the participants' negative reactions would make it more difficult to get further data from the research setting because it would harm the relationships we had developed. My critique was of the wider profession and its discourse rather than a critique of the teachers in the study who I considered to be highly-competent doing their jobs with complete integrity. I believed such subtle distinctions would be hard to communicate to the teachers whilst it would require concepts from the literature which would not have been easy to explain to people unfamiliar with them (Seale 1999: 63). The nature of the research setting made this more complex because I was an insider, not only a fellow ESOL teacher, but an ongoing part-time member of staff. Revealing my findings could have not only affected my chances of collecting further data, but also my professional relationships (and potentially chances of future employment) as well as my personal relationships, as I counted some of the participants as not just colleagues but as friends. Behaving honestly in the field is a supportable aim, but in practice the context makes for ambiguity and difficulty; thus "some deception, passive or active, enables you to get at data not obtainable by other means" (Punch, 1994, p. 91).

What can be seen in this example is how ethics permeates throughout a qualitative second language education research project. The initial gaining of informed consent is only a starting point. An important consideration is that I often felt ill-equipped to deal with the ethical dilemmas I faced; an inadequacy that I believe was partly due to coming from a discipline where ethics had a peripheral role. The rationale I provide above is something I developed after leaving the field rather than while doing the research. Indeed, in the comfort of hindsight, I believe that I made several poor ethical judgements which I may have avoided if I had been in a discipline that where ethics was more centrally placed.

4.2 In Practice

In the classroom, practitioners can be faced with a whole range of ethical tensions and issues at four different levels. In the classroom, tensions can occur between teachers and students because on the one hand teachers may have the desire to respect students' autonomy in terms of their cultures, identities, needs so forth, but the rights of the student may contradict the greater good of learning itself. For example, I taught a group of Chinese English language teachers on a teacher development course who carried out a research project interviewing Chinese students studying English at my institution. Their findings were that the students found the methodology to be 'childish' focussing on speaking activities such as games, group work and discovery learning, and not what they considered to be 'serious study'. This clash between students' perceived needs and their actual needs is further complicated by the commodification of education where the student is constructed as the customer (Anderson, 2003a). The student as customer raises a further difficulty when students display behaviour or beliefs that contradict established ethical norms. For examples, I have had student teachers report on students displaying racist views and refusing to work with other students because of their gender.

The second level of ethical tensions is between teachers and institutions. Institutions, whether public or private, can dictate various aspects of how a teacher does their job thus threatening their professional autonomy. I have witnessed in observing teacher practice teachers struggling to teach good lessons when obstructed by a prescribed syllabus and materials. Another ongoing issue is the discrimination of non-native speaker teachers whether in recruitment or in job contracts. Often at the centre of these tensions is the student as customer being driving force for management policy and decisions, which can be to the detriment of education (Anderson, 2003a).

At the third level is tensions between teachers and government. For example, the UK Conservative government has reacted to anti-immigrant feeling amongst some of its core voters by developing proposals such as forcing immigrants to learn English (Shepherd, 2011). Yet, while some teachers may object to forcing someone to learn there is a counterargument that learning English is liberating particularly for immigrant wives in patriarchal communities who do not speak English. Another example is the contradiction between testing and curricula where a national curriculum may prescribe a more communicative approach but the testing requires more traditional teaching (e.g. in Japan). The final tension is between teachers and the profession-discipline. Teachers are faced with what choices to make when confronted with wider debates at the academic level which are ongoing. For example, whether the target for students should be native-like competence or lingua-franca competence.

5 CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the role and importance of ethics in second language education for both researchers and practitioners, but from the starting point of research ethics. Ethics should be part of the daily decision making for all those working in the profession, yet it has taken peripheral role. Furthermore, ethics plays an essential role in how a discipline considers what its field of knowledge and practice is; in how the discipline should be carried out; and in how its practitioners and researchers should behave. The peripheral role has been counterbalanced by a rising interest from qualitative researchers in second language education, critical applied linguistics and language testing. Thus there has been a slow historical shift over the last twenty-five years of bringing ethics from the periphery to the centre. Yet compared to other disciplines within the social sciences this role is still relatively peripheral. It is essential that second language practitioners and researchers should engage more. This engagement needs to be at every level as described in the aforementioned model. The final section provides examples of the sort of ethical issues, tensions and dilemmas professionals face. A discipline that has ethics at its centre can guide and support its members in this hazardous process of negotiating a complex terrain.

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