

ELT-31

Culture and the Language Classroom

Milestones in ELT

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The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

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Culture and the Language Classroom

This 1990 collection of papers looks at contexts of language teaching from educational and cultural perspectives, starting from the premise that language teaching is not 'value free or ransparent'. Authors of the various chapters discuss issues including values and beliefs enshrined in English; power relationships and the use of English; stereotyping and representations in textbooks; teaching techniques; cross-cultural behaviour and students' attitudes in the classroom; beliefs about education, and what comprises 'knowledge' and 'culture' – as well as views on 'high' and 'low' culture; deculturation, acculturation and bilingualism.

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Culture and the Language Classroom

Edited by: Brian Harrison

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Culture and the Language Classroom

ELT Documents 132

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Preface

Brian Harrison

Culture, both in itself and as it impinges on the language classroom, is seen in the following pages as many-faceted. Thus we are concerned not only with the views and achievements of peoples, Anglo-Saxon or not, but also with how these views and achievements are transmitted. We do not neglect either the effects of transmission, both on the societies from whom, through their language, 'culture' flows, and on the societies who receive it, and who, probably, modify it in the receipt. We are concerned with the procedural culture of the classroom itself, and how that culture mirrors, or struggles against, wider societal views of what learning is and what education is. We are concerned with the effect of political decisions on the content of language teaching programmes. We are obviously concerned with language teaching materials, and how adequately they reflect, or how they distort, the culture they purport to represent. We are concerned with overt censorship via ideology and self-censorship through omission, unconscious or deliberate.

We would assert that, historically, language teachers have been more concerned with techniques than content and in this they do not resemble, let us say, teachers of literature or sociology. Language teaching is, in a sense, a subject in search of subject matter; that subject matter could, or should be, culture, not merely the 'high' culture of literature, but, as expressed above, the views of a people, its variety and its essence.

If there is one proposition on which all the contributors to this book agree, it is that teaching a language is not a value-free, or transparent, activity. What we do in the language classroom is affected by who we are, the views we hold, and the societies we are part of. This will be so however askance, as individuals, we may look at dominant views in these same societies.

Thus Robin Barrow, in the first paper in the book, argues that we do indeed present values and beliefs when we teach English, and the values and beliefs enshrined in English may be different from those enshrined in other languages. He questions, however, the claim sometimes made that this process must necessarily be pernicious or imperialistic. Doug Holly would assent to the first of these propositions but would regard

as merely Platonic an argument which neglects power relationships within societies, and what English is used for. Joyce Valdes, in a survey of materials and practices mainly in the United States, assents to the indivisibility of culture and language.

Jane and Michael Clarke in their article on the important question of stereotyping, consider the extent to which representations of society in language textbooks are partial, how that partiality arises and what might be its effects. In my own paper on the teaching of literature I raise two questions: to what extent are literary texts penetrable to readers from a different culture and how might one approach and select literary texts for the foreign language classroom. Martin Cortazzi discusses cross-cultural behaviour in the classroom and how previous learning experiences can influence views on what is being taught and on the teacher's role; the article questions what one might describe as naive transferability, the assumption, perhaps prevalent amongst syllabus designers, that what works well in one society will work well in another.

We then have case studies from different societies. Euan Reid looks at ESL teaching in Britain, and the links between the kind of teaching that has gone on in the last few decades and British views about the culture of minority communities. Michael Byram looks at the effects of language programmes on pupils' views of foreign societies; Roy Dunning considers teaching and learning styles and the effects, via educational politics, of decisions about what counts as knowledge. Pamela Fearey and Olga Lalor write about textbooks and materials selection in the Soviet Union. Mildred Thiyaga Rajah in an article on TESOL in Malaysia looks at the effect of the wider social and political milieu on what is taught, how it is received and how English is used. She also argues that, at least in Malaysia, English is seen instrumentally rather than as a vehicle for an alien culture. Marion Myhill looks at teaching materials designed for New Australians and the oldest Australians of all, the Aboriginal population.

In the last paper Arvind Bhatt writes a personal account of processes, deculturation and acculturation, bilingualism where first one and then another language is dominant, which most of the other contributors have only had to consider intellectually.

Finally, by way of a public health warning, if language teaching is not value-free then neither are these essays about language teaching. Some might be construed as conservative, or supporting the status quo, others are certainly of the Left. (It is not part of the editorial function to state which is which; readers can interpret the texts for themselves.) Authors, however, are responsible for their own views. Considering the volume as a whole, it is neither accidental nor tokenistic that contributors come from various racial backgrounds and both genders. Virtues embodied, then, are pluralism, a belief in rationality, constructive scepticism and absence of dogma.

Culture, Values and the Language Classroom

Robin Barrow

On the face of it, teaching English, whether to ethnic minorities in English-speaking countries or to members of non-English speaking countries, stands in little need of justification. The ability to speak the language of the country in which one lives has obvious value; but English is also useful for those whose mother tongue it is not, given that it is the second most widely used language in the world. It has an unsurpassed richness in terms of vocabulary, and hence in its scope for giving precise and detailed understanding of the world. However, it seems that we sometimes get cold feet in this enterprise and worry about our right to proceed, largely out of fear of what may be termed 'cultural imperialism'. Are we not guilty, the suggestion goes, of imposing the values and beliefs of the English-speaking western world on individuals and countries whose traditions are quite different? In this paper I shall argue that we do indeed transmit particular values and beliefs by teaching English as a Second Language, but that to some extent this is inevitable, that in respect of some values and beliefs it is desirable, and that therefore it is not something about which we should feel guilty.

Any programme of teaching involves behaving in ways that may shape values and beliefs. At the very least, teachers provide exemplars of particular attitudes, assumptions and values. Such exemplars may, of course, make little impact or even prove counter-productive; but, by and large, the historical record would seem to suggest that they are quite influential. Some teachers, such as missionaries, have quite deliberately sought to instill particular beliefs and values. But even those who do not are bound to represent certain values, even if they are only procedural values such as a belief in rationality or impartiality, by the mere fact of teaching what they teach in the way in which they teach it. When it comes to teaching a language, ultimately one teaches the distinctions that are recognised by and are important to those who normally speak the language, one teaches types and ways of reasoning, and one almost certainly, more indirectly but more

specifically, promotes particular substantive values through the material one uses.

Whether or to what extent and in what ways language and thought are logically inseparable is perhaps open to debate. But it seems clear that as a matter of contingent fact people's ability to think and the quality of their thinking is co-extensive with their command of a language, provided we accept the obvious qualification that command of language is not necessarily to be identified with the capacity to articulate it publicly. In other words, while one of course recognises that some people who cannot express themselves well publicly, perhaps because they are shy, or mute or suffer some speech defect, can nonetheless think clearly, the argument would be that, insofar as they think, they will be doing so by means of or through the medium of some language. What they are capable of thinking will therefore be delimited by their grasp of the language in question. To think intelligently about existentialism, physics, or stamp-collecting involves grasping the concepts central to these areas and appreciating their logic. To grasp the concepts requires labelling them. At any rate, I find the idea of somebody having a concept of, say, love, without any word, sign or symbol for demarcating it unintelligible. To understand the existentialist concepts of bad faith and *angst* requires knowing what these words mean in the existentialist tradition. I may add that for the purposes of this argument, if anyone doubts this thesis, a weaker one will suffice: one obvious way, and the only way that we have any control over, to develop a conceptual grasp of the world is to provide understanding of the language that encapsulates our understanding to date. In short, and by way of example, if we wish to enable people to understand laws of science or principles of aesthetics or religious faith, the obvious way forward would seem to be to give them understanding of the language of these subjects. Conversely, while I do not claim and do not in fact believe it to be the case, that an individual is logically incapable of discovering and appreciating the laws of science in a culture that has no developed scientific discourse, it would seem highly unlikely in fact that many, if any, would do so. For such an individual would have to generate for himself all that is now enshrined in the scientific discourse that has been developed over centuries by numberless individuals, each building on the work of predecessors. (Barrow, 1982)

If we concede that in practice the manner and extent of people's thinking is governed by the limits of their language, it follows that different languages may make a material difference to the nature of thought in different communities. Particular communities may vary in what they think worth reasoning about and, as a consequence, fail to develop a language for reasoning about certain things. This, in turn, will inhibit and restrict the chances of developed or refined thought about those things. For example, classical Greek indicates a concern with, and allows for sophisticated reasoning about, individual freedom, which the contemporaneous language of the Persians does not. Similarly, the various languages associated with Islamic culture reflect this association,

inasmuch as they are dominated by certain words and concepts rather than others. The Latin word 'gravitas' may be roughly translated as 'gravity' or 'dignity', but to be Roman or to learn the Latin language involves arriving at a different and far more subtle, rich and distinctive concept of 'gravitas' than could ever be conveyed by and amongst English speakers using the word 'gravity'. To learn Latin is, therefore, amongst other things, to come to conceive of and see value in 'gravitas', which is an experience that is not necessarily vouchsafed by learning English. Some cultures incline more or less to what we would term religious explanation at the expense of scientific explanation. Some cultures incline to particular ideological explanations of psychology or sociology and hence do not develop these disciplines in the same way as other cultures. Consequently I concede that in teaching English to those for whom it is a second language we may be promoting different ways of thinking and different values from those with which they are familiar.

Now what is wrong with this? Why should it be pejoratively termed a form of imperialism? In the first place, having conceded the point in principle, I may be forgiven for raising the question of how real a problem it is in practice. Are we really to believe that Saudi Arabians or French Canadians are so different from us that our language alone will completely re-orientate the view of life they have gained through acquisition of their native language? Since this is a contingent question that would require detailed empirical study of various particular languages, I will not pursue it here. I merely re-iterate that while there may be some cultures whose language is so different from ours that in teaching them English we literally shatter their world view, and while it is conceded that the structure of, say, Greek, reveals different beliefs and values as compared with, say, Latin, by and large English would seem merely to lead to different emphases, priorities and capacities when contrasted with the sort of first languages that we usually encounter. The Inuit, we are constantly reminded, have several different words for 'snow' and lack a vocabulary of literary criticism. But in learning English the Inuit are not culturally demolished: they can still make the fine distinctions between types of snow that is useful to their way of life, and they add the capacity to make fine distinctions in respect of literature.

A related point worth raising here is that some of the claims made about different ways of thinking appear to confuse what cultures are interested in doing and what they are capable of doing. For instance, it has been said more than once that some cultures do not have the concept of contradiction. But in any suggested instances, it invariably transpires that what is actually being claimed is that a particular culture does not approve of contradiction in social intercourse. This is something quite different from not having the concept of contradiction, which would imply that if members of the culture were to be involved in argument, they would be unperturbed by reasoning of the form: "x is the case and -x is the case". I do not believe there has ever been any such culture, and

if there were (though this is a point to be developed below) I should unhesitatingly suggest that something be done about it. What does of course happen is that cultures vary in their ability to recognise, or in their assessment of, particular contradictions. But here (and again this will be developed below) one should surely be concerned to consider whether particular cultures are *correct* in failing to see a contradiction where others see one, rather than to glibly assume that whether one recognises a contradiction or not is a mere matter of cultural preference.

A similar example is provided by those who argue that the West African Kpelle tribe do not accept the basic laws of syllogistic reasoning. Apparently, if one says to a member of this tribe "All Kpelle men are farmers. Mr Smith is not a rice farmer. Is he a Kpelle man?" one will meet the response "As to that I can't say. I have not met Mr Smith". Well, as to that I say: this at best shows that the Kpelle are not inclined to reason syllogistically or that they do not appreciate its force, rather than that they cannot or that the logic of valid syllogistic reasoning somehow doesn't apply in West Africa. Would a Kpelle man, for instance, assume that his newborn child might be able to lift tables, prior to observing him? Or would he assume that his child would not be able to on the grounds that no child can lift tables? And if the Kpelle really believe that the syllogism in question is invalid they are mistaken. (The truth, I hazard, is that they don't like to reason syllogistically about Mr Smith because they appreciate (correctly) that the premiss may be false.) (Anderson, 1984)

At this point, then, I want to accept the view that different languages do enshrine different values, different beliefs and different ways of thinking; but I also suggest that the differences may be exaggerated, and that some beliefs or values may be inadmissible. The last point leads into what is surely the most interesting aspect of the argument surrounding teaching English as a Second Language: the idea that we ought not to impose on or influence people's ways of thinking.

Prima facie, this is a most peculiar objection to encounter in an educational context. For if education is not about developing people's ways of thinking, it is hard to see what it is about or why we do the various things that we do do. The tighter the connection made between language and thought, the more evident it becomes that all education, and not just second language teaching, necessarily involves presenting particular beliefs and values. So on what grounds might one oppose such practice? The key lines of argument seem to be that it is indoctrination; that it offends against individual rights; and that it ignores the fact of cultural relativism.

- (1) Whether the practice amounts to indoctrination, and whether that matters, depends on what we mean by indoctrination. It would not be appropriate here to launch into an analysis of that concept. But it will be sufficient to point out that if one takes a view such as that the favouring of particular beliefs and values is in itself

indoctrination, then indoctrination is unavoidable and, if for no other reason, it cannot be presumed to be immoral. It does not make sense to presume that one is committed to a belief or value that one never acts upon or refers to. Consequently, nobody can altogether avoid modelling and admitting their commitment to the values and beliefs that they do hold. And, as the old adage has it, "ought implies can". It is for such reasons that those who wish to retain the pejorative implications of the term 'indoctrination' have had to accept some such definition of the term as "the deliberate inculcation of unquestioning commitment to certain (usually 'contentious' or 'unprovable' or 'doctrinal') beliefs". In that sense the teaching of English, whether as a first or second language, clearly need not be indoctrinatory. (Snook, 1972)

- (2) The argument in respect of rights has to be mentioned, because we are currently going through a phase of re-introducing the language of rights in all sorts of contexts (e.g. the rights of non-smokers, the rights of mothers). This is arguably unfortunate, since philosophers, without necessarily endorsing Jeremy Bentham's view that talk of rights is "nonsense walking on stilts", have nonetheless traditionally seen enormous difficulty in this manner of talking. The problem is not that we do not wish to accord people various rights, but that the claim that someone has one doesn't in itself advance an argument. The suggestion that women have a right to an abortion does not add anything to the claim that in the speaker's opinion they ought to be allowed to have one. To substantiate the claim in either form requires lengthy, difficult (and in this case we may say undetermined) argument in the realm of moral philosophy. Furthermore, attempts to specify rights for particular groups, such as non-smokers, have nothing in common with traditional arguments for rights which are concerned with the idea of natural or universal rights — rights, that is to say, that persons have *qua* being persons. We may and do give legal rights to particular groups of people on moral grounds, but the idea of having a natural right to something *qua* being a non-smoker or an Inuit or an Irishman scarcely makes sense. (Wringe, 1981)

Certainly any attempt to argue that teaching which interferes with or modifies the individual's cultural inheritance offends against that person's rights (or the rights of his parents) would need a lot more work than has so far been done. Why should an Asian living in Leicester be presumed to have the right to remain utterly untouched by the ways and demands of that society? Why should an Indonesian or an Englishman be presumed to have the right to refuse to be subject to the influence of other cultural ideas?

There is a tendency for some to attempt to deal with such questions by an appeal to what is natural. An Indonesian is naturally of a certain sort; an Englishman is naturally of another sort. But if there is one concept even more fraught with confusion than that of rights, it is the concept of nature. If one took the argument seriously one would

have to conclude that by rights no society should evolve at all; for, at any given point in history, what is natural to a culture would be fixed in terms of the then current aspects of the society in question — any development, change or modification would, by definition, be unnatural. But surely more serious is the objection that the fact that something *is* the case (and is therefore in one sense natural) is in itself insufficient to permit the conclusion that it *ought* to be the case. (Barrow, 1978)

- (3) All such arguments lead inexorably to the argument that revolves around the issue of cultural relativism. It is feared that steps taken to modify or alter the cultural perspective of an individual or a group unwarrantably imply the superiority of the imposing culture. People do not generally object to imposing beliefs and values accepted as uncontentious within our society on our children, but they sometimes worry about imposing disputed values and object to the idea of imposing our ideas on the children of other cultures which do not share them. And they object, very often, because they subscribe to the view that while cultures may be different, they cannot be distinguished in terms of varying quality or worth. I want to conclude by making various comments on this kind of view.

First, to re-iterate a point made above, we surely exaggerate the shift in world view that our humble efforts may achieve. Learning English does not necessarily destroy the Inuit's, the Indonesian's, or the Asian's commitment to beliefs and values that they otherwise acquire. Rather, we may add something to their inheritance, as familiarity with other languages might add something to ours.

Cultures are undeniably different in some respects. But the fact of difference, the fact of existence, is simply not germane to the question of worth or value. In other words, if there is a case for asserting the equal worth of all cultures, it certainly does not lie in the mere fact of their existence.

Some cultures are superior to others, at least in certain specific respects. Here we come to the nub of the argument. I am inclined to the view that at least in principle some cultures can be said to be superior to others *in general or on balance*. (The point of the qualification 'in principle' is that there is a separate question as to whether particular cultures are indeed superior to certain others. Whereas most people would agree that the Third Reich was culturally inferior to many other cultures, one doubts whether it would be easy to get agreement on the superiority of, say, Canadian culture to American culture. Such difficulties in establishing particular judgements should not be confused with the question of the logical possibility of making any such judgement.) But of more immediate practical significance is the point that evaluative comparisons can certainly be made in respect of specific criteria. That is to say, it would be an instance of relativism gone mad, if one were to pretend that some cultures are not superior to others in respect of their literature, their

morality, their industrial capacity, their agricultural efficiency, their scientific understanding and so forth.

I am not suggesting that teachers of English as a Second Language should see themselves as missionaries for the cultural heritage that is enshrined in the English language or that they should disparage the cultural backgrounds of their students. But I am suggesting that they should have no qualms about the fact that they are directly introducing certain patterns of thought and values to students, and, indirectly, introducing various other beliefs, values and ways of thinking. It is true that at a sophisticated level of language use students will encounter much that is foreign to their thinking, but we can reasonably argue that much of what they are introduced to is desirable, in some instances we may even say superior to alternatives. Besides which, provided we avoid indoctrination, we are not forcing anybody to accept anything: we are merely presenting them with the possibility of thinking in certain ways.

In conclusion, I suggest that self-doubt and fears of cultural imperialism amongst teachers of English as a Second Language are misplaced. English does indeed enshrine a variety of ways of thinking, values and assumptions that may be absent from, or at variance with, the presuppositions of other languages, just as it may fail to recognise certain ways of viewing the world that are implicit in other languages. But, while it is conceded that therefore to teach English may involve changing the way in which people think,

- (i) it does not necessarily do so. Provided that we avoid indoctrination, we are merely providing the opportunity for people to see things in new ways.
- (ii) in the context of teaching English to those who have become citizens of English speaking communities, it would seem entirely reasonable to take active steps to initiate people into the common understandings that the language enshrines.
- (iii) in some particular cases what is implicit in the English language may represent a better or truer way of understanding the world than is represented in certain other languages.
- (iv) the reverse may of course also be true, but there are grounds for associating the richness and diversity of a language with superiority in terms of providing a true perspective, on the principle that the ability to make fine discriminations is part and parcel of subtle and realistic thinking and understanding. English, on these terms, is a relatively powerful language.

If these points are well taken, the teaching of English as a Second Language may properly be regarded as a service and a potential advantage to non-English speakers, rather than as a further exercise in cultural domination.

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The Unspoken Curriculum — or how language teaching carries cultural and ideological messages

Doug Holly

By now Ivan Illich's aphorism 'the hidden curriculum' has become a commonplace in the English-speaking world. Like all such expressions it perhaps conceals more than it reveals. In general terms, I think Illich himself meant to convey that the *overt* curriculum of schools and other establishments where formal education takes place is much less important, in the long run, than the *covert* process of subtle — and sometimes not-so-subtle — repression which is, according to him, their real 'curriculum'.

Whatever one might feel about the intrinsic nature of schools, Illich's phrase contains an important insight: namely, that in the process of attempting to educate, educators may well be in the business also, and quite unintentionally, or alienating, or confusing issues, of conveying repressive, authoritarian/elitist messages. This is a matter which, surely, must fascinate linguists in particular; and in the course of this essay I will be paying special attention to the unintended 'messages' which might well accompany a foreign language, particularly when that language is English, the social vehicle, *par excellence*, of imperialism — old-style *and* new-style. First, however, I want to try and elaborate on the general idea involved, irrespective of the particular content of the teaching/learning encounter.

We should attend first, I think, to the matter of social relations and, in particular, *power* relations. By this I do not have in mind the unequal power implicit in any teacher-taught encounter. For teachers of languages, be they 'natural' or technical, this form of inequality is, certainly at the outset, inevitable. The teacher is in possession of knowledge which the learner lacks and that knowledge — or, at least, the possession of it by the one and not the other participant in the learning encounter — necessarily defines the social relation between them. This truism has, in fact, tended to colour the whole popular perception of

education so that even governments see it as *the* defining characteristic of teaching/learning. It is probably this, more than any Illichian repressive intent, which has made 'schooling' the sadly alienating experience it remains for many. But such a tendency to characterise *all* learning by reference to one rather special kind is itself problematic. Why do people necessarily identify learning in terms of an 'unknown language' passed on from the knowing to the ignorant? Why has this become, so to speak, the defining metaphor in the popular perception of education? And why do governments, in particular, tend to cleave so determinedly to this popular perception — insisting on it against all professional objection on the part of educational theory? The problematic embodied in these questions is the one that I want to make central in what follows. The connection with the specific interests of language teaching is, we see, actually a vital one. I will explore, in due course, the particularity of that connection for *English* teaching as a natural consequence of the argument.

To address the problem directly: what is the force of the knowledgeability/ignorance metaphor and whence does it derive its widespread currency? The force of the metaphor is in its legitimating function and this function follows from its derivation. For the currency of the 'knowledge/ignorance' duality reflects the reality of social life, outside their most immediate circles, for a majority of humanity. The reality of current social orders is of a wide disparity in knowledge and power as between more or less restricted elites and more or less broad masses of people. This holds good whether the dominant political-economic aspiration is socialist or capitalist and whatever the position on some scale of economic 'development' — with the exception, perhaps, of the least developed groups of isolated hunter-gatherers now threatened with imminent extinction. An important fact of life for most people is a perceived or actual inferiority to 'Them'. Whatever national constitutions may assert, the classless society is nowhere in sight. On the contrary, those governments and leading groups formally dedicated to such a society seem, in practice, to be abandoning the idea. Everywhere, entrepreneurial self-sufficiency rather than equity is now the implied goal of such elites. It goes without saying that, for the mass of people in Africa, Asia and South America, the daily reality is one of vast inequality. For such people — and they are a majority of the world's population — inequality seems ordained by the gods. And, as Paulo Freire, an expert in 'Third World' fatalism has pointed out (1985) — it is an attitude shared by the less privileged even in the 'advanced' countries.

As it is today, so it has been throughout recorded history: inequality of knowledge and power is experienced as a fact of existence on a par with mortality and the rotation of the seasons. Small wonder then, that the most widely-held notion of learning sees it as a handing-down of knowledge, an encounter between the inevitably powerful and the inevitably powerless. In this context the 'secret language' metaphor seems to make sense.

Yet, in fact, such a notion basically misconceives the nature of the sort of learning which is specifically human. Such learning, completely inaccessible to even the most intelligent chimpanzee, is what in fact defines *education* as opposed to *training*. For such learning is fundamentally posited — and here linguists may recognise just how deeply involved they are in the whole business of education — on the possession by human beings of a ‘natural’ language of meaning-symbolisation. Such language, I need hardly tell my readers, is not, of course, in the least ‘natural’. It is, on the contrary, entirely social, an artefact of a specifically human social organisation, one based on instrumentality — a consciously transformative engagement with the environment. Such language both reflects and, in turn, is reflected in ‘instrumental’ thinking, thinking derived from interposing instruments — tools, weapons — between purpose and action. It is, in short, *symbol-language*, a language of mental constructs.

It follows that a species defined by instrumental/symbolic language actually learns most effectively in a reflexive, interactive manner. Human learning operates, for the most part, in a way quite distinct from the simple conditioning involved in training — a point completely missed by the dominant school of Western behaviourist psychology but already fully grasped by the early Soviet cognitive psychologist Lev Vygotski (1962).

This digression into learning theory has been prompted by the need to understand the basic social relation of any human learning that is meant to be more than mechanical: a social relation of balance, in which the necessary dynamism is provided and maintained by an interactive tension between the professional intentions of the teacher and the curiosity/motivation of the learner. If there is a slackness in this tension, on either side, the learning process — which is, remember, dynamic — will be to that degree impaired.

It is in this context that we need to see the specific case of language teaching and, particularly, of *English* language teaching. In relation to native speakers, the question of language teaching is everywhere highly political. The intention of teaching a language to those who already have that language is, quite clearly, regulatory. The attempt is to regularise and standardise the use of a received practice in grammar, lexicon, orthography and, often, pronunciation. But the standard usage is not arbitrary: it is always ultimately referable to social power. The exemplar of usage to which the general usage is intended to most closely approximate is always referable to some notion of an elite model and, therefore, naturalises the ideology of elitism itself. For this to be true, it is not at all necessary that the language-model need be actually characteristic of any existent elite group, as is illustrated by current Soviet practice with regard to Russian, where the model concerned is, ironically, referable to a long-defunct aristocracy. Forced linguistic emulation through mass-schooling systems is, in fact, symbolic. Deference to a language form is deference to a necessarily unattainable ideal. In

Victorian Britain insistence on ‘the Queen’s English’ was an obeisance to monarchy and social elevation itself. Everywhere non-standard forms have been regarded with horror by ‘the educated’ as anarchic, potentially subversive of good order and social discipline.

If there are overtones of social valuation in competing forms of a mother tongue, how if the language being acquired is *non-native*? There are two typical situations here. One is illustrated by Shakespeare’s unfortunate contemporaries and their successors for centuries at schools like Stratford Grammar who had, to the accompaniment of much physical chastisement, to acquire the then language of high-status discourse — Latin. It was no doubt the thought of this which caused them to “creep unwillingly to school”. Latin was for centuries a hair shirt which the children of Europe’s ambitious parents were forced to wear in the pursuit of a necessary high-vocational skill. It is a model of language acquisition we will return to in what follows. The other typical situation is illustrated by the experience of later generations of aspirants in England who were forced to undergo rote learning of French which was — and by some, I suspect, still *is* — supposed to confer a social polish on otherwise uncouth adolescents. The result of language-acquisition in such contexts was — and is — bound to convey a profound sense of the alien quality of the language concerned and, by easy transference, to all ‘foreign’ languages. The unspoken curriculum in such learning is that other people’s languages are difficult, uncomfortable and arbitrary, and that the cultures they embody are foreign and undesirable in themselves. It is a direct invitation, in fact, to xenophobia — an invitation eagerly accepted in England. Perhaps sincere internationalists should be calling for a ban of second language teaching . . .

The quotation-marks with which I have, throughout, invested ‘natural’ and ‘naturally’ are intended as a caution against an over-naive conception of language. As I reminded my readers a little earlier, language is not, in fact, a ‘natural’ phenomenon in the biological sense. Sounds and body-language certainly are used by a variety of animal species for communication, but human language, while it may have originated in this way, has become something ontologically different. Starting from Pavlov’s later work on the ‘second-signal’ system and undoubtedly influenced by his contemporaries’ interest in semiotics, the aforementioned Lev Vygotski came to see the close connection between spoken language (*rech*’) and thinking (*mysl*’) both in the mental development of the individual and, more generally, in the species development of humanity. A central point in Vygotskian linguistic psychology is the interplay between an individual’s psychic development and the meaning-system of a language. After Vygotski it should not be possible to treat a ‘natural’ language, however transactional the mode, as simply a mechanical system of communication, like mathematics. One must consider the possibility that all human language necessarily carries a hidden cultural charge. Seen in this way, any given language-use carries a message additional to its simple reference-value, as it were. When I use

'fenêtre' in translation, I cannot, in this sense, use it as an exact equivalent of 'window'. Though for many purposes such translation may be perfectly adequate, nevertheless 'fenêtre' has a cultural history which gives it an emotive force quite distinct from 'window' or 'fenster' or 'okno' — to choose only European examples. And this is not a matter of academic etymology: a word is related to its object-referent via a thought process, a complex of recognition and emotive response which is, outside poetic utterance, usually dormant but which, nevertheless colours our thinking, however faintly.

It is, however, the ideological salience of these cultural nuances that I want to emphasise. If our native language is the material, so to speak, from which our thoughts are constructed, in learning subsequent languages we must beware of culture imperialism — and, even more so, in teaching them. This is particularly true when the 'base-language', if I may so term it, happens to be English, the language of the dominant political-economic system of the modern world.

We must beware of an over-literal 'translationism' which treats words as pure equivalences rather than cultural referents. To ignore the shades of cultural meaning contained in the words of a language, simply on the grounds of transactional adequacy, is to deny the integrity of one or other of the cultures you are trying to put in contact with one another in the act of translation. When one of these cultures aspires to world dominance through its ideas and ideologies, artefacts and preconceptions as does the Anglo-American, then it is inevitably the other language/culture which is reduced by the assumption of equivalence. Herein, of course, lies the importance of wide reading in the language and general cultural contact with its speakers, as far as possible in their native context.

Because we are normally at least subliminally aware of the complexities of our own society and at least potentially alert to its power relations, we are always in danger of underestimating the problem for non-native speakers in this respect. The problem with encountering another society, particularly if our main or even only means of encounter is through fossilised forms, so to speak, is that we are not alert to these political — in the widest sense — overtones. Reading a text or even watching a film — better because the cues are multi-dimensional and include visual messages — is liable to give a very partial (in both senses) view of things unless we are able to submit that text/film to a process of linkage to a wide range of different experiences.

To move to the specific question of the teaching and acquisition of English as a second language. I asked earlier what is the consequence of teaching/learning non-native languages in general. I alluded to the experience of Shakespeare's contemporaries — and generations before and since — with Latin. If the learning of any other language can result in a general alienation from other cultures and, as I argued, the promotion of xenophobia, the learning of especially high-status languages associated with cultural empires — which tend to outlast political ones as Latinate cultural hegemony outlasted Roman imperialism — can result in

'ideological colonisation'. By this I mean not a willing submission but, rather, a hopeless sense of inadequacy in the face of vaunted excellence. It is 'alienation' in the basic sense of a loss of self-confidence to an 'other' set of experiences which are felt to be somehow superior. And the major vehicle of ideological colonisation in the world is now English. We see this most clearly if we ask how many non-native speakers are clamouring to learn Russian or Japanese? Putting it rather differently we may wonder why native speakers of English are so incurious about other languages, even those, like Spanish, which are spoken throughout whole continents or which, like Chinese, are the language of one quarter of the world's population, a language, furthermore, which draws on an ancient culture.

Imperial languages have always had fake linguistic claims made for their pre-eminence. With Latin it was supposed to be a superior logical structure that trained the mind in clear thinking. What it actually trained the mind in, of course, was 'cultural imperiousness' — no less so when it ceased being the language of a military empire and became the vehicle of an absolutist religion. The point about Latin is that, from being the first language of an Italian military elite, it became the second language of a social, religious and cultural elite. Its special imperiousness came to consist of its non-availability to all but a coterie of 'learned' males.

As a language accompanying the flag of empire English was in no better case than Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese or, briefly, German. What guaranteed its pre-eminence globally was firstly the victory of the British over their major rivals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in key areas like North America, Southern and Western Africa, India, the Middle East and South East Asia and then, even more important, the dominance of the City of London over world commerce in the early twentieth century and its partial replacement as a centre of financial imperialism by Wall Street from then on.

Imperial languages, when they outlive actual empires, then become 'imperious languages' and take on a different sort of colonising function. The future location of capitalist decision-making could well move to East Asia but the role of English in its hegemony is probably assured. This is because the cultural function of an 'imperious' language is even less predominantly communicative than human language in general and is, instead, predominantly symbolic. English, whether as the language of international trade or commercial 'pop' culture, serves the function of inspiring awe in non-native speakers. The awe is no longer related to Britain or even, in simple political terms, to the United States. English is widely revered by the world's masses — especially by those who are both poor and young — as the language of wealth. The unspoken curriculum of English as a language to be acquired is the cultural baggage of entrepreneurialism and commercialism in general. And as long as the English language is sought as a talisman of success and an entry-ticket to the good life, teachers of English to non-native speakers will encounter a barrier to full comprehension. Anyone who has followed the earlier argument about the true nature of human language will recognise that

I am not seeing this barrier as somehow 'extra-linguistic'. It is, rather, an unspoken accompaniment to learning that is at issue — a profound mismatch between the intentions of the average teacher and the motivation of many learners. The teacher rightly perceives acquisition of English as a gateway to understanding the complex cultures — artistic, political and social — for which the language is a vehicle. The learner often, equally correctly, perceives acquisition of the language as a means of approaching nearer the throne of world economic dominance. Nevertheless, to approach the throne is by no means to share its power. It is in this misconception, the failure by both partners in the learning encounter to appreciate the possible *tokenistic* force of a language that a problem might lie. The teacher misses the tokenism — or, at least, fails to appreciate its force — because her/his training tends to have been in terms of language as a transparent mechanism. For the opposite reason, the learner fails to appreciate that the use of English by wealthy and powerful people is purely an exclusion mechanism. The popular perception of all learning — and particularly the learning of an alien language — tends, as we have seen, to be the acquisition of a valuable commodity or, rather, an exchange-value, a currency exchangeable against cultural or material goods.

The way out of such an impasse is not essentially different from that recommended by modern theoretical practice for *all* language learning — the emphasis on a productive dialogue which fully encompasses the motivations of the learner. Whether one is seeking to learn Spanish for holidays or English for economic advancement the principle is the same, an encounter which opens out unexpected areas of new experience by starting — an age-old pedagogical precept — from 'where the learner is at'. If, in the process the learner discovers that Seville may have more to offer than the Costa Brava, well and good. But, crucially, the learner ought to be better poised for dealing with the Costa Brava. In the same vein, the learner from the 'less developed' world who seeks insurance against poverty *may* learn that poverty is also experienced by native speakers of English and that the language in itself is no reliable guarantee against oppression. What is important is that she/he is first of all enabled to deploy the language in the spirit of a native language — which for many millions it is — rather than in the spirit of an 'open sesame' conjuration. Accompanying either process will be the recognition that every language and language variant encompasses and helps to define a new and socio-culturally different way of thinking and relating to the natural and social universe. If this is to happen for the learner of the 'imperious language' English, it will have to be accompanied by a full appreciation of, precisely, socially and politically charged variations, not just in register but in socially generated forms of the language. It is vitally important that the English learner encounters and appreciates the very different social force of the say, on the one hand, Mid-Western American and, on the other, Black and Hispanic American as spoken in down-town New York. Similarly the learner should be encouraged to

recognise the nature of the class dialects involved in Public School English on the one hand and the speech of Liverpool 8 on the other. These are not just 'linguistic' variations — whatever such a term might mean — they are vital ingredients in an experience differentiated by vastly unequal social power. Before arriving at this level of comprehension there is naturally a long road of familiarisation with different forms and usages *in context*.

The point I wish to end on, however, is one of principle rather than pedagogic strategy. English is not simply a language like any other language. In the contemporary world it can also act as a means of politico-cultural colonisation of the spirit, serving the interests of the most powerful concentrations of economic power the world has ever known. It is no comfort that there are other oligarchic concentrations of power in the world. Were I writing about the teaching of Russian or Chinese or Arabic I would certainly have had to attend to one or other of these, while acknowledging their tributary relation to the most powerful oligarchic force of all. But if we are to take seriously everything that is involved in the learning/teaching of English to non-native speakers we cannot, I am certain, ignore the fact of hegemony — the dominance of one over all the other socio-economic-cultural forms, nor the historical fact that English has become the 'court language', the main ideological and administrative vehicle of that hegemony. There is, I fear, no choice for teachers of English as a non-native language: either they co-operate, wittingly or unwittingly, in colonisation of the mind or they take measures to combat it. The skilful teacher will perhaps build up a subsidiary motivation based on natural curiosity, to know more not just about the language but about the social complexities of the cultures which use it regularly as expression. It is worth remembering, perhaps, that many in the 'developing' world use English to express their thoughts, feelings, political understandings and aspirations. The language does not have to be referred only to metropolitan power elites. Paulo Freire (1976), to whom I have already alluded, argues that acquisition of the written form of the language could help to give oppressed people greater purchase over their own daily reality. His approach to literacy teaching sets out to help the poor to "name their world" and, thereby, come to understand the machinery of oppression. This political psychological process can surely be equally true of the business of acquiring the language of the dominant world economic culture. Learning English does not *have* to entail learning subservience or servile attitudes: the process could equally well serve to unlock the mysteries of oppression and awaken a consciousness of self-worth in those whose daily experience may do very little to encourage it.

In case any of this should appear rather distant from the commonsense understanding of language teaching, I recommend the distinction made by a man who considered the matter of politico-cultural hegemony from the enforced leisure of one of Mussolini's jails: 'common sense', in Antonio Gramsci's opinion (1973), is much less to be preferred than *good* sense.

The one proceeds from accepting matters at face value, the other from considering them more analytically. I hope my readers will consider it, perhaps, good sense to perceive language, and particularly English language, as a great deal more than a medium of simple communication in today's world.

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The Inevitability of Teaching and Learning Culture in a Foreign Language Course

Joyce Valdes

Although the inclusion of culture in the foreign language curriculum has become more prevalent in recent years, gaining in both popularity and respectability, there are still those who either ignore the concept or deny its validity. Ironically, while these holdouts are presumably ignoring culture in their classrooms, they teach it every day. There is no way to avoid teaching culture when teaching language; they go together like Sears & Roebuck — or Marks & Spencer, as the case may be.

From the first day of the beginning class, culture is at the forefront. Whatever approach, method, or technique is used, greetings are usually first on the agenda. How can any teacher fail to see the cultural nature of the way people greet each other in any place in any language? The differences made in formal greetings, casual greetings, in greetings of young to old and vice versa, of employee to employer, in who shakes hands, bows, or touches the forehead, who may be called by first names, etc., are certainly not universal and serve as an excellent introduction to the culture of the people who speak the language, as well as to the language itself. Not calling it a lesson in culture does not prevent its being one. Every language lesson, from repetition drills, and fill-in-the-blanks to sophisticated compositions in advanced classes, must be about something, and almost invariably that something will be cultural, no matter what disguise it travels under. Recognizing the culture lessons to be learned for what they are and making the most of them enhances the learning experience.

Perhaps the problem for the holdouts is really semantic, with a narrow view of what is meant by culture. They may think culture is a geography lesson in which the entire focus is on the content, with no attention to linguistic features. Such a presentation is entirely justified as a portion of the language lesson, but is by no means the only, nor even the most frequent, method of including culture in the course. There have been

many definitions of culture as it applies to language learning, but perhaps Lado's comment, "'Culture,' as we understand it here, is synonymous with the 'ways of a people'" (Lado, 1957), is as effective as any, as well as one of the most succinct. The focus of a lesson may be on syntactic or phonetic features, but the content cultural, particularly if the teacher is following the current guidelines to more communicative language learning. This may be called the "incidental approach to culture teaching", and is probably almost as effective as a more direct approach — which it may well develop into as students ask questions about the content.

The cultural material selected for a language course may be as varied as types of classes and age groups. What slips into a course for foreign students in the United States is different from what is inserted into a course for middle school children in France, and both are different from what engineering students in Algeria will get. It may be profitable to consider each of these in some detail.

The foreign student in the United States has a wide range of texts, based on notional/functional, cognitive code-learning, even still some audiolingual, and many more, while others receive training through Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, etc., without a text. However, all aim at teaching the student to communicate, and if he communicates he must learn something of the culture. How much more effective for the language learner if the teacher is cognizant of the cultural nature of what he is teaching and adds interpretation, explanation of underlying values, along with word order, tense, and aspect. Attention to cultural details doubles the usefulness of the lesson, not only in adding another dimension, but also in making the lesson more interesting and therefore easier to learn.

What kinds of cultural information are likely to get into a typical lesson for foreign students in America? A panoply of American life. For example, the Hartman, Esparza, and Zarian text, *Tense Situations* (1984) has a traditional structure based on grammar points, but the content is clearly communicative and the cultural points to be gleaned are abundant. Lesson 1, "Present Continuous, Simple Present," begins with pictures in the form of a film strip giving short paragraphs accompanied by a picture, on "The Holiday Cruise".

My name is James Sterling. I'm the cruise director on the "Holiday Princess." Every week our ship sails around the Caribbean full of passengers. The people on the ship are always looking for fun and excitement. Let's look at some of the people on board this week.

Here is Mr. Rodney Tyler. He is a very charming man. He is enjoying this trip very much right now.

At this moment he is sitting in the middle of a group of women.

He is entertaining them with funny stories, offering them champagne, and laughing at their jokes.

In his everyday life, however, Rodney Tyler is a very shy man.

He is working temporarily as a librarian. At work, he sits by himself among the books in the library.

He rarely looks at people and usually spends his time daydreaming.

And there is Mr. Horace Pennington III. He is relaxing this week.

Look! He is lying in his chair and reading a novel. And isn't there music coming from the radio beside him?

After additional paragraphs about people on board, the lesson continues with paradigms and exercises. Other lessons are similar in their culturally loaded reading material preceding the grammar explanations and exercises. If the teacher were never to mention anything about the behavior of the characters (which would be strange indeed) the students would still inevitably pick up a great deal from the paragraphs themselves.

Speaking Naturally, a text for advanced students aimed at guiding them in the use of real language, provides dialogues with a variety of themes in a notional/functional approach. The dialogue for Lesson 6, "Expressing Anger and Resolving Conflict", offers a good example:

Mr. Sorensen: Richard, what's that under your paper?

Richard: What's what?

Mr. Sorensen: Lift up your arm. What's this?

Richard: Oh, that. Uh, that's a grocery list. I've got to pick up some things on my way home.

Mr. Sorensen: Do you really expect me to believe that?

Richard: Well, that's what it is.

Mr. Sorensen (*reading*): Soren Kierkegaard, Denmark, 1800s, Hegel, Germany, Sartre, Paris, 1900s . . . An interesting "grocery" list, Mister Jackson!

Richard: Oh, gee, let me see that. Oh, my gosh, they must be my notes. How did they get here?

Mr. Sorensen: I'd like to see you in my office, please. (*They leave the classroom and go to the office down the hall.*) Now, Richard, would you care to explain how the answers to the test questions appeared on your desk?

Richard: I can't, sir. Someone must have left them on my desk.

Mr. Sorensen: Someone left them on your desk! Someone with handwriting identical to yours left them on your desk? I'm afraid I can't accept that answer.

Richard: Are you accusing me of cheating?

Mr. Sorensen: Yes, I am.

Richard: You can't do that without proof! I'm going to call my counselor!

Mr. Sorensen: By all means do that. In the meantime, however, don't come to class again. I am extremely disappointed in your behavior.

Richard (*grumbling to himself as he leaves*): What a pig-headed, narrow-minded jerk!

The dialogue not only demonstrates the expression of anger, but also highlights important information on American attitudes toward cheating, both from the teacher's point of view and from the student's. Presumably discussion would bring out further information.

Whatever the content, culture is unavoidably imbedded. Look back to

the audiolingual texts, so determined to present structure and so unconcerned with content that the boredom of repetitiveness became its downfall. That now frayed sentence, "I went to the library last night", unintentionally, yet undeniably, conveys cultural information: (1) there are libraries on U.S. campuses, (2) students use these libraries, hence (3) students are expected to do outside assignments that require use of the library, (4) study time is so important that students will devote evenings to it rather than socializing as they probably would in many other countries, (5) libraries are open at night to accommodate students, and (6) spending one's evenings at the library is evidently approved, if not essential, behavior for students. The deep structure of a simple seven-word sentence carries much hidden information where no such fallout was intended.

It is not, obviously, only in American texts that the culture of the speakers of the language is dispersed. The very successful *Cambridge English Course* by Swan and Walter (1985), being used in an amazing number of places around the world, is an excellent example. It is successful because, aside from being pedagogically sound, it is interesting, and it is interesting because, along with its variety, it concerns people and what they do — and that is culture in action. Consider Unit 8 of Student Book 2, "Know Before You Go", which is overtly intended to supply cultural information while teaching language. Section A, "Going to Britain", has items on money, where to stay, getting around, writing home (postage and such), eating out, and medical care, while Section B, "Going to the U.S.A.", also has information on money — unfortunately a *sine qua non* wherever one travels — telephoning, passports and visas, traveler's cheques, medical insurance, holidays, and specific information on several favorite holiday sites, such as Hawaii, Las Vegas, New York — and a raft on the Rio Grande River between Texas and Mexico! Much of this lesson is on tape, providing listening comprehension, with exercises which require speaking as well, with grammar points and vocabulary included. Although these two sections are culturally loaded, they achieve a great deal in several aspects of language teaching as well. This is not an example of unintentional inclusion of culture; the authors clearly knew exactly what they were doing.

There are even occasions when there is a definite effort to exclude cultural information from the teaching. In the Language and Culture Center of the University of Houston a special group of Libyan engineers was being taught in an EST approach to prepare them for a year of on-the-job training with an engineering company which was building a gas plant in Libya. This carefully selected group would return to Libya to hold high-level positions in the plant upon its completion. The core teacher was told by the students that they wanted to learn nothing about the culture; they were there to learn the language they needed for the required training, and that was all they wanted from him. The teacher said, "Fine", and agreed to do his best, knowing full well that keeping culture out of the classroom was impossible, as well as undesirable. What

was needed in this case was a more specific cultural content: one that dealt with situations these students would have to face. In their year at the engineering company they would not be spending all their time within the walls of a classroom; they would be in the field, at gas plants and in the gas fields, talking and listening to all types of people, from the well-spoken upper echelon whose language is usually taught in the ESL classroom, to the Texas “roughnecks” (a technical term; in no way pejorative) in the oil and gas fields who speak a number of dialects sometimes difficult for other Texans to understand, not only because of the variety in pronunciation, but also the job-specific jargon. Clearly, the students needed to be prepared for all this in ways that go beyond linguistic competence, and they were. Culture by any other name, such as situational language lessons, is still culture. I also recall an evening in a Moroccan restaurant to which I was invited for dinner with the program director and the class. This offered the opportunity for the other side of cultural exchange, for the students to teach the Americans, and it was very satisfying to them, as well as to us. They expected us to be horrified that we were to dip Moroccan ‘bread’ into a communal bowl, and were pleased to learn about party dips so popular in America. It is amusing that many of them never perceived of this evening, as well as many other aspects of their program, as being cultural exchanges, though doubtlessly others did — an official position of culture learning was one thing, and a pleasant experience was another.

After all, for students living where the target language is spoken, culture permeates everything. Students have to eat. Clearly, entering a restaurant, ordering, eating, getting the check, paying for it at the table, counter, or cashier’s counter is a cultural experience, even if for some strange reason a student kept his head down and did not observe anyone around him. If students eat in the privacy of their own apartments, they still have to go to the supermarket, and that is most certainly a cultural experience. Recently I took some quite sophisticated French visitors to a supermarket specifically for the cultural experience; they were fascinated by what they saw, so different from a Paris supermarket. I am not sure they *liked* it — but they were certainly interested in the cultural experience.

Billboards are another facet of adsorbent culture. Even if one avoided television and radio, whose cultural content is *too* obvious to need discussion, in most towns and cities, and on the roads in between, he would be faced with billboards, which, alas, cannot be totally ignored. The propensity of advertisers to use puns to make their products remembered is a handicap to non-native speakers, as well as the underlying cultural base of most advertisements. A five-minute drive along a Houston thoroughfare yielded a number of cases in point, sure to bring questions to the non-native speaker’s mind. One pictured a suffering face with the caption: “Group rates making you sick?” What are group rates? Group rates for what? The advertiser is an insurance company, which is a clue, but does not put a spotlight on the solution. Another, with no

picture, merely says ominously: "Warning: Hot check writing is a crime". How can checks be hot? What does this mean, and what does it mean to me? It would be useful for him to find out, the easy way. There is no advertiser this time to serve as a clue. Another pictureless one says: "Learn how to jump-start a life", and is signed by the American Red Cross. What is jump-starting, in each of its double contexts, and why do Americans — much more future-oriented than people of many other cultures — think it important to prepare themselves for such an unlikely emergency? The Public Television station's billboard has a picture of a baseball coming toward the viewer, with the caption: "It's a hit! Channel 8's 19th Annual Teleauction". Never mind the baseball and its accompanying confusion, what is a teleauction? Why does a television station have one? What is PBS and why? Certainly a non-native speaker can ignore billboards, though he cannot screen them out, but how can an inquiring mind not inquire?

Possibly it will be conceded that the learning of culture is inevitable for language students who are living in a country in which the target language is prevalent. But what of other situations? Is EFL in a non-English speaking country as susceptible to cultural transfer as ESL? Actually, no, not so much; but still susceptible. Consider an English class in a middle school in Paris. The social distance, in the sense the term is used by Brown (1980) to refer to the "cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures which come into contact within an individual", is not great between the two Western cultures involved. Similarities are likely to be more salient than differences, but this, too, is important. A feeling of closeness to the speakers of the target language can be a strong motivation for language learning. In visiting a class of middle school students, eleven and twelve years old, I was most impressed by the eagerness with which they pursued their lesson, which was definitely along communicative lines, taught by a highly skilled teacher. At every question presented by the teacher, eager hands shot up. I do not believe that such would have been the case if the students had not been interested in the cultural content as well as in language use and usage, no matter how skillful the teacher. In the French system the curriculum is prescribed at the national level by the Ministry of Education, but within that curriculum the teacher is allowed considerable latitude. This teacher used material from the assigned text plus a good deal of other material which he had gleaned from other sources to give further variety and liveliness to the class. The materials were, of course, cultural as well as linguistic. The students were entranced by their American visitors and several stayed behind after class to ask questions, or just to say "hello."

A still less culture-oriented program which I have had opportunity to observe was a school for electrical engineers and technicians in Algeria. They were taught intensive English first, as all the texts and lectures were to be in English, but most students would receive all their education in Algeria, never to set foot in an English-speaking country. This seems a perfect set-up for EST, with no attention whatsoever to culture. The

Algerian students were not totally removed from contact with English speakers, however, as the teachers, both of English and of technical subjects, were Americans. That situation would change, after a full cadre of Algerians had been trained in the U.S. to take over all courses, but in the beginning engineering and technology teachers were all faculty members of a consortium of American universities and the English teachers, with varied training and experience in ESL, were hired in the U.S. specifically for this job. Naturally enough, students wanted to know more about their teachers, which automatically meant learning quite a lot about American culture. The 'campus' was an isolated community a two-hour train ride from Algiers, with very little to do to pass the out-of-class hours; as a result, students and teachers saw a great deal of each other. The materials were not technical in the beginning since the prevailing philosophy was that general English should be taught first, moving on to EST when the students had a sound foundation on which to build. Consequently, texts in use were selected for their pedagogical and situational applicability from the entire field of British and American texts available at the time. The cultural material in these texts made the learning tasks more interesting, and therefore more learnable. These students, unlike the Libyan engineers, were quite eager to learn as much as they could about both Great Britain and America, even though most of them did not expect ever to visit either country. No doubt, now that all their teachers are Algerians, the situation has changed to some extent, but since their teachers were trained in either Great Britain or America, it would surprise me very much if culture did not continue to penetrate their training program.

Clearly, the level at which culture is least necessary and the least obtrusive is in an EST course in which the aim is learning to read technical material in English, with no need to speak, hear, or write it, but even in such a restricted class as this culture cannot be ignored. In Kaplan's seminal article (1966) on cultural thought patterns he pointed out that different cultures have different rhetorical forms and styles resulting from their particular approaches to thought. His now-famous illustrations of four such patterns indicate the difficulty that other cultures may have with the straight-arrow approach of expository prose in English in the time-honored pattern of introduction, supporting facts, and conclusion, with no straying from the topic allowed. Add to this the scientific attitude of the fewer words used the better; economy of language is the hallmark for effective scientific writing, almost as if a word saved was a penny earned. Students of many other cultures are very much put off by this approach because their societies admire and adhere to a more elaborate system of expression, perhaps as if they were being paid by the word. Succinctness is certainly not admired by most Orientals or Middle Easterners. When they read texts in English, so bare and brief, they tend to feel cheated, to fear they have missed something, or even that the author does not know his subject well enough to write about it. Lack of respect for the writer leads to inadequate learning of the

materials as well as a frustrated feeling that something is missing from the information gained. This aspect of culture in our writing patterns must be taught overtly in order to avoid misconstruction and misconceptions.

More recently Kaplan has said (1987):

Thus, the introduction of science and technology into traditional societies, even ones which have had literate cultures over a long period of time — and the introduction of English into these cultures through the mechanism of scientific information create two kinds of problems: lexicon and written text (either as English words, as transliterations, or as equivalent terms from the language itself or from another language available in the environment), and on the other hand, the incorporation into the rhetorical structure of a new rhetorical style which is based in English but is more directly a function of scientific information. Both of these changes tend to destabilize even a standardized writing system.

This packed statement makes several points: (1) English words and phrases infiltrate other languages on scientific subjects, (2) English scientific writing style influences that of other languages (and cultures), and, by implication, (3) learning theory must also be influenced. This influence impacts on culture in several ways.

The American-British theory of learning which requires that the student examine the information he is given, even in scientific and technical subjects, analyze it, compare and contrast it with other information at his disposal, test it, and even apply it in ways of his own devising not specified for him by the teacher (such subjects as architecture come immediately to mind) is mind-boggling to students of many other cultures. In most non-western cultures, the student is given information and is required to accept it without question; his is not to reason why, or even if. Hypothesis is not for him. And to be required to do something on his own with the information he is given is beyond thinking about. Students from these cultures who go to western countries to study are sure to undergo culture shock in this area, if in no other. Since, as Kaplan says, English is so powerful in the scientific field that it even influences the scientific writing of other languages, surely the learning that goes with the English materials must also be learned, and adapted, at least to some extent, or the scientific knowledge set forth in English, in English style and in the western system of logic, thought and learning, will not be accessible to the student.

The notion of interacting with a text, whether technical, scientific, literary, or whatever, is no part of the reading process for persons of many cultures. As Widdowson points out (1983):

Schemata, then, can be defined as cognitive constructs or configurations of knowledge which we place over events so as to bring them into alignment with familiar patterns of experience and belief. They therefore serve as devices for categorizing and arranging information so that it can be interpreted and retained.

Perhaps anyone who reads with any degree of consciousness follows this process to a certain extent. But what if the reader's schematic knowledge does not match with that of the author? Widdowson adds,

If anticipations based on schematic projection are denied, if our theories fail, then there will be a disruption of normality which will call for a rapid reappraisal of our schematic projections . . .

Even if the student follows the process of matching his schema to the material, he is likely to form false anticipations as he reads which will result in frustrating confusion and leave him puzzling over the meaning. Ignore the culture and read for factual information? The world is not made up of factual information, cut and dried. In order to understand the message, the reader must find a common schema with the author, who is trying to communicate by presenting the unfamiliar through overt or covert comparisons with the familiar in his own schema of the world. This can be accomplished only through the reader's understanding, in some depth, of the culture of the author.

Having considered the study of culture in foreign language learning in its least likely contexts, the final consideration will be of the most likely: the study of literature. The traditional reason for studying a language was to enable one to read its literature, and thus become a Cultured person, with a capital 'C'. When needs changed and the purpose of language learning was communication, many turned away from literary study as from a thing defiled; those who sanctioned its continued use justified it on the basis of its being an excellent guide to the learning of culture (lower case). But why be narrow in the view of reasons for language learning? There are still those who want merely to read the literature of another people in the original language; there are those who want to communicate in all four aspects — listening, speaking, reading, and writing; those who are interested in only one aspect; and those who are interested in the entire spectrum of possibilities. Is it impossible for a South American whose primary goal in learning French is to gain the capacity to translate technical material from French to Spanish to also have a desire to read Voltaire, or Sartre? So much in language learning is engaged in a continuous flow through interlocking canals that it is difficult to determine what is cause and what is effect. Indeed, literature may be studied for a better understanding of culture — but so may culture be studied for a better understanding of literature. Before getting to Voltaire and Sartre, one has had a long path to follow, one strewn with cultural facts and innuendos. What has been gleaned, both from intentional and inadvertent cultural teaching, will be applied to the literature that one has become sufficiently proficient, in language and culture, to read with some if not full understanding.

The process in the study of literature — and I mean by literature the Voltaire and Sartre level, not material intended for language learners — is a constant oscillation from applying the culture one has previously learned to finding new cultural information to seek further information

about. Some possible reactions to a passage from *Pickwick Papers*, since, unlike Voltaire and Sartre, Dickens conveniently wrote in English, may illustrate the point:

It was a more difficult task to take leave of the inmates of Manor Farm, from whom they had received so much hospitality and kindness. Mr. Pickwick kissed the young ladies — we were going to say, as if they were his own daughters, only as he might possibly have infused a little more warmth into the salutation, the comparison would not be quite appropriate — hugged the old lady with filial cordiality: and patted the rosy cheeks of the female servants in a most patriarchal manner, as he slipped into the hands of each, some more substantial expressions of his approval.

The word ‘inmates’ throws up a block; before it has been encountered in reference to prisoners, but the word itself is a clue and the reader may readily enough extend the meaning to persons within something other than prisons — so that’s all right. Then the nature of the departure itself, the leavetaking from females of whom Pickwick is fond, but not related to: the reaction may be one of slight shock for a Muslim reader, or for anyone from a more reserved society. He has already learned of such casualness and familiarity in greetings and leavetakings, so he is not surprised, though shock is still likely to seep through, especially since Pickwick is both thorough and enthusiastic in his gestures. But what is this that follows the patting of the female servants’ rosy cheeks? What is the “more substantial expression of his approval” that he slipped into their hands? The reader may have learned a good deal about modern-day tipping in English-speaking countries, without recognizing the practice of bestowing gratuities on servants in a house where one has been a guest. With no native speaker to inquire of, this part of the passage could well remain a mystery, but with a resource, such as a teacher, the reader may add this bit of cultural trivia to his storehouse of knowledge. In this day of servantless homes the knowledge may prove of little use to him, but it has served us as an example, at least.

Thus the reading of literature utilizes the cultural knowledge that one has accumulated, and adds further to that accumulation.

If this article seems to wander into many realms in the effort to establish the inevitability of culture learning in language learning, it is because culture itself penetrates all the corners of language education. If it cannot be escaped, it seems obvious that every teacher and every learner should be alerted to it and should make the most of it, to use it as a tool where appropriate, and to approach it face-forward, in order to make the learners’ cultural knowledge as accurate and as useful as possible.

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Stereotyping in TESOL Materials

Jane and Michael Clarke

Language and culture are widely accepted as being inseparable, and yet most language teaching bears little relation to socio-cultural context as broadly defined (see Stern 1983). Culture, as transmitted in TESOL materials, is here intended to include the varying values, attitudes and world views of the L¹ community serving as a model for learners, who are typically, if tacitly, encouraged to become honorary native speakers of the target language, rather than effective bilinguals, in the view of Alptekin and Alptekin (1984). By implication learners are induced to accept whatever cultural norms are offered as part of the total language learning experience.

In this article we are concerned with those aspects of cultural content which are selected by TESOL textbook writers and, perhaps more significantly, those which are omitted. We want to ask whether the process of selection among the range of socio-linguistic and socio-cultural parameters, is carried out consciously or unconsciously, systematically or unsystematically, intentionally or accidentally. Above all, are images of Britain and the British representative or unrepresentative of social reality?

Textbook writers will inevitably conceive both of the group represented ('the in-group' 'the British') and groups on whom materials are targeted ('others', 'out-groups', 'foreign learners' etc.) in generalised terms. However, if these generalisations serve to confirm and harden existing stereotyped images of in-group or out-group or both, the result will be learners whose cultural ineptitude will affect detrimentally their personal and general educational growth, as well as their capacity for successful language acquisition. At worst, learners may suffer from misinformation and ignorance leading to prejudice in their relationship with a culture which they meet partly, or uniquely, in the illustrations and texts of a TESOL textbook.

Prejudice has been defined as aversion fuelled by ignorance, and although this is not the terminology used by Krashen (1981), it is clearly cognate with those negative feelings on the part of a learner towards a target language/culture which trigger, in Krashen's model of second

language performance, the raising of the affective filter and the consequent hindering of effective language learning/acquisition. Is the nature of a learner's cultural orientation (favourable or unfavourable) a function of linguistic proficiency, or vice versa? We note an important interrelation between linguistic and cultural understanding, and the questionable basis of the traditional view in the teaching of modern and classical languages in Europe that linguistic competence in the target language is a prior and necessary condition for cultural appreciation. (Had this been realised earlier, Classics teaching in British education need not be in the present evanescent state.)

It is important to locate these views in a historical perspective. The prime aims of language learning in the late twentieth century are not literary or scholarly, but social and instrumental (Stern *op. cit.*). While language courses were based on structural analysis and the grammar/translation method, the content of language teaching could remain virtually context-free. The teaching of usage took precedence over any considerations of use. However, the redefinition of the aims of language teaching in terms of communicative competence has seen the formal grammatical basis of TESOL widely balanced or even replaced by socio-linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives. Much of the recent literature on syllabus design has dealt with the integration of socio-semantic categories with features of the grammatical system, including not only notions, functions, settings, and purposes, but also the attitudes, roles and specific social groups with which learners must be familiar to operate effectively in the true context of utterance. (See for example Yalden (1983))

It might be argued that language teaching texts have always conveyed cultural information. Swan (1985) in an attack on extreme functionalism in language teaching claims that even a textbook of the vintage of Candlin's *Present Day English* (1968) included functions. In fact, exercises headed "Willingness and Intention" and so forth can be found in Candlin. Could the same be argued of cultural content generally, that all courses of necessity show social contexts, roles, and other parameters as a vehicle for language teaching? The difficulty with such arguments is this: in PDE functions are included incidentally and unsystematically, with no conscious integration or continuity with the book's unitary structural design. The process is random and partial. The 'phrase-book effect' is rife (e.g. 8 different context-less sentence patterns for expressing permission), and the complex many-to-many relationships between functions and their realisations are little understood. This handling of linguistic content is paralleled by a similarly haphazard and subjective cultural content. The British, or more accurately the Southern English, are shown in PDE as shopkeepers and bank managers, well-heeled and middle-class, given to amateur dramatics in their spare time, and dwelling in Oxford, London or Stratford-upon-Avon. This may be one man's Britain, but is it Britain?

This is of course an easy retrospective. But are these matters being ordered any better in the late eighties? Textbooks may attempt to deal

systematically with language and meaning, yet show no signs that cultural variables are being dealt with in a consciously principled way. In particular, are we treating issues of gender, class, race, regional identity and dialect any more sensitively and representatively? Before looking at the different degrees of awareness of these issues in TESOL materials, we need to examine the stereotyping process and its social-psychological basis.

The Nature of the Stereotyping Process

It has long been realised that the very fabric of language is constructed by and constructs the world view of its users. Thus it would be neither possible nor desirable to write or use a textbook which did not embody some of the perceived values and behaviour patterns of the target speech community and/or the learner group.

In order to interact in the world with individuals or groups we all have implicit theories or schemata about those within or outside our own group. The generalisations we make enable us to function with others. Each new person we come into contact with will extend the framework for filtering our experience of the next person we meet. Images are also built up through other people's perceptions either through face-to-face interaction or through education and the media. This is why the TESOL textbook may be a powerful force in conveying these images, images which may be partial and reinforce stereotypes.

We will turn to the stereotyping process itself and look later at why the perpetuation of stereotypes is a cause for concern for the TESOL writer, teacher and learner. Lipmann (1922) argued that a stereotype could be individual — a scheme which associates a set of personality traits belonging together in a particular individual. Allport (1954) cited the frequency of stereotyping from appearance — hence redheads have fiery tempers and fat people are jolly. Other writers have noted how personal names conjure up a stereotypical image. An awareness of the possibility of this individual stereotyping is essential for teachers in monitoring themselves and their responses to learners. However, it is the associated phenomenon of group stereotyping which most concerns us here. Group stereotyping, according to Lipmann (*op. cit.*), associates a set of personality traits with members of a particular group. Tagiuri (1969) begins to allow that stereotyping is a process and in the following definition shows the end stages of that process:

Stereotyping is the general inclination to place a person in categories according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristics such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to him (her) qualities believed to be typical of members of that group.

It can be seen at this stage that stereotyping is considered by some to be a fairly anodyne process. Allport (*op. cit.*) argues that "most stereotypes contain a 'grain of truth' ". If this is so, it must be asked, which 'grain

of truth' does a stereotype contain, and to whose advantage is the dissemination of that particular grain of truth. Gahagan (1984) demonstrates in her definition of stereotyping how the stereotype can be blinkering rather than illuminating. She sees stereotyping as "beliefs about the characteristics possessed by some group members and possessed therefore by any members of that group". A stereotype, therefore, is fixed and not open to modification like a generalisation. Thus new experiences will not enhance and develop understanding, but will be filtered in order to reinforce the existing stereotype.

The process of assigning individuals to a particular group, believing that all members of that group share certain characteristics, and inferring that an individual must possess those characteristics, is but the end of the process. It is only through understanding that the transmission of Allport's 'grain of truth' is not contingent but largely determined by historical and political factors in both the public and private sphere, that the power of the stereotype can be appreciated. For example Van Arkel (quoted in Pollins (1987)) writing on the roots of anti-semitism argues that stereotyping is connected with a collective opinion leading to collective censure and eventually to collective prejudice. He sees stereotypes being developed and expanded through *stigmatisation* (Jews were stigmatised by Christians for not following the faith), *segregation* (interaction between Jews and Christians was prevented) and *terrorisation* (members of the majority group may be forced to conform in persecuting the minority).

It may seem to some readers that the above argument has little relevance to the TESOL teacher. In this article we are concerned with both racial and gender stereotyping — in what ways have stigmatisation and terrorisation been a part of the process of building up the stereotypes of women and non-white people? Van Arkel is clearly relevant in that those unlike ourselves are dehumanised and stigmatised in order that we can be seen as more fully human. This was done by all European colonisers in times of slavery in order to justify it, just as the popular press stigmatises homosexuals and minority pressure groups today, and the government idealises the aggression of one nation while decrying that of another. Similarly, certain types of women have been stigmatised — women with healing powers were outlawed as witches in the eighteenth century, women at Greenham were vilified by the popular press in the early 1980s as being "husband-haters in sandals". Physical segregation does not seem to be a necessary factor, particularly for gender stereotyping, because it begins at birth and is reinforced by the family and social milieu as well as by wider society. Segregation may have helped to harden collective opinion in racial stereotyping, but the immutability of the stereotype means that when groups do mix, the stereotype remains impervious to evidence of its inadequacy, and the group member who does not display the characteristics is seen as deviant — for example, the Asian woman who is assertive is seen as 'difficult' because of her submissive stereotype. The pressure within the majority group to accept

the stereotyped image of out-groups is not overt terrorisation, but rather a more subtle form of social control, in that both majorities and minorities are socialised from birth to accept stereotypical images rather than to question them. Because dominant groups to a great extent control communication systems, subordinate groups more readily perceive and internalise the negative and contradictory interpretation that the dominant group forms of them. The the 'grain of truth' in the stereotype that is transmitted is the grain which serves the interest of the more powerful group. Millions of other grains of truth may be conveniently forgotten, as well as the realisation that groups of people are heterogeneous.

All this has implications for writers and users of TESOL materials. English is a world language because of our colonial history. That history has been justified through selecting information about the past; through trying to prove 'scientifically' white male intellectual supremacy in the nineteenth century, and through the stereotyping of women and of those colonised as being less capable and rational than white men. We will discuss below how similar stereotypes are perpetuated in TESOL materials which could, and should, constitute a medium for wider cultural tolerance and understanding.

Stereotyping and Cultural Context in ESOL Materials

Most TESOL coursebook writers set the target language in a country where it is spoken as a mother tongue, usually Britain or the USA. The decision — probably conscious — to do so leads to other decisions — probably unconscious — as to which aspects of the target culture will be represented. If in the inevitable transmission of cultural information, this unconsciously partial and selective representation of, say, Britishness is distortedly favourable — what might be termed a 'no-flies-on-us' approach — then foreign learners, ministries and other client institutions may shy away from the underlying judgmental ethnocentricity:

because the culture of the English-speaking world is implicitly contrasted with the learner's own to the detriment of the latter (Byram 1986)

Note that this is not a comparison of like with like to the mutual enrichment of both cultures, but an idealised version of one ('no-flies-on-us') contrasted with the 'warts-and-all' reality of the other.

Stereotypical representations of British culture in textbooks can be doubly dishonest. Firstly the omission of aspects such as the linguistic and ethnic diversity and the enduring class and gender oppositions in British society constitutes a denial and devaluation of, among others, women, black Britons, and those living north of Shakespeare's birthplace. Second, out-groups are given messages implying the uneven contrast outlined above, which can give rise to charges of linguistic imperialism and cultural colonisation.

One way of avoiding such issues might seem to be the setting of TESOL textbooks in the learner's own country. An example of this is *Saudi Arabian Schools English* (Field, 1982) which contains virtually no images of Anglo-American contexts or people, and in which women of any nationality are all but non-existent. One of the very few 'English' images on offer is of a silver-haired gentleman in morning suit. He contrives to hold a briefcase, a tea-cup and a saucer and the 'Times' (in his mouth) while opening a door. Had he but more limbs he could perhaps have clutched the complete works of Shakespeare and his copy of Wisden. Learners may infer from this intrusive caricature that English people are white male professional civil servants — why, from the evidence supplied, should they think otherwise? Can they know this figure represents only a very small sub-class of British people, known to most of us only from T.V.'s *Yes, Prime Minister*? Is it the social prestige of that sub-class which prompts the inclusion of this image of ambassadorial Britishness? If so, this minority prestige if further shored up, while ordinary Britons remain unrepresented and Saudi children miss a learning opportunity. The overall effect is one of distortion motivated by avoidance, in a course from which the target culture is removed or else shown in partial, stereotypical glimpses. The course aims "to help the pupils understand the texts more easily *because of the lack of cultural barriers*".

The decision to set materials in the learner's society seems to occur more often where English has played an historical part in the life of such countries as Malaysia and Hong Kong. However, Bond and Ying (1985) have pointed out that in Hong Kong "most of the textbooks are written by westerners and many are imported". Indeed it is in TESOL textbooks published in the west for the world market that we find a major instrument for cultural transmission and a source of concern for the effect which stereotyped images may have. In looking at examples of such materials (traditionally styled 'EFL'), it is worth recalling our earlier remarks about the nature of stereotyping. Generalisations may be useful and even inevitable in cultural understanding, but inflexibility, partiality and a belief that because *some* group members show certain characteristics then *all* must — these are aspects of a process of hardening and clinging to early impressions. Textbooks may pander to existing views of Britishness held by learners — though this may be a reflected stereotype ('how we think they see us') or how we want them to see us. They may appeal to stereotypes or prejudices assumed to be held cross-culturally (as with mothers-in-law). We would, therefore, look for a tendency in materials to disconfirm the hardened views of cultural identity by showing, or celebrating, the diversity of Britishness, even where these differences are conflictual. Not to do so amounts to idealisation on the writer's part and induces stereotyping on the learner's.

It is encouraging to find certain current materials adopting a cross-cultural perspective like *Advanced International English* (Brieger and Jackson, 1989) or resisting a homogeneous approach to cultural content

and inducing learners to broaden their cultural perceptions. Social issues are the basis for language practice in Carrier (1980), including divorce, drugs and street riots, though with variable realism. Hartley and Viney (1982) have a unit dealing with football hooliganism and violence at matches, and the role played by police, T.V. coverage and so on ("Where Have All the Fans Gone?"). Another unit ("Out of Work") provides a contrast with a type somewhat over-represented in TESOL generally, the affluent professional with his large detached house in a leafy suburb . . . In a third unit ("The Happiest Days of Your Life?"), four men and two women give accounts of their school experience. The range of schools (comprehensive, grammar, public etc.) and the range of later occupations (builder, personnel manager, unemployed, etc.) are diverse. There is some resistance to the banal treatment which the title might imply without the question mark. Schools and teachers are criticised as well as eulogised. Jones (1984) has a unit entitled "Are we talking the same language?", where learners confront the diversity of British and American accents and dialects and people's attitudes towards them.

This is a rare respite from the usual exaggerated concern with R.P. (and those who speak it) in British TESOL. Many Britons are, after all, bi-dialectal or bi-lingual. This is recognised by Doff, Mitchell and Jones (1983) in a unit on "Similarities and Differences" which briefly deals with the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of Wales and Scotland. The numerically more significant groups of bilingual and even trilingual groups of Asian background are not mentioned, groups which are also ethnically, if not regionally, well-defined.

However, there are materials which may tend to foster stereotyping among learners. We offer some examples below.

Racial Stereotyping

It is extremely difficult to find black people represented in most EFL materials other than tokenistically. In the case of Britons of Afro-Caribbean origin, negative images predominate.

Example 1. (Hartley and Viney, 1982): an (authentic) newspaper advertisement for the Metropolitan Police shows a British 'bobby' (white) surrounded by the heads of various people threatening or asking him for help. The sole black male says aggressively: "you only stop me 'cos I'm black".

Example 2. (Doff, Jones and Mitchell, 1983): a Caribbean carnival is reported in a newspaper article which speaks of violence, police provocation and National Front *agents provocateurs*.

These examples and other like them offer an unbalanced image. Black Britons do not spend their time exclusively participating in carnivals which result in street violence; nor are they invariably unemployed and to be found challenging the police on street corners. In fact they may also be found, like other groups in British society, in a wide range of occupations and roles, as mechanics and athletes, teachers and musicians,

lawyers and politicians. They participate in society as parents and foster-parents, churchgoers, tax payers, voters, and in innumerable other respects. This would not be evident to TESOL learners abroad, who will continue to hold negative associations of black British people if these are the only images presented. *Black* TESOL learners will, of course, have reactions which are even more complex and disturbing.

Gender Stereotyping

Materials often tend to show women only as supporting carers who live for and through men, or men as uniquely work-oriented, outgoing and practical — a splitting which does justice to neither women nor men.

Example 1. (Hartley and Viney, 1979): Jane and Sally discuss their respective husbands in a dialogue. Jane's is big, strong, handsome and athletic. Sally's has none of these qualities, but is intelligent and he can cook, sew and iron — “a very good husband”, to which Jane replies incredulously: “Really? Is he English?”.

It seems it is a matter of wonderment to British women to hear of men who are distinguished by anything other than strength and athletic prowess without the inconvenience of any intellectual distraction. Where is ‘the English husband’ to be found on the simplistic continuum between wimp-ishness and unreconstructed machismo?

Example 2. (*ibid*) In prison, Fred tells his cellmate Tom he plans to go with his wife to have tea at his mother-in-law's immediately he is released. Tom nearly falls off his bunk in astonishment on hearing Fred further intends to work for his mother-in-law. The contextualisation of “going to” is ingenious. The implied scorn for the woman who is ready to rehabilitate her son-in-law is unfortunate.

Example 3. (*ibid*) John and Anne can't agree what to watch on T.V. There is a clash between “Mary in Love” and a football match on different channels. John finally tells Anne to go and watch the love story at her mother's. Inferences for learners about current man-woman relationships in Britain are that a man is master in his own home, while a woman is dependent either on his whim or on the sanctuary to be found at mother's. A grain of truth? — which grain, selected why and by whom? Again, the simple splitting of interests as between men and women (football vs. love) denies the possibility of overlap. Men too have emotional lives, women too are interested in the external world.

Class and Regional Stereotyping

Example 1. (*ibid*) Most courses in their early stages teach the habitual use of the present simple, but it is a little bizarre to teach this structure via an interview with a cartoon duchess. She too reads the ‘Times’. Rising at 10.00, she has lunch at 12.30 and rests till 6.00. She then dresses for dinner (a two-hour undertaking) and she habitually dines at 8.00 (the lady isn't a tramp!) To present a number of ‘real’ people and their routines

would surely be culturally and methodologically preferable.

Example 2. (*ibid*) “An English Wedding” — outside the church the bride is in a long white dress, the groom in “traditional morning suit” and top hat. A Rolls-Royce, a big hotel for the reception, champagne and two crying mothers are added to the scenario which soon takes the couple to Heathrow, thence to Bermuda, a seaside villa honeymoon, ultimately to live happily ever after with “a lot of children”. It is fair to say that relatively few marriages have such a lavish and “traditional” beginning or such a fairy-story ending. Too rarely are these other truths treated, of divorce rates, registry offices, and why even atheists may marry in church. The ‘happy family’ idealisation may accurately describe a publisher’s image of a wedding, but it is a minority norm.

Example 3. (O’Neill, 1982). Four places in Britain are compared. London is busy, interesting and noisy; Brighton is cleaner and a tourist centre; Stockport is dirty and industrial “*but the people are very friendly*”; Killbrae, a village in Scotland, is clean and beautiful “*but the people aren’t very friendly*”. To complete this exercise in over-simplification, why not say that people in the English are “poor but honest”, or Scots “mean, dour and God-fearing sabbatarians”? These characterisations are acceptable only if we see groups as uniform rather than heterogeneous collections of individuals. Northerners, after all, do not have a monopoly on human warmth and why should kindness or any other quality be shown as distributed unevenly across the regions of Britain?

In all these images of class, gender race and other social parameters, there is a partiality which tends to promote stereotyping in the readership. TESOL texts often lack any awareness of these issues, adopting, apparently, a policy of avoiding cultural issues, as if they are too sensitive to countenance. Cartoon pictures, ‘culture free’ texts and texts of interest to people of many nationalities, and other vain attempts to de-culture content rest on lowest common denominators rather than diversity within and across cultures. Nolan and Archer-Woods (1983) for instance, offer computer literacy, extractor fans and air cleaners among their internationally targeted topics. A text on the overseas aid organisation “Voluntary Service Overseas” is presented in a tone of middle class Anglocentrism (volunteers wish to make “a personal contribution” with “extra responsibility” in the “third world”), and represents a tendency to treat institutional matters at a depersonalised level. Into this bland landscape wander occasional outsiders, caricatures, not characters, with comically endearing qualities. Two such characters (*ibid*) are (i) a tramp, accidentally locked in a department store over Christmas. “He seems to have been a man of good humour and philosophic temperament — as indeed vagrants very commonly are” [sic]. (Homelessness, currently on the increase in Britain, is not funny.) (ii) A “Wild Man from Africa”, “a curiosity”, “naked”, “he eats raw food”, “walks on all fours” etc. etc. A frantic yelling glaring savage, perhaps cannibalistic, he forms an impromptu circus attraction. It transpires that he is really a disguised

Irishman, the racism of the piece is nicely compounded, and one is left wondering how African learners receive these images.

We are dealing here with the stereotypical representation of out-groups, whereas hitherto we have looked at in-group stereotyping, or the presentation of images of ourselves as seen by ourselves for the consumption of out-groups. In fact out-group characters make rare and fleeting visits to some TESOL books. This is to see Britishness as a standard, and to de-emphasise and deny the importance of cross-cultural perspectives in effective and appropriate second language performance — for example, the socio-linguistic conditions and parameters for criticising and complaining are not isomorphous as between English and Japanese, and have to be learnt.

We wish to turn from EFL materials, designed and marketed for the widest possible world coverage rather than for a particular group, and look at the rather different case of second language learners living permanently in Britain (ESL).

Generally materials for these learners are aimed at more clearly defined groups, and can address their survival, work, integrative and other needs while representing the learner group more realistically and characteristically than do EFL materials, though the range of available published ESL materials is limited. Furnborough *et al.* (1980) show Asian characters at home dealing with people who knock at the door; at work, talking about how they spent the weekend; visiting friends or family in another city, and so forth. This seems realistic, and shows the learner role models for interacting with a range of others, notably white British interlocutors, like the electricity man or the foreman at work.

Though most ESL materials operate at early to intermediate stages of learning, they tend less towards gross caricature and over-simplification than do early stage EFL materials for the most part. However, a danger for ESL materials aimed at those with little English is that they may show learners in client roles, helpless and dependent on the dominant group. So, an Asian worker may be taught how to apologise for lateness, but not how to query his wage slip if it is wrong, for which appropriate language skills include matching language forms selected to the status of the interlocuter. Again, if in an ESL textbook one driver breaks down and another stops his car to help him, the former will be Asian, the latter white. These roles are reversed in life, so why not in textbooks? ESL women are typically shown shopping, cooking, or in the pages of numerous “English for Pregnancy and Childbirth” courses.

Restricted access to health education and other services are well-motivated and needs-related topics for ESL, as in Gubbay and Cogill (1980), a course for adults which minimises the ascription of client roles to minority group members. Moreover, it succeeds in dealing with sensitive issues (such as “Your Rights and the Police”) without patronisation. Whereas some materials previously discussed consistently omit to mention cultural differences, here we find a unit addressing cross-cultural issues (“Visiting Friends from a Different Culture”) in a positive way,

yet avoiding blandness or mawkishness. Asian host and English guest air their anxieties as to appropriate behaviour, unfamiliar food and so on, with an emphasis on mutual understanding and respect, yet maintaining a pride in one's own culture. Any difficulties that exist are shown not as located in one culture or another but in the *relationship* between them. (Contrast this with the earlier discussion of the treatment of groups within and across cultures as identical.) Cultural differences can, therefore, be turned to good advantage, rather than merely avoided or exploited.

Conclusion

The treatment in TESOL texts of race, gender and other cultural issues is marked by considerable discrepancies with social reality. We have noted that generalisations are inevitable, and it would be absurd to ask that all aspects of infinitely varied society be shown in all textbooks, and yet many significant features of British life go unrepresented or misrepresented. Many teachers hold this view, and some express it unequivocally: "sexual stereotyping is widespread in EFL materials: in their language, their illustrations and in the roles given to women. This bias is often unconscious on the part of writers, publishers, designers and teachers" (Pugsley, 1988). This group stresses that women form fifty per cent of the population and forty per cent of the work force, urge all TESOL writers to maintain a balance between the sexes in texts and illustrations, and seek not only visibility for women, but the representation of most men and women as "whole human beings with human strengths and weaknesses". Among their recommendations are: avoiding the oversimple splitting of characteristics, e.g. logical coolness (men) and emotional subjectivity (women); and the distribution of abilities, occupations and dominant roles more evenly between the sexes. Indeed, qualities like sensitivity and assertiveness may be found in the same individual, as may courage and gentleness, whether the individual be a man or a woman.

Similarly, it is the diversity of world views, values and roles within as well as between cultures that needs to be addressed. Anglo-Americanism or Eurocentrism in many EFL textbooks can give an over-positive stereotype of the dominant group and lead to feelings of inferiority or resentment in the learner, while in ESL materials it has been with good intention that authors have provided characters with whom learners may identify – the unemployed, factory workers, and the extended family; nevertheless, to cast Asians only in those roles, whether they be Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, and whether they have come from the Indian sub-continent or from East Africa, is to deny the heterogeneity of these groups. The lack of a range of role models serves to limit learners' own horizons and their capabilities as perceived by others, and may ultimately contribute to feelings of helplessness as users rather than providers of services.

Where negative images are transmitted of those not in either the target or the learner group, the stereotype binds the latter two groups at the expense of the first. The myth of the savage African is particularly pernicious. Any individual's culture is part of their identity. It is dynamic and continually changing, although aspects will be conserved in different ways by different people. Diversity between cultures, whether along gender, race or class lines, needs to be recognised, but so do similarities. Stereotyping in TESOL blinkers teachers and students rather than broadening their vision.

We conclude by considering some factors determining the selection and omission of cultural images in TESOL.

(i) TESOL, particularly EFL, has long been a subject in search of subject matter, concerned with skills rather than knowledge. Without a programme of topical or cultural knowledge, any and every subject may be dealt with. EFL often appears to be the advertising arm of the tourist industry, but in general no explicit criteria govern the selection and ordering of subject content. We have referred earlier to the policy of rendering content bland and neutral, but "avoiding ideological issues is itself a political position". (Kerl quoted in Byram *op. cit.*)

(ii) Where no conscious guidelines exist, writers must fall back on their own personal interests, experience and values. It may thus be the case that TESOL materials represent not the British but that small sub-set of people who have access to and control of one branch of the printed media.

In men this blunder still you find
All think their little set mankind
(Quoted in Cooper and Hartmann 1980)

(Hannah More's use of "men" and "mankind" has a continuing significance.)

(iii) In terms of marketability, publishers may see no reason not to reinforce stereotypes. It may be seen as, if not impossible, counter-productive to challenge firmly held images, as if there were no middle way between telling learners what they want to hear, and totally contradicting their cherished impressions. Is this a conflict between educational and commercial priorities? The customer may always be right, but learners learn only when accepting that they are partly wrong, or ignorant. On this possibility of change in the learner's position, Bond (1987) demonstrates that initial impressions can be disconfirmed when we meet members of another group behaving contrary to expectation.

As to the desirability of challenging stereotypes, it is surely a responsibility of writers towards target and learner groups to promote learning through movement from ossified or stationary positions, especially as auto- and hetero-stereotypes are notoriously conservative:

The human understanding, when any proposition has once been laid down . . . forces everything else to add fresh support and confirmation . . . rather than sacrifice the authority of its first conclusions.
(Bacon, *Novum Organum*. Quoted in Bond *op. cit.*)

In some circumstances TESOL may seek a solution in Cultural Studies, in which the study of “way(s) of life, or culture(s) is treated as seriously as language study” (Byram *op. cit.*) In principle this approach rejects the idealised or tourist view as well as the tendency to treat cultural matters as mere incidentals. It follows that some TESOL teachers may benefit from a training in the social sciences, just as some ESP teachers require a background in science and technology.

We have stressed the need for conscious decision-taking in presenting cultural images. Future research into the omission/inclusion of specific features of culture may show an even greater degree of selectivity than our own (socially conditioned) reading of textbooks suggests. We have also focussed on the notion of partiality in encoding and decoding cultural messages. Partiality implies a lack of completeness, but has of course another closely related sense of “favouring one side or another”. Total impartiality may be unattainable, but it need not be unapproachable.

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Culture, Literature and the Language Classroom

Brian Harrison

‘The text you write must prove to me that it desires me.’ ‘Does writing in pleasure guarantee me, the writer, my reader’s pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader without knowing where he is.’ (Roland Barthes)

Let us begin by saying that if the text happens to be *Paradise Lost* and the reader a Bangladeshi schoolboy, a possible juxtaposition, then the location of the reader by the writer and vice-versa, through the text, could prove arduous except in the geographical sense. I happen to be writing these lines in Swaziland where in the Junior Certificate Examination, after three years in the secondary school, questions tend to be of the factual recall type — ‘which country did Gulliver go to first?’ What is left out is usually the imaginative, the personal and the inferential.

What Barthes (1975) is claiming is that the ‘message’ in any text does not flow unimpeded, as a constant, from the writer to the reader, but that each individual reader must wrestle with a given text, and will interpret it in the light of his or her sensibility, world-view and cultural experience, in whatever cultures. There is no such thing as a single, authoritative or canonical interpretation. It could be claimed that one of the things which the Structuralist movement, in which Barthes was a prime arbiter, brought to literary criticism was the quality of openness, the refusal to accept that in any given text there was a definitive meaning, to be prescribed by a dogmatic critic. This is not of course to say that any interpretation is as valid as any other, for literary competence comes through experience. It is not claimed, naturally, that the Structuralists invented openness — it is for one thing unusual to find a literary movement that owes nothing to its predecessors, however strident the disclaimers may be. T.S. Eliot (1957) writes as follows:

A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all of these meanings may be different from what the author thought he meant . . . The reader’s interpretation may differ from the author’s and be equally valid — it may even be better.

It is equally true, nevertheless, that for many critics what is called author's intention or the critic's interpretation of author's intention is of primary importance. An account by F.R. Leavis (1936) of Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* is full of categorical statements like:

Keats is strictly only half in love with death.

Keats entertains at one and the same time . . . It is so for Keats . . .

Leavis and what, following Leavis, is described as 'practical criticism' is still dominant amongst literature teachers in British schools.

The debate on author's intention is well summed up by John Sturrock (1986) writing about the post-structuralist critic Derrida.

That is, the meanings that are read into it (a text) may or may not coincide with the meanings which the author believes he or she has invested it with. A reasonable view is that a large number of these meanings will coincide, depending on how far separated author and readers are in time, space and culture; but that a large number of other meanings will not coincide. For language has powers of generating meanings irrespective of the wishes of those who use it.

In the last chapter of *After Babel* (1975) George Steiner makes a not dissimilar point to Barthes. He alludes to the nineteenth century debate on whether literalism or re-creation should be the dominant aim in translation, the problem faced by Fitzgerald in *Omar Khayyam* or, later, by Pound in the Cathay poems. It might be too cynical to point out that perhaps Fitzgerald and Pound re-created because they could not translate. For the foreign reader, however, re-creation is unavoidable, and interpretation and personal translation are closely linked. As K.M. Osterloh points out (1986):

Western language productions . . . aim at the individual experience of the reader, and expect him to relate to the text's manifestations and react accordingly. This use of the language is most difficult for the student from the Third World.

One of the reasons why it is difficult of course is that to react as an individual can be seen as culturally alien. In the Sanskrit tradition, the task of the chela, or pupil, is to listen to the guru and not query what he says. Questions of culturally appropriate behaviour are dealt with elsewhere in this book, but let us note in passing that a personal approach to Western literature can in different traditions involve severe modifications in teaching and learning styles as well as problems of content.

In the work cited George Steiner goes on to write about what he calls cultural topology, the question of dominant theme and variation in Western Literature from Greece to the present day. As a simple example he quotes Asclepiades:

'The joys of the Love-Goddess are to be found only among the living, girl, and we shall lie as no more than bone and dust in the place of death.'

This is echoed and re-echoed down the centuries in Horace's *Carpe diem*, in Herrick's *Gather ye rosebuds . . .*, in the Cavalier poet's *Give me a wench of just sixteen, already voted to the Queen of lusts and lovers*, to Auden's image of lovers embracing briefly beside a river — only the river flows on, 'You cannot conquer time.'

Here the theme is clear enough, the variation would come from the effect on it of, let us say, acceptance or rejection of Christian notions of sin, guilt or grace, but the question raised is to what extent a reader brought up in a culture of abnegation, of denial of sensual experience, would find these texts penetrable. Another example given by Steiner is the Oedipus myth, central in Western Literature, where, viewed from outside, abhorrence of surface behaviour might lead to an unwillingness to grapple with psychological universals, or, at least, universals as we in the West understand them.

The externals of English are being acquired by speakers wholly alien to the historical fabric, to the inventory of felt moral and cultural existence embodied in the language. The landscapes of experience, the field of idiomatic, symbolic, communal reference which give to the language its specific gravity, are distorted in transfer or lost altogether. As it spreads across the earth 'international English' is like a thin wash, marvellously fluid, but without adequate base. George Steiner (*op.cit.*)

Steiner then goes on to say 'So much that is being said is correct, so little is right'. Although it is possible to detect a note of elitism here, in that 'international English' does not merely serve purposes of high culture, and that in some areas the 'thin wash' might be sufficient, the central point is inescapable, teaching literature across cultures is an arduous business, both for teacher and student. Anthony Burgess (1987) makes much the same claims in his autobiography, writing about his teaching experiences in Malaysia:

Marriage in Christian novels had none of the dissolvable frivolity of its Malay equivalent. Literature is not universal. Malays would laugh at Graham Greene's 'The Heart of the matter', finding the dilemma of a man who commits suicide because he loves two women essentially comic. Shakespeare was usually acceptable, confirming the claim of his near universality . . . But George Eliot and Jane Austen were hard going even for Malays who used English as a second language.'

The question of whether there is a contradiction between claims for, for example, Shakespeare's universality and the notion of the impermeability of different cultures, is something to be discussed later.

Burgess goes on to write about his attempts to translate Eliot's *The Waste Land* into Bahasa Malay, and why he gave up.

*April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain*

*Bulan April ia-lah bulan yang dzalim sa-kali
Membawa bunga lilac daripada tanah mati
Memchamporkan ingatan dengan hafsu*

We did not get far with the Waste Land. It would not work. Why, in the tropics, should bulan April be different from any other bulan? How could a bulan be dzalim, or cruel? The attribution of a painful quality to a 'bulan' forced the Malay mind to interpret the word as menstruation. The Waste Land revealed itself, while the cats were chewing raw snake, as a very ingrown piece of literature which had nothing to say to a culture which had no word for Spring and did not understand the myth of the grail.

One's cavil here is not to deny the inaccessibility of poems like *The Waste Land* to those who grow up in another culture, but that it would be a mistake to assume that texts which are rich in classical, or biblical, or historical, or literary allusion are accessible even to pupils who grow up in our own culture. For many modern students, the associations of Glastonbury would be with a pop music festival rather than with an abbey which figures in Arthurian legend. It is not only across cultures that problems of interpretation exist.

We have thus far thus raised two questions, the problem of culturally-specific content and the problem of ensuring personal response, and alluded to a third, the problem of the dissonance between the second and accepted teaching and learning styles. Before attempting to provide solutions, however partial, to the first two, which will involve us in a discussion on whether the barriers raised are insuperable or merely difficult, let us consider briefly approaches to literature so far apparent both in TESOL and in the teaching of English as a mother tongue.

First, however, it is depressing to realise that in many parts of the world those responsible for English Literature syllabuses do not seem to realise that our two problems, cultural impermeability and the business of personal response, actually exist. The following text books have been selected for the 'O' Level English Literature Examination in Swaziland in 1990. *Macbeth* and George Eliot's *Silas Marner* are compulsory reading, and then teachers can choose for their students any two works from the following: Graham Greene's novel *The Human Factor*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Galsworthy's play *The Silver Box*, a collection of short stories by European authors, and one novel by an African writer, Katiyo's *A son of the Soil*. I would not necessarily argue for African writers in Africa merely on grounds of surface political and sociological 'relevance', but I do not think these factors should be neglected either. There is, however, much more chance in Southern Africa that the world of the text in novels like Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* will mesh with the real experience or folk experience of the reader than would be the case in that part of the globe with, let us say, *Pride and Prejudice*. One of the principles of text selection could be worlds cohering rather than worlds missing each other by several light years, whatever the purely literary merits of the texts involved.

It is difficult to see what principles, other than that of grab what first comes into one's head, underlie the collection mentioned above. It is, nonetheless, by far from being the worst case I have come across.

We mentioned earlier structuralist criticism and the business of personal response to literature. Now although the structuralist and post-structuralist movements and linguistic criticism generally have been influential in British as well as in other Western European universities, the debate has not yet really begun as far as British schools are concerned, or as far as schools in many countries where English is a medium of instruction are concerned. Liberal humanism is still the dominant mode. The Bullock Report 'A Language for Life' (1975) claims succinctly:

In Britain the tradition of literature teaching is one which aims at personal and moral growth, and in the last two decades this emphasis has grown.

The question of moral growth, or morality however defined, or moral values is difficult because unverifiable. In the tradition established by F.R. Leavis it would be claimed that literature has a civilising influence, that it leads to enlightenment, and that it stands in the way of a general decline into barbarism. This may indeed be so, but it seems to be mainly those who profess literature (critics, lecturers and teachers) who make the assertions rather than those who write it. It would be difficult to argue, at least, that the first group is more altruistic, or less venal than the rest of common humanity, or indeed that nations with an extensive literary corpus, well represented in the educational system, are less given to outrageous political conduct than those without one. Michael Stubbs (1982) has an anecdote, claimed to be true, about a professor of English who, when stopped by a seller of lapel flags for charity, said 'I've been stopped already', implying, falsely, that he had already contributed to the charity. It would obviously be ludicrous to proceed from this example to a generalisation that familiarity with literature makes one subtly ambiguous, devious, evasive and economical with the truth, but arguments that it inculcates the opposite virtues are no more firmly based.

Leaving aside morality, what is certain is that there is amongst many literature teachers in Britain a deeply-rooted aversion to any kind of linguistic analysis: it is felt, somehow, that to consider language is to destroy sensibility and diminish aesthetic appeal. As a linguist of sorts, I am at a loss to understand these feelings; I merely record the phenomenon. In *Teaching Practical Criticism* (1985), Margaret Mathieson writes:

Resistance to the introduction of linguistics and stylistics to replace the individual, personal, intuitive responses currently invited by this examination (The 'A' level paper in Practical Criticism) derives currently from four main sources: linguists' lack of interest in the personal and moral elements; their disregard for the social, historical and literary uses of language; the threatened proliferation of disciplines likely to fragment literary studies into semantics, historical linguistics, structural linguistics

(etc) . . . ; and its inevitable consequence, pre-occupation with separate small units, the word, sentence, the parts and not the whole.

Some of this is wrong headed: linguistic critics, so far as I know, are not trying to replace anything.

Margaret Mathieson herself quotes Madeleine Ferrar (1984) on the different but complementary nature of aesthetic and linguistic approaches. Some of it too is plainly wrong; one cannot as a matter of simple logic see how a linguistic approach to literature could disregard literary uses of language. Next, if there is one thing with which literary stylistics is concerned it is discourse, the interaction of language and social context and not 'the word, the phrase, the sentence'. Most of the rest of it has been anticipated (Fowler, 1966):

The image (of the linguist) is sometimes an unhappy one: pretension of scientific accuracy; obsession with an extensive, cumbersome and recondite terminology; display of analytic techniques; scorn of all that is subjective . . . But this view of the linguist — armed to the teeth and potentially destructive by his attack on a sensitive work of art — cannot be substantiated: it rarely has any factual basis in the actual practices and interests of linguistics.

Fowler goes on to say reasonably enough that linguistics, like 'literary criticism', is not homogeneous, and that there is no single linguistic approach to a text. None of this is to deny, of course, that some linguists have a rebarbative prose style and that some might seem over-concerned with elaborate model building, but what we are in the presence of is a powerful but defensive mythology about what linguists actually do. To give two very brief examples of what they might do: if F.R. Leavis claimed that T.S. Eliot was the first authentic poetic voice of the twentieth century, then a linguist, by examining Eliot's lexis, imagery and use of grammatical structure and comparing them with those of his predecessors, might want to establish whether this was so and how it was so. Secondly, if I read Winifred Nowotny's account (1962) of syntax, rhyme and diction in Pope's well-known lines beginning: 'Wher e're you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade', and how the interplay of these factors could be argued to affect my expectations of what is to come before it happens, then it seems to me that my response to the poem is more likely to be enhanced than shattered.

The advantage of an approach where one looks closely at texts and can consider linguistic, cultural, political, religious and social evidence, in short an approach which is catholic but analytic, is that meaning is not imposed on phenomena; on the contrary, meaning gradually emerges. It is not that linguists or structuralists deny personal testimony but would claim rather that it often needs to take somewhat longer in coming, to be supported by something more objective, although not of course value free.

Fowler's remarks quoted above echo something Roman Jakobson wrote in 1960:

I privately believe that the poetic incompetence of some bigoted linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realise that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.

This debate has indeed seemed interminable and unfortunately shows no sign of abating. Let us merely note the marked element of midden-crowing involved. Many people — and one has to say especially teachers of literature — seem more concerned to defend their own territory rather than seek cross-fertilisation or synthesis.

All of this is unfortunate as the various parties in the dispute seem, at least overtly, to want the same thing, to enable people to interpret literature personally rather than having didactic interpretations thrust upon them, thus causing any literary text to become merely a frozen artefact. As far as schools are concerned there is a paradox here in that one cannot in the early stages of literary appreciation allow uninformed or naive responses to pass unchallenged, yet the more the teacher interposes his or her views, or an authoritative critic's views, the less likely it is that adequate personal responses will develop. The paradox only exists, however, if teaching is seen synchronically rather than diachronically. Over time, the art of teaching, in Literature as in many other fields, is to know when to interpose and to withdraw, when to give information and when to keep quiet, when to present one's own views or one's own analysis and when to enable students to get on with developing theirs.

Agreement about aims and procedures should not nevertheless blind us to the fact that there are marked ideological differences between, let us say, Leavisites and those who see literature as socially engendered. The latter would argue that claims for the universal validity of literary or moral values are false (v Carter and Simpson, 1989). These change from culture to culture, and even within cultures, and from one period to another. This is not relativism gone mad, but merely a claim that a given work of literature has to be validated and re-validated according to the norms and tenets of the different societies which use it. Once again, one would expect there to be a measure of common ground.

Nonetheless, the Derridan claim that 'truth (if one means absolute truth) is an unwanted theological concept in literary study', is to be taken seriously. People have to find their own truths, in the light of their own cultures, which brings us back both to non-didactic classroom procedures and to cross-cultural approaches.

It seems to me finally that George Steiner overstates his case if he claims that works of literature are likely to be locked into particular cultures. The Japanese are not umbilically connected to Shakespeare's Scotland, but that has not prevented them from producing compelling interpretations of *Macbeth* on film and on the stage. They have their own history of blood lust and dynastic struggle. I once heard an anecdote told about a Japanese academic visiting Grasmere, who was heard

reciting Wordsworth's *Daffodils* in front of a bed of dandelions, but that does not mean that he had no appreciation of the poem. What does, of course, often get in the way of theme is the particular context in which it is worked out. However, this simply means that overseas much English literature, if approached at all, is best approached via something comparable in the local culture. The symbolism attached to the Rose is by no means the same as that attached to the Lotus, but there may be points of contact.

To sum up then, in English Literature problems of culture and its assimilability are real but can be exaggerated. Much depends on the sensitive choice of texts, so that students can be enabled to move from their own immediate world, over time, to other imaginative worlds. Here much depends again on skilled teaching, and that is in short supply in many parts of the world, including the metropolitan countries. As far as approaches are concerned, it seems to me that any argument which claims that literature belongs exclusively to linguists, or sociologists or psychologists, or literary critics of whatever persuasion, or professors of literature, is essentially reductionist. However, one can scarcely discuss literature without discussing the language in which it is cloaked, and to discuss language, as the Kingman Report (1988) pointed out, one needs a metalanguage. This metalanguage may or may not be explicit to students, but it should certainly be explicit to teachers. [As a last example, any teachers who want to consider an approach which is linguistic but which neglects neither social nor psychological meaning might try Walter Nash's *Changing the Guard at Elsinore* (Nash, 1989)].

To end, as we began, with Roland Barthes, his remark that 'literature is what gets taught', is intended as a warning against the all-too-prevalent tendency to regard literature as a body of work which belongs to prestigious institutions like universities and Boards of Examiners, rather than to its readers.

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Cultural and Educational Expectations in the Language Classroom

Martin Cortazzi

Introduction

As in any classroom, there are certain expectations of language lessons. Both teachers and learners have expectations about the content and the method of foreign language learning. Often these expectations are not articulated explicitly, or, where they are specified, it is likely that only the teacher verbalizes them, either to colleagues or directly to learners, often as an introduction to a course. Less obvious, perhaps, are the expectations and assumptions of what language *is* and how it is, or should be, *used*.

Where such expectations are congruent, or at least close, language learning will probably be that much easier. If the expectations are very diverse they may well constitute barriers to learning. This is especially likely to be the case when very different expectations are not recognized by teachers or learners.

The line of argument here is that these expectations derive primarily from often hidden assumptions embedded in participants' cultural backgrounds and/or stem from general orientations towards learning resulting from previous educational experiences.

Both these cultural and educational expectations originate from socialization patterns in early childhood or at key stages in education. Sensitivity to these expectations must surely be a useful element in a professional approach to language teaching. Possibly some direct issues concerning cultural and educational expectations can be raised in some classrooms in order to explore explicit cross-cultural usage and expectations in the target language and culture.

Expectations in the Classroom

Since the late 1960s some thought has been given to the effect of teachers' expectations on learning in the classroom, at least, in Western classrooms. The self-fulfilling prophecy is a well-known example of such an effect,

where it is proposed that learners tend to perform as well or as badly as their teachers expect. It is believed that the teacher's expectations are communicated to learners, particularly in unintended ways during classroom interaction and that this is an influence on later learning. (R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson, 1968) This effect could be viewed as a social variation of an early teaching of the Buddha; not so much, "As you think, so you will become", but rather, perhaps, "As you think of others, so they will become."

The idea of self-fulfilling expectations in the classroom is not without controversy, but has been fairly influential in British sociology of education. A reading of studies based on the concept could heighten language teachers' awareness of social processes, classroom interaction and learning.

R. Meighan (1968) outlines four stages in the build-up of such expectations:

1. Even before meeting learners, the teacher makes predictions based on his or her interpretive schemes or ideology of education.
2. Initial meetings in the classroom, key occasions when teacher and learners sound each other out and the teacher sets a pattern of working.
3. Subsequent patterns of classroom interaction over the longer term.
4. The teacher's retrospective assessment and reflection, leading to a reinforcement or modification of the original interpretive scheme.

Such a cycle could continue with different groups of learners. The teacher's interpretive scheme is said to be built up of complex patterns of such pairs of labels for learners as: bright/dull; quiet/noisy; likeable/not likeable. These labels, in turn, may be derived from cultural constructs — including the professional culture of teaching, in the country of origin or country of work. Once categorized, learners are thought to be treated according to the labels, with consequent effects on learning.

Students, of course, also have expectations of teachers (R. Nash, 1976), categorizing them along such lines as: interesting/boring; keeps order/ unable to keep order; teaches you/doesn't teach you. In complementary fashion these might be expected to change the learners' attitude to teachers and perhaps eventually modify teachers' own classroom behaviour. The relations between the sets of expectations must be reciprocal, if asymmetrical on occasion.

British research on teachers' and pupils' perspectives and expectations (e.g. P. Woods and M. Hammersley, 1977) takes a 'perspective' to be a matrix of assumptions by which someone makes sense of their world. Crucially, perspectives are not thought of as being simply reflections of reality, but rather as being constructed in the course of social interaction in terms essentially given by a culture. In this view, culture serves as a framework for the perception of others and guides the interpretation of classroom interaction and, more broadly, the construction of meaning in the classroom. It could be considered that this is what classrooms,

ultimately, are all about. The trend of such research is to examine the occupational culture of teaching and the processes of schooling in order to analyse how teachers and learners make sense of the classroom; what counts as teaching and learning; how intelligence, morality, learning and knowledge are socially constructed; how pupils are socialized into school and subsequently into society.

These studies have tended to concentrate on British teachers in U.K. schools, often working with deviant or difficult pupils in secondary schools. More importantly, they lack a multicultural perspective.

This last point is clearly significant if we are looking for relevance to language teaching where, especially in the context of TESOL, learning frequently takes place in culturally heterogeneous groups, or, at least, the teacher represents a culture quite different from that (or those) of the learners. If the work referred to above sees participants' expectations as having consequences for learning and classroom behaviour in a mono-cultural setting, we can expect potentially greater consequences in bi- or multi-cultural settings.

Key questions, in the general context of culture and language teaching, are, therefore:

- How might the cultural expectations of teachers and learners affect language learning processes?
- What sorts of effects are there when a language classroom uses cross-cultural communication patterns?
- Could we build some sensitivity to cultural expectations into the language classroom itself, as part of both the process and the content, implicitly and explicitly?

Socialization

It now seems well-established that different cultures make use of differently emphasized 'ways of speaking' (e.g. D. Hymes, 1977). For example, there is enormous cultural variation in how people speak, sequence their conversation, interrupt, use speech act types, employ silence and the like. Rather than merely considering patterns of phenomena which never appear in one's own society, it is probably more useful to reflect on the fact that most cross-cultural differences turn out to be differences in *context* and/or *frequency of occurrence* (B. Schieffelin and E. Ochs, 1986). Before looking at some examples related to the language classroom it is a worth while preliminary to link cross-cultural variation in ways of speaking with socialization and cultural transmission.

Socialization can be thought of as the process of acquiring adult roles, internalizing the beliefs and values of society. Thus parents and other adults or older peers display in interaction with children the expected ways of thinking, feeling and acting (W. Wentworth, 1980). Socialization is clearly linked to cultural transmission. It takes place through the medium of language, but children are also socialized into ways of using

language, which is itself an important part of culture, and varies widely across the world. Language in interaction with children is thus a major if not *the* major tool for transmitting sociocultural knowledge and is a powerful medium for socialization.

Vygotsky suggested that through speech cultural forms are internalized and, at the same time, when socialized speech is turned inwards, higher cognitive functions originate. The medium of social interaction is taken over and internalized, reorganizing thinking (L. Vygotsky, 1962). His notion of a 'zone of proximal development' has been taken up by Bruner in terms of 'scaffolding' and 'formats' (J. Bruner, 1983). Here, structured cooperative 'interactions' — with young children in the form of lap games, nursery rhymes, finger plays, the use of picture books, in the course of which learners progressively take responsibility for the initiative or create variations — are seen as being of great importance in mother tongue acquisition. In fact, the language acquisition appears to be a by-product, and vehicle, of cultural transmission.

One can begin to ask whether there are parallel routines of classroom interaction where learners are socialized into relevant language *and* into aspects of the target culture: forms of greetings, classroom organizational routines, forms of pair work, correction techniques etc . . . The Vygotskian perspective is seen as crucial in D. Edwards and N. Mercer's (1987) analysis of classroom talk with older learners. The Vygotskian process is, however, observed as being incomplete in classrooms because there is often no final handover of responsibility for knowledge and control to learners. Would teachers or learners expect this handover? The observed result is that pupils often fail to learn because they are preoccupied with procedures rather than trying to grasp the purpose, concepts or principles of classroom activities.

Since cultures differ enormously with respect to socialization, and more particularly, regarding *language socialization* (B. Schieffelin and E. Ochs *ibid*), we can expect wide variation in cultural concepts, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge which learners bring with them to the classroom *and* — the vital point, here — in the learner's beliefs, attitudes and expectations of language behaviour, language learning and use. These products of early socialization in the family and first language speech community will, by the time second languages in education are being learned, be overlaid with further expectations of language learning and learning in general derived from the educational system itself.

In fact, there is increasing recognition that children and older learners *are* socialized into learning patterns in classrooms. Infant teachers, for example, use explicit language to help newcomers settle into classroom routines. The teachers may not always be conscious, however, of the tightly structured nature of much classroom interaction. This interaction can be regarded as a culturally transmitted source of instruction about rights, rules, roles and unspoken assumptions about how to learn and what is worth learning. (e.g. M.J. Willes, 1983)

We could ask the following sorts of questions of any classroom:

- Who speaks most of the time?
- Who asks most of the questions?
- Who evaluates the answers to questions?
- Who has the right to interrupt others?
- Who says whether, when and how others may speak?
- Who controls the language of interaction?
- Who says what has been learnt, how well and why?

The answer to such questions in many classrooms the world over would be: the teacher.

Probably the reason why the answers to the above questions relate to the teacher is that fundamentally they depend on a transmission view of education. Such a view sees the teacher's knowledge as being transmitted to learners and it can be contrasted with the more innovative view that learners creatively build up knowledge and concepts through activity, participation and the experience of verbal expression. (D. Barnes, 1976) These two views reveal a major contrast between education as cultural transmission or as innovation and social change. The first is closely associated with cultures stressing continuity, stability and group identity. The second is linked in the West with an emphasis on individual development and personal experience, which is a different cultural emphasis. Both aspects are present in most cultures but receive very different emphasis, with the result that varied expectations come about, affecting presuppositions about learning and teaching.

The point here is that learners are socialized into such patterns and roles in classroom interaction at a very young age. They are a deeply embedded part of learners' expectations about what should happen in 'normal' classrooms. Many learners will expect the foreign language classroom to be 'normal' in these respects. They will expect the language teacher to be a 'normal' teacher.

Where teachers want or expect different styles of learning or interaction, for such reasons as learners' age, type of institution, methodological approach, etc., then they will probably need to take time to socialize learners into new ways. This process has been analysed at the secondary level of education (A.D. Edwards and V.J. Furlong, 1978).

As is implied by the likely answer to the above series of questions, classroom language, in most classrooms, can be characterized as a centralized communication system controlled by the teacher. Knowledge, skills and attitudes and how to acquire them are socially constructed in teacher-learner talk. This is doubly true of the foreign language classroom where the target language is at the same time both the *content* and, usually, the *medium* of learning.

An example of a commonly identified pattern of oral exchange in classrooms is:

QUESTION – ANSWER – EVALUATION OF ANSWER

This three-part exchange is nearly always matched with the classroom roles of teacher and learner:

QUESTION — ANSWER — EVALUATION OF ANSWER
(TEACHER) (LEARNER) (TEACHER)

The learner's role could be viewed as the middle of a sandwich, signalled and sealed by the teacher. So much does such a pattern become expected that the absence of a third part, silence from a teacher after an answer, is interpreted as a negative evaluation and learners may offer other alternative answers. (e.g. J.Mc. Sinclair and D. Brazil, 1982)

This kind of exchange has a useful function in language teaching where the teacher evaluates the answer and the language of the answer. However, its use is bound to be limited, if only because learners need to practise the skill of asking questions themselves. Techniques to give rapid, intensive practice, such as pair work, on the other hand, often clash with cultural/educational expectations of learners. Reactions may be the following:

Why are we being asked to talk to each other and ask each other questions? The teacher should ask the questions and listen to the answers and correct them. If we are all talking in pairs together, how can the teacher correct us?

These are common educational and cultural assumptions about what teachers should do. Unexplained violations of the expected norm by teachers enthusiastically embracing communicative approaches may lead to the diminution of their status and perceived competence in learners' eyes. The teacher is not behaving in ways learners have come to expect good teachers to behave. Since learners do not expect to learn much from a bad teacher, a cycle of expectations with possibly deleterious effects (like the self-fulfilling prophecy) is set in motion. The learners' feelings are not likely to be voiced, especially if courtesy, respect for teachers, and lack of face-to-face conflict are part of the reasons for their reluctance to participate. If culturally orientated to individual learning, the teacher may draw erroneous conclusions about their academic ability or personality. This, in turn, may lead to the teacher lowering his or her expectations of student performance, setting in motion another self-fulfilling prophecy. The expectation gap thus widens with implications for both teaching and learning.

Further Examples

The perceived nature of a language and learners' cultural and educational experience of it may influence their expectations of second language learning.

To learn to read and write Chinese needs much tracing, overwriting, copying and memorizing characters. The sound and meaning of a character or combination of characters cannot necessarily be deduced from their appearance, in contrast to scripts with more or less phonetic

alphabets. Learning to read Chinese is seen as requiring some analysis of character components, but consists mostly of memory, hard work and rote-learning. Arguably this is because of the nature of Chinese writing, but it occurs in an educational setting which may emphasize these qualities in any case. Consequently, Chinese learners are likely to perceive reading skills as involving: the need to know vocabulary; to memorize words; to read slowly and carefully, a word at a time.

Naturally enough, Chinese students and their Chinese teachers would expect other languages to be taught according to these expectations, using a carefully controlled, structured, memory-oriented approach.

This could contrast greatly with an EFL teacher expecting to use recent Western approaches, where prediction, context skills, skimming, scanning, fluency are involved, and the need to memorize words is de-emphasized. Unless there is some adjustment of expectations on either or both sides, the attempt to use current Western approaches in China would be perceived by the learners as being inappropriate, or even as bad teaching.

A somewhat different, more powerful expectation arises with some Arabic speakers. It is common for Arabic to be admired by its speakers for its logic, mathematical precision and perfection. This perception may be heavily, if unconsciously, reinforced by religion. The Islamic view is that God revealed Himself through the Word of the Qur'an which therefore represents *par excellence* the perfection of its language, Arabic. Added to this is the prohibition of much artistic representation, especially of the divine, except through calligraphy. This leads to mystical traditions that Arabic names and letters represent the highest possible manifestation of the divine in Islamic thought (e.g. A. Schimmel, 1975). Writing has higher value than speech. Arabic script has far higher value than other scripts, according to such a religious and cultural view.

Students of English socialized into this attitude in early childhood, and taught it in religious classes in school or mosque, may well, unconsciously regard English as inferior. English grammar is seen as illogical. The language, however useful for higher education, science and technology or travel, will be perceived as inglorious, second best compared to Arabic, the language of Revelation. God chose Arabic, not English. In this light, it would be understandable if some Arabic speakers from an Islamic background seemed reluctant to make a real effort to master English. Perhaps even handwriting is unconsciously affected. Some students who are pleased to produce elaborate Arabic calligraphic designs will write English carelessly and untidily. Chinese learners writing English, in contrast, with a similar careful and exact, though more visual approach to script than Arabic learners, will generally write English carefully and neatly, with far fewer spelling errors.

Academic Contexts

Cultural and educational expectations in Western tertiary education include:

- knowing and understanding different points of view;
- critical evaluation of alternative theories, approaches etc;
- arriving at balanced judgements;
- presenting clear lines of argument rather than description or information;
- acknowledging sources used.

Yet staff in academic institutions sometimes find students:

- only considering one 'correct' point of view;
- reproducing lecture notes;
- describing information without critical evaluation;
- quoting sources without acknowledgment, copying;
- not presenting clear lines of argument.

When we look at education systems and cultures around the world, we soon realize that many students have been socialized into an academic approach based on reproducing transmitted knowledge where respect for teachers, scholars and those in authority is paramount and where to criticize publicly is culturally or politically unacceptable. Respect for authority may not show itself in acknowledging sources, however, since what is true may be considered more important than who says it, 'copying' from a book may have been acceptable and is easier. There are right answers and truths, so why waste time considering known wrong alternatives? Since students arriving in Western institutions have often been extremely successful at home, it is bound to be a challenge to adjust to such different academic expectations elsewhere, especially where language issues or culture shock are also involved.

Western academics may be presenting students with cultural challenges when insisting on their approach. One could ask whether it might be part of the approach itself, as presented to students, to consider Oriental or African learning/cultural styles explicitly, with examples, before imposing a particular model of academic life. This could be considered as a consideration of alternatives before reaching a balanced judgement. Such a strategy with overseas students might then exemplify the expected approach.

Japanese – English Contrasts

As a further more systematic example let us consider Japanese cultural, educational and linguistic expectations. Drawing on Barnlund (1975), Condon and Saito (1974), Shimahara (1979), and other authors, we could list the following contrasts with the U.S.A.. It should be clear that these contrasts reflect differences in emphasis rather than absolute categories.

The reader could pause to make predictions of likely classroom expectations and difficulties based on the table below . . .

	JAPAN	U.S.A.
CULTURE:	homogenous hierachical group harmony consensus group dependence avoid confrontation emphasize empathy + non-verbal elements	heterogenous egalitarian individuality independence self-confidence confrontation acceptable stress verbal communication
EDUCATION:	repetition, memory, persistence respect authority exams are crucial fear of failure accept group consensus	understanding develop critical ideas exams less important less fear of failure debate ideas
LANGUAGE:	complex scripts strong word orientation prefer hints, ambiguity, indirectness listener interprets use of intuition avoid disagreement avoid direct questions distrust speech prefer formal, regulated situations reluctance for verbal intimacy	one simple script meaning orientation prefer explicitness, being straightforward speaker makes clear verbal clarity disagreement acceptable many direct questions speech shows confidence prefer informal, spontaneous situations willingness for verbal intimacy

The Japanese see themselves as reserved, formal, silent, cautious, evasive and serious. Americans see themselves as self-assertive, frank, informal, spontaneous, talkative and humourous (C. Barnlund *op cit*).

These perceptions affect expectations of what and how to communicate, which could be tabulated:

	JAPANESE	U.S.A.
CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION	develop interpersonal attitudes	debate ideas
MODE OF COMMUNICATION	use intuition	use logical argument
AIM OF COMMUNICATION	attain social harmony	reach valid conclusions

Many of these cultural features are likely to be transferred to English by Japanese speakers or vice versa by Americans.

The avoidance of disagreement is an instance. The Japanese "exquisite politeness can never say 'no'. But his 'yes' may be capable of almost infinite interpretation. It may mean 'no' or 'perhaps' or 'wait we shall look into this' or perhaps an affirmative 'yes' . . ." (M. Random 1987, p.24). Ueda (1974) includes other ways of saying 'no': silence, ambiguity, expressions of apology, regret, doubt, lying . . . This raises the question of how language teachers working with Japanese learners might handle such language functions as expressing personal opinion, disagreement, contradiction, counterargument, and so on.

Classroom Learning about Expectations

There are two obvious strategies which might be adopted by teachers in order to tackle the issues raised here. Firstly, for teachers to acquire knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, learners' cultural and educational backgrounds, and perhaps consider adjusting their own expectations accordingly. This is clearly far easier with homogenous groups of students. By reading about and, where possible, experiencing, aspects of the relevant culture, by talking with learners about their educational and cultural expectations and by reflection, observation and listening to learners, teachers can improve their own cross-cultural skills.

Secondly, there is the possibility of students themselves understanding more about cultural expectations through classroom activities. Approaches here could include examples of cross-cultural misunderstanding written into normal course materials, leading students to work out what happened and why. Given that misunderstandings commonly occur in situations involving cross-cultural communication, even without the factor of language learning, it is curious that this kind of task appears so infrequently in standard published materials.

Case studies of variant expectations for role playing and analysis could be used as supplementary material using such sources as Brislin *et al.* (1986), which contains explanations of the perspectives involved. Explicit texts on ways of speaking can be used for reading and other language tasks (e.g. J. Rubin, 1980), where the content relates to cross-cultural issues.

In the case of Japan, for instance, one could draw on humorous examples (G. Mikes, 1970), detailed studies, such as *Sixteen Ways to Avoid Saying 'No' in Japan* (K. Ueda, 1974) or Barnlund (1975), or applied linguistic studies (e.g. K. Noguchi, 1987).

Similarly, reading selected texts on cultural uses of smiles, gestures, space, touch, body language, etc (J. Hall, 1976) could lead to light-hearted but useful discussion.

A further possibility is to use cross-cultural training materials involving tasks, exercises, role playing, and workshop activities (e.g. P. Casse, 1981). The aim here would be to provide learners with the conditions to create

multiple understandings of one situation and to reflect on varying cultural perspectives, expectations and assumptions, thus raising their awareness, knowledge and skill. Pedersen (1988) lists some important factors which teachers and learners might need to consider in order to develop such awareness:

- interest in another culture
- sensitivity to non-verbal cues
- ability to recognize direct and indirect communication styles
- sensitivity to cultural stereotypes
- ability to articulate elements of one's own culture
- awareness of communication relationships between cultural groups
- criteria for judging 'good' or 'bad' communication from another culture's point of view

An even more explicit possibility is to focus on culture shock (A. Furnham, S. Bochner, 1980). Pre-session courses for overseas students in the UK often include consideration of psychological, social, emotional, and health problems as a step in this direction. However, problems of culture shock often occur later in a course when a student is more isolated from others in a similar position.

Perhaps these more explicit suggestions would be useful for teachers' cultural sensitivity too. In order to learn something, there is nothing like teaching it. Do we become what we teach?

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Culture and Language: Teaching ESL in England

Euan Reid

Language and Cultures in England in the 80s

When discussing culture in the language classroom in the context of the teaching of English as a Second Language in England, the learning situation we are dealing with is of a particular kind. It is noticeably different from that confronting the Foreign Language, or English as a Foreign Language, traditions which some of the other contributions in this collection draw on. Typically what we do *not* have is a homogeneous group of learners from one relatively easily defined cultural tradition setting out to study the language and culture of another well-defined group, of more or less equal status and power in the world.

Rather, we are faced with a heterogeneous group, in terms of the languages and cultural traditions from which they come. They are the children and grandchildren of migrants living in a complex and dynamic set of overlapping and interacting sub-cultures, some of them pretty hostile to the learners. In this kind of situation, 'culture' ceases to be a matter of academic interest only: cultural choices have to be made at every moment of the learners' daily existence. They are involved in a constant effort to project particular identities consisting of elements of the parental or ancestral traditions and elements of the new society.

To illustrate what may be an unfamiliar context for many readers, thumb-nail sketches are offered below of the school populations in several English education authorities in the 1980s (Linguistic Minorities Project, 1985). Readers may like to ask themselves to what extent the cultural traditions represented in these places are reflected in English teaching materials which they know.

Bradford: A wool-manufacturing town in West Yorkshire which is typical of many of the Northern and Midland conurbations in terms of the languages spoken by its school population. Apart from English, the dominant languages are Urdu and Panjabi from Pakistan, Kashmir and, to a lesser extent, from Indian Panjab. Men speaking these languages were recruited, in the 1950s and 60s, as cheap labour for the declining

mills. Under the legislation in force at that time, their families were able to join them, so that by the mid-60s the schools were taking in quite large numbers of 'non-English speakers', as they were then usually referred to. In the mid-80s such children amounted to about a quarter of the school population in Bradford.

Peterborough: Situated in the East Midlands, it is classified as a 'new town', meaning that it has made a special effort to attract growth industries to replace the employment lost in the declining sectors of the economy in which many of the original immigrants were employed. Again Panjabi and Urdu are prominent minority languages there, but so is Italian — spoken now by the children and grandchildren of the original, mostly Southern Italian, migrants who came to Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire in the post-World War Two period, often to work in the tough conditions of the brickworks. Linguistic minorities in the early 1980s represented a much smaller proportion of the school population in Peterborough than in Bradford — about 7 per cent.

Haringey: The picture in terms of this North London borough is rather different. The major minority languages in this area are Greek and Turkish — both spoken mostly by people whose families came from the island of Cyprus. Greek and Turkish speakers in North London together dominate some sectors of the clothing industry, with a high proportion of women used as home-workers. There is also in Haringey a particularly large number of other languages, including South Asian, a pattern typical of most parts of London: in 1981, speakers of minority languages represented nearly a third of the total school population in Haringey.

Inner London: In these schools speakers of Bengali (or rather Sylheti, a variety of Bengali spoken in the North-Eastern corner of Bangladesh) are the biggest minority. Sylheti speakers have lived until recently mostly in the East End of London, but are now also in neighbouring areas. They too are prominent in the clothing and restaurant trade, and have much the worst working and housing conditions of all migrant groups in England, as well as suffering from substantial racial harassment (CRE, 1987; 1988.) The next most frequently reported language in Inner London is Turkish, followed by a wide range of other language groups — more than 150 in total, with the largest numbers being speakers of languages from South Asia and Southern Europe. In the London boroughs north of the Thames, more than a third of the children are now 'non-Anglo' British (ILEA, 1987).

Sociolinguistic Networks at School and at Home

It will be evident from the previous section that there are likely to be particular linguistic or cultural minorities which are predominant in different areas of towns and cities, so that one school may become *de facto* the institution where, for example, Bengali-speakers or Greek-speakers go.

However, the more typical population in English inner city schools is made up of pupils whose families have come from many different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, so that classrooms are the setting for implicit and explicit *multicultural* or *intercultural* learning. This makes a transmissional approach to culture, even if that is what teachers wanted to adopt, extremely difficult. With so many cultures involved, the logistics of such an operation would be well beyond most schools, apart from the fact that there are wider educational objections to the kinds of separate groupings of pupils implied.

In spite of these problems, and the rather static and backward-looking concept of culture implied by the terminology used, the European Communities' 'Directive on the Education of the Children of Migrant Workers' refers to the agreement by Member States '... to promote ... teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin ...' (EC, 1977: Article 3). This aspect of the Directive seems to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and the kind of cultural teaching which is undertaken most successfully seems to be focussed much more on process than on product — a model which may well also be of more general applicability.

To add a further layer to the complexity of the situation, we now set out some data on intergenerational patterns of language use, which have been collected in the course of research by the Linguistic Minorities Project (1983) in Bradford and Peterborough. Secondary-age school pupils were asked, among other things, who they used different languages with at home and at school. Although their responses need to be interpreted with some caution, given the school context in which the enquiry was carried out, they do suggest rather clearly the dynamics of their situation.

In the top half of the Table the first rather obvious point to notice is the shift towards English from one generation to the next — most dramatically shown in the differences between the child's language use with siblings compared with what they speak with parents. In the bottom half of the Table, another significant aspect is the non-reciprocal language use implied by the contrast between the top and bottom of the Table, for example between parents and children. In other words, there are clearly a good many conversations in which mother or father uses the minority language to the child, who understands it, but replies in English.

Such complexities of interlanguage switching and mixing are confirmed if we also look at patterns of adult language use. Figure One includes two sets of data from the Linguistic Minorities Project's Adult Language Use Survey in London in 1981, based on questions asked, firstly among Gujerati, then among Greek speakers, about the languages used in their households. In both cases, for high proportions of the samples, it is not a simple matter of choosing, in a particular setting, either English or the mother tongue, but of using both in varying proportions (Reid, Morawska & Smith, 1985). In other words, we are looking at linguistic and cultural content situations, rather than simply movement from one discrete language or culture to another.

Table One: *Intergenerational Patterns of Language Use*

	<i>Peterborough</i>				<i>Bradford</i>			
	n	% minority language	% English	% both equally	n	% minority language	% English	% both equally
To my father I usually speak:	129	51	17	32	203	71	16	13
To my mother I usually speak:	132	62	13	25	209	78	11	11
To my brother(s) I usually speak:	112	16	50	34	200	19	60	21
To my sister(s) I usually speak:	107	17	49	34	189	25	54	21
To my grandfather(s) I usually speak:	83	74	16	10	127	87	6	6
To my grandmother(s) I usually speak:	95	78	13	9	130	78	6	16
My father usually speaks to me in:	128	62	16	22	203	76	14	9
My mother usually speaks to me in:	133	70	14	16	206	87	8	5
My grandfather(s) usually speak to me in:	83	82	14	4	131	87	8	5
My grandmother(s) usually speak to me in:	95	82	11	7	132	88	9	3
In school breaks, my friends and I usually speak in:	131	3	81	16	202	9	84	6

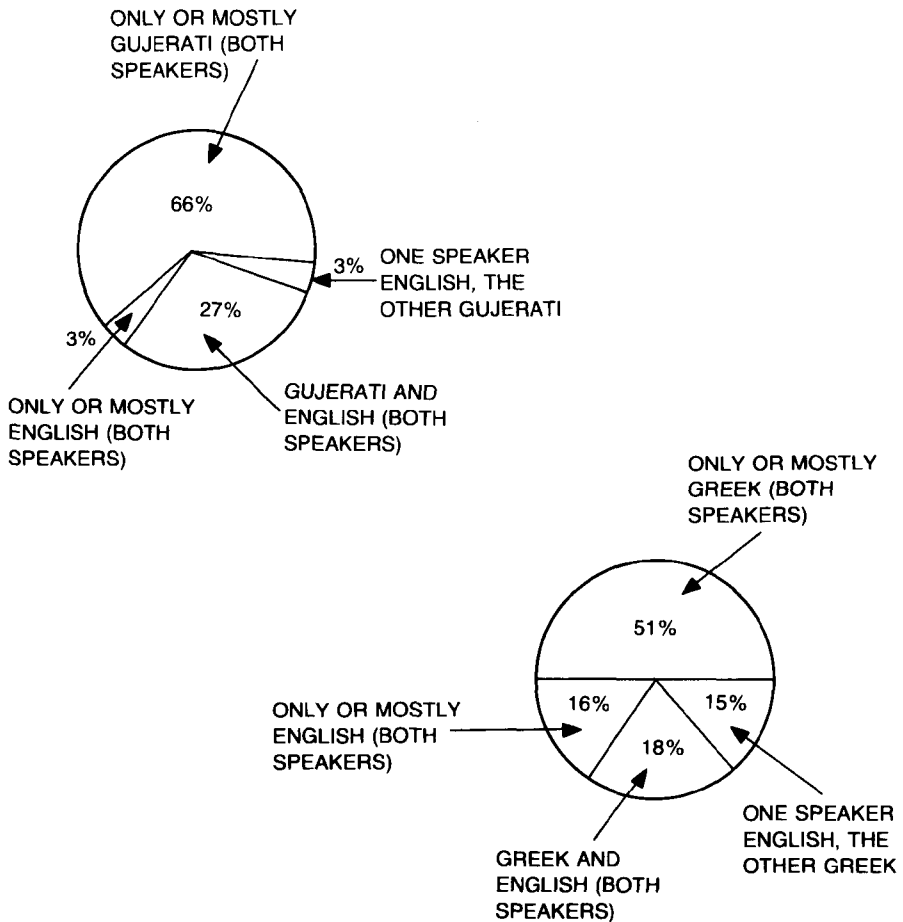


Figure One: *Household Language Use in Two London Minorities*

Studies have also begun to appear which document and discuss in the British context phenomena familiar from many other parts of the world, such as code-switching and code-mixing (Agnihotri, 1979; Hewitt, 1986). Rather less is now heard of pathological categorisations of children seen as 'trapped' or 'lost between two cultures'. More talked of now are notions to do with cultural fusion and the emergence of new cultures and their linguistic manifestations.

The Educational Response

Table Two (Reid, 1988) represents one view of the last 25 years or so, divided into three main phases, roughly 1962–1970, 1970–1977 and 1977 to the present. My dates probably represent most accurately ‘progressive practice’, particularly in the London area, rather than being generally true for the country as a whole. The headings of the other columns for each phase taken together are intended to give a comprehensive picture of the institutional framework within which ESL in England has developed during this period. It will be noted that consideration of cultural learning, certainly as far as the majority of pupils are concerned, is evident only in the later phases.

Table Two: *English as a Second Language in England 1962–1988*

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Learners</i>	<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Journals & Associations</i>
1962–70	‘Immigrant children’ or ‘non-English speakers’	‘Induction centres’ or ‘language centres’ [No MTT]	Structurally based — from foreign language teaching or EFL models	ATEPO 1 ‘English for immigrants’ ATEPO 2
1970–77	‘Ethnic minority’ or ‘Linguistic minority’ pupils	‘Withdrawal groups’ ‘mixed classes’ [MTT only <i>out of school</i>]	Thematically based — from primary school ‘topic’ models	‘Multiracial school’ NAME 1 New Approaches to
1977 onwards	‘Bilingual learners’ or ‘Black Asian (etc.) British’	‘Mainstream’ or ‘Regular classes’ [<i>some MTT in school</i>]	Curriculum content-based — science, history, (etc.)	Multiracial Education NAME 2 (National Antiracist Movement in Education)

Source: Reid, 1988: 186

In the first phase, during the 1960s, the initial response of local education authorities to the arrival of immigrant children in many of the larger conurbations was to set up separate language or ‘induction’ centres — although it was probably only ever a minority of new arrivals

in the country as a whole who attended such centres: see Townsend (1971), Bourne (1989 forthcoming). In the centres pupils spent up to two years, separated from their English-speaking peers, ostensibly so that they could be taught English to a level which would allow them to join classes in ordinary schools, but also in fact to satisfy majority parents that their children would not be 'held back' by the presence of large numbers of culturally different children in the same classes.

In such centres there was usually also some teaching of subjects other than English, at least at the secondary stage, but the curriculum was much narrower than in regular schools, and the teaching staff rarely included a full range of specialist teachers (CRE, 1986). The teaching materials developed specifically for use in such contexts were derived essentially from foreign language teaching models of the kind prevalent in the 1960s. That is to say, they were structurally-based, but were given settings appropriate to the inner urban areas where most migrants lived on first arrival in the new country, and incorporated characters representing families from India, Pakistan, Cyprus and Jamaica, as well as 'indigenous' people (SCOPE Stage One, 1969).

The cultural and ideological basis of such materials was broadly liberal pluralist, reflecting the optimistic attitudes more common then than now about race relations. They have to be seen in part as attempts to move on from the assimilationist assumptions even more common among teachers in British schools at that time than now.

By the early 1970s, in what may be seen as the second phase, more attention was being given to meeting the needs of what were by then often referred to as 'ethnic minority' or 'linguistic minority' pupils in the context of ordinary schools, at least at the primary stage of education. Sometimes this was still in 'withdrawal classes': children were taken out from their ordinary classes for an hour or more each day, or twice a week, and given special tuition in English. Meanwhile their classmates were doing something else. The teaching materials used in such classes overlapped considerably with those from Phase One.

However, the most significant move during this period was towards trying to teach children in 'mixed classes' — i.e. linguistically and culturally heterogeneous classes consisting of native English speakers, children whose parents had come from the Caribbean and who spoke some kind of Creole-influenced variety of English, and speakers of other languages. In terms of learning materials, this implied a shift away from teacher-centred, structurally-based foreign language-type materials, and towards child-centred, thematically-based materials, usable in 'mixed ability' situations (SCOPE Stage Two, 1972). The origins of this approach to language teaching for linguistic minority children lies much more in good mainstream primary school practice, using 'centre of interest', thematically-based approaches to learning.

The cultural content of the SCOPE Stage 2 materials broadened considerably to include reference, for example, to migration out of the UK as well as into it, and to population movements and ways of life in

many different parts of the world, and in different historical periods. This was accompanied by a shift of attention away from an exclusive pre-occupation with 'them', and a fuller recognition that an appropriate educational context for ESL learners would also have to involve changes in the cultural and linguistic education of 'us' — the Anglo-Saxon, (or 'Anglo-Celtic'), majority.

In this phase of language education, as in the previous one, almost no support was given to the learner's mother tongue, at least not in the mainstream curriculum. At best mother tongue teaching was given a kind of marginal status during the school day, with classes meeting irregularly in lunch-hours or after school, and taught voluntarily by bilingual teachers, who were quite often not language-teaching specialists themselves.

By the beginning of the third phase, which had begun in most areas by the mid- to late 1970s, a further significant shift was beginning to take place. It was marked in part by changes in terminology: the expression 'bilingual learners' came to replace the term 'second language learners' or 'linguistic minority pupils' from Phase Two. (Occasionally terms like 'Black British' or 'Black Asian British' were found, but they have never come into general use, since they imply a degree of equality and integration which goes well beyond what has actually been achieved.)

More significantly, perhaps, this third phase is marked by changes in institutional arrangements. Local authorities are beginning to close even their secondary level language centres, and to put more and more emphasis on what has become known as 'mainstreaming' — the placing of all learners, even newcomers, from a very early stage in their education, into regular classes in all subjects of the school curriculum. This is usually accompanied by the development of 'language support' roles for ESL teachers, and, more recently and less certainly, of 'collaborative' teaching approaches.

As far as English language syllabuses and teaching materials are concerned, these are increasingly rare, replaced in effect by the syllabuses and materials of the mainstream standard curriculum — in science, history, home economics, geography, etc.

The cultural and ideological messages built into these materials of course vary enormously, and there is an ongoing debate about the appropriate context and teaching style in controversial areas of the curriculum. On the one hand are those who, for example, favour a more or less radical transformation of what is taught about history or geography, with reference to Britain's relationships with the Third World. On the other hand are those who wish to continue with a more or less traditional view of Britain as an entirely benevolent and non-exploitative power, contributing generously to the 'civilising' of less fortunate parts of the world. The current introduction of a National Curriculum, much more susceptible to central government control, is likely, in the short term at least, to favour the latter group.

As part of the build-up to the 1987 British General Election, a Committee of Enquiry into Teaching about the English Language in schools was set up by the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Although it did not report until after the election (Kingman, 1988), the public debate provided the occasion for much lobbying on the subject of English teaching in schools.

Contributions to the debate included a booklet *English our English* (Marenbon, 1987), which attacks what it sees as the current orthodoxy, embodied in the writings of liberal and leftist educationists and sociolinguists, the national schools inspectorate, the teacher training establishment and the reformed examination system at 16+. It makes a plea for the reinstatement of the traditional cultural values associated, in this view, with the teaching of English. It demands an almost exclusive emphasis on standard written English, at the expense of the development of 'oracy', and a return to the classical canon of English literature – at the expense of contemporary writing, or interest in newer genres, or writing by authors working in Britain now but coming from other traditions.

Not only does this kind of emphasis seem to undervalue much of the most invigorating writing being published in Britain in the 1980s, for example by Rushdie, Mo, Ishiguro, Seth, Naipaul, it also ignores the problems of accessibility of particular kinds of writing to young people in schools and colleges not exclusively populated by upper middle class white males in the more salubrious areas of Southern England.

The kind of separate provision for English Language learning sketched out earlier in this section seemed to many at the time entirely a matter of common sense, and indeed in several parts of the country still seems so to those responsible for administering the schools. The cultural and indeed political messages carried by such arrangements were not obvious to many of those involved.

However, at the end of 1986, the Commission for Racial Equality published the result of a thorough investigation into a system of this kind, in Calderdale, Yorkshire (CRE, 1986). They presented a formidable case showing that the system was in fact discriminatory in effect (whatever the intentions behind it were), and in several quite serious ways it was clearly in breach of both educational and race relations legislation designed to ensure equality of treatment and opportunity. The view of most people in the field now is that this 'Calderdale Report' will mark the belated end of Phase One throughout the country. Separate provision can no longer plausibly be presented as equal provision: cultural contact and exchange is at the heart of effective learning.

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Foreign Language Teaching and Young People's Perceptions of Other Cultures

Michael Byram

The aims of foreign language teaching

My purpose in this article is to introduce a research project which has been taking place at the University of Durham over the last three years. The article represents only a part of our work, but will explain the rationale, the methodology and some initial findings.

In order to explain why the research was undertaken it is necessary to explain briefly the development of foreign language teaching in England in the last two decades. The biggest problem which British language teachers have faced in the last two or three decades is how to teach languages — usually French — to *all* pupils whatever their motivation and ability. In the mid-1970s teachers began to take note of the work of the Council of Europe and of “communicative language teaching”. New syllabuses, new examinations and, by implication, new methods were developed in what became known as the Graded Objectives in Modern Languages Movement (Hewett and Page, 1987). Essentially the pupils were to be persuaded that they would soon be going to France and that when they did, they would not survive in this alien and hostile environment without some skills in French. Thus, ideally, pupils were taken to that hostile and alien land, to prove to them how necessary it was to learn the essential vocabulary to ask for a coffee, a loaf of bread, and the toilets. Of course, this is a caricature of communicative language teaching, but it is not all that much of a caricature of what French teaching consisted of. Personally, I felt there were two things missing. First, my pupils were not learning a satisfactory version of the French language but only memorising lists of phrases. As a consequence, they were not gaining any understanding of what French, English or language in general *is*. Secondly, they were not gaining any insight into the French way of life, nor were their attitudes to France changing in any desirable way — if anything, they were becoming more hostile and ethnocentric.

And yet, when asked by other colleagues what purpose there was in teaching French to *all* pupils, I would talk about “broadening their horizons”, making them “more tolerant”. Now, ten years later, I could answer the question by quoting the national inspectors of education who have listed what they call the “human and social aims” of foreign language teaching. The inspectors say that learning a foreign language helps to “increase social competence”, to “foster positive attitudes towards other countries” and peoples, to “awaken an interest in foreign cultures and lifestyles” and so on (HMI, 1987).

Unfortunately, like the rest of us, the inspectors have nothing more concrete to say about how all this is done in the day to day processes of the foreign language classroom. All they say is that these things happen as a consequence of “mastering linguistic objectives”. So we are simply told to get on with teaching language for communication, and hope for the best.

A second reason for quoting the inspectors is that in the last ten years their role has changed. Once they used to inspect what *was* happening in schools and report confidentially to the Minister; now they say what *ought* to happen in schools and then tell the general public if it *is*. This change arises out of changes at a political level. The details are specific to the English education system but it is a useful reminder that all teaching, including language teaching, is a political activity. The kind of language teaching which, in day to day practice, is concerned with *skills* and holds a narrow view of communication as a way of bridging information gaps and passing messages, is a politically conservative activity. No doubt few language teachers in England would accept this view, for most would consider their work to be apolitical. Everyone is aware that the introduction of a new national curriculum for all subjects is an important political issue. Yet the specific language policy which encourages the teaching of language as a set of skills would not be seen as a political issue.

In Germany, on the other hand, the history of language teaching demonstrates much more explicitly that language teaching is subject to the pressures of contemporary politics (Buttjes, in press). In particular, it has been the developments in Landeskunde, that is, teaching about the foreign country and people or ‘cultural studies’, which have been at the centre of controversy and pressure. If we really do pursue the aims which the national inspectors describe, the achievement of something that might be called “international social awareness”, then we shall be more evidently involved in a political activity. We, therefore, ought to stop presenting the foreign culture as an alien environment, or, what is scarcely better, as a holiday centre for the tourist-consumer.

In brief, there are two related points: the first is that language teaching can claim to have social significance, and to contribute to pupils’ general education by introducing them to cultures other than their own. Second, all language teaching which includes some attempt to present another culture — however well or badly this is done — is a political activity,

because no presentation can be apolitical, whatever the intentions of the teacher. These are the reasons why it is important to investigate and improve upon the cultural studies aspect of foreign language teaching. Of course, the word 'improve' itself introduces many new questions, with both methodological and political significance. Initially, however, it is necessary to establish some empirical evidence on the basis of which developments might be properly founded. This is the purpose of the project in question.

The Durham Project

The aim of the project is to provide some empirical information on contemporary language teaching and its effects on pupils' perceptions of other cultures.

Two concepts are frequently used when the issue of 'broadening pupils' horizons' is discussed. First, it is said, they should gain 'insight' into a foreign culture or way of life, and, secondly, they should acquire 'positive attitudes' or 'tolerance' towards speakers of foreign languages and their cultures. These are the terms used, for example, in the National Criteria for the English General Certificate of Secondary Education (DES, 1985). In order to investigate the effects of language teaching, these concepts have to be operationalised. This was done in several ways. First, a measure of pupil attitudes towards other peoples was devised, based on Osgood's semantic differential (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1967). Secondly, the notion of 'insight' was operationalised in terms of what pupils know about the foreign way of life, or 'culture' as described by social anthropologists. Finally, the language teaching process was analysed with respect to the cultural studies dimension by classroom observation. Essentially this means we have three kinds of data:

First

- information about pupils' background and any factors which might influence their insight and tolerance,

together with

- a measurement of their attitudes towards French people (and two other nationalities, the Germans and the Americans, for purposes of comparison).

Second

- informal interviews in which pupils talk about their knowledge of French culture, their attitudes to the French and other foreign people, and the sources and influences they feel they are under at school and elsewhere.

Third

- observations of French teaching during a period of 8 months, in which

attention was paid to how teachers and pupils talk about France and the French way of life.

These three kinds of data were analysed in three ways:

1. Statistical associations between:

level of ethnocentricity (attitudes to French people):

and – exposure to French teaching

– socio-economic status

– gender/sex

– visits abroad

– parents' knowledge of languages

– etc. (other 'background' factors)

2. 'Textual' analysis of interviews with pupils selected by three levels of ethnocentricity; this included analysis of

– attitudes expressed and reasons given

– knowledge of aspects of French life

– sources of knowledge

– views of French teaching re. knowledge (e.g. views of textbook expectations of what 'French' will be or ought to be

3. Analysis of fieldnotes taken during observations of French lessons,

e.g. what kind of information is given by teachers

what kind of 'talk' about France takes place

analysis of the 'image' of France in the textbook.

The amount of data available is too vast to summarise. In particular, analyses of interviews and classroom observations are difficult to present in brief. Almost half of the 400 pupils involved were interviewed for an average of about 40 minutes each and the interviews transcribed. Seven teachers were observed in a variety of classes for several months until it was decided to focus on four teachers and their third year classes. Ultimately, the intention is to combine all three dimensions of the analysis in order to see what patterns of teaching and learning may emerge.

Research Findings

Initially, it is possible to select some findings from each aspect. Let us take first that which is easy to summarise but ultimately less interesting: statistical analysis of attitudes.

The independent variables found to be most strongly associated with attitudes tended to be those measuring pupil background rather than their experience of other countries and languages. Gender, membership of a particular school class, age and socio-economic status are more significantly related to attitudes than are experiential variables such as having foreign relations, language learning experience in the family and experience of other countries.

Gender was found to be one of the variables most frequently associated with variance in attitude scores. Whether in primary or secondary schools, girls have a more positive attitude towards French people than boys. Of three groups, the French, the Germans and the Americans, only the last are mainly positively perceived by boys. Given the preponderance of girls studying languages in Britain, the fact that girls have positive attitudes towards a foreign people before they start learning a foreign language is particularly interesting.

Being in a particular class at school — both primary and secondary — appears to associate significantly with attitudes. As school class serves both as a descriptor of a collection of pupils receiving similar teaching and as a descriptor of an aggregate of individuals having a variety of backgrounds and experience, interaction amongst factors is likely to be present. Gender is one factor to be considered, as is foreign travel. Two secondary classes with the highest positions in the rank listing of attitudes both have high proportions of girls in them. Further, classes rated highest in achievement in French are highest in their regard for the French, although in general individual pupils' achievement in French does *not* covary with attitudes to the French.

With respect to age, the younger age group (both boys and girls) showed generally more negative attitudes towards one people — the Germans. The corollary of this was that the younger age group perceived the Americans, who, of course, have a similar linguistic background, even more favourably than did the older age-group. It is evident, however, that the relations between age, school class and gender are so complex that no firm conclusion as to the significance of French teaching can be drawn from statistical analysis alone. Such statistics simply suggest ways in which the analysis of interview transcripts and field notes might be best pursued.

The analysis of interviews was done under four headings: by attitude, by topic, by source or 'input' and by school class. We wanted to see, first, what ideas and opinions lie behind the levels of ethnocentricity we had measured. Second, we wanted to discover what kind of knowledge pupils have of French people and their way of life. Third, we wanted to ask pupils themselves what kind of influences *they* think form their views and attitudes, as opposed to statistical analysis of variables. Fourthly, we want to relate the ideas and attitudes of the pupils in the four classes — observed in detail — to the observations made of their teachers and the processes of teaching.

Here it is possible only to give some examples from interviews while stressing that this does not do justice to the range of material or to the procedure of qualitative, textual analysis. Let us begin with *attitudes*.

The majority of pupils interviewed were asked about their attitudes towards French people. For both age groups the correspondence between scores on the semantic differential test and attitudes expressed in interview was reasonably clear. The greatest correspondence was found amongst those pupils categorised as 'non-ethnocentric'. In the other two

groups — 'ethnocentric' and 'medium ethnocentric' — pupils expressed both positive and negative views about the French, but where extremely negative and hostile attitudes were expressed, these came exclusively from those in the 'ethnocentric' group. An illustration of the latter point in a most vehement form is the following: — (I = Interviewer; P = Pupil):

- I: Have you met any French people over here or when you were in Spain?
P: I didn't meet any when I was in Spain but when I was in — when some of the French people came over here they all, like, walked around the school, lashing out with dirty looks and everything. I just don't like the way they look at you, they look at you as to say what are you looking at — I don't like them.

On the other hand, the range of views within the 'ethnocentric' group is represented in the following two quotations:

- P: The people, they are not very polite, not very sociable.
I: When you say — they are not very polite — how do you mean?
P: Like, when I was in Boulogne we went into a cafe and asked if we could go to the toilet and they snapped at us and told us that we couldn't go in because with it being a cafe and that. It wouldn't have been so bad if they had told us politely we couldn't go but they snapped at us and we had to go out.

This incident contrasts with another from a school trip. The pupil here had a different view of what had been interpreted as harassment by others. He also noted the use of trying to make verbal contact:

- P: all he (i.e. a French boy) wanted to do was see who they were 'cause they were English, they were different and sort of he started talking as we walked past 'cause we were lost and told us where the hostel was and took us back to the hostel, all helpful. Just if you talk to them not if you sort of shout at them in a loud voice and try and get over in English they ignore you but if you try to talk to them in French they'll help you as much as they can.

The second heading for interviews was a series of *topics or aspects of French life*. The topics discussed in interviews were mainly decided in advance and introduced into the conversation in an informal way by the interviewer. In addition, pupils also introduced their own topics from time to time. Topics included: aspects of family life, schools, the way people dress, food and drink, famous people, French history and contemporary politics, religion, French attitudes to other nationalities, and so on.

On some topics — particularly food and drink — pupils have a lot to say both before and after they have begun to learn French. With others, their knowledge seems very limited *before* they begin French, and after three years they have had no specific help in extending their knowledge from their teachers or textbooks. One such topic is religion, something which is fundamental to the understanding of any culture.

Compare what one pupil who had not yet started French had to say:

The religion . . . I should think that they were, yes, they would just be probably the same as us, except that there might be a few more pagans. No, I think they'd be more like us, yes.

And one of the pupils, who had had 3 years of French:

P: Probably just the same as English but they have like — they don't have Church of England.

I: No?

P: They probably have Christianity, unless it didn't spread over there.

I: Well I wondered if you'd ever heard about it spreading over there?

P: No, we had a bit in history. Like when people had to flee and they fled to different countries.

I suspect by 'Christianity' he means Protestantism and the persecution of the Huguenots. Otherwise pupils said they did not know anything because they hadn't 'done' it in lessons, saying for example, "We haven't got up to that yet". One interviewer was aware that the textbook has pictures of Notre Dame and asked

I: Have you seen any pictures of famous churches at all?

P: No, not in France.

I: No? Notre Dame?

P: Oh, I have heard of it. I don't think we did anything about the church in it though.

The third heading for interviews was *Sources of Knowledge*. On the question of sources and influence, statistical analysis had revealed no significant associations between degree of ethnocentricity and experiential factors. The advantage of qualitative analysis is that it can nonetheless reveal interesting trends and individual experiences even if statistical analysis does not prove significant. Perhaps not surprisingly, television was mentioned quite often. Pupils who had not yet begun French mentioned three kinds of programme: news, comedy, and holiday and cookery programmes — and advertisements. Here is one example which also illustrates some of the characteristics of interviews with young children:

P: I like the French. I think the food might be O.K. I've never ever tasted it before but I think they're good cooks. They know how to cook better than what the Spanish do.

I: You've heard that, have you, that they're good cooks?

P: Yes, 'cause like if you turned on BBC2 sometimes on Sundays, you might watch them, and all that. On BBC1, there's all singing and that; like this woman with a red thing on her head and playing music, and that.

I: Like (inaudible) Indian?

P: Yes.

I: But what about BBC2. What were you telling me about BBC2, then?

P: Oh, like they tell you how to cook in French and different? religion? ?religion?

- I: Right. So what — that's what you would say about the French then?
P: Yes.
I: Anything else?
P: No — like, — I don't like onions but I think they like peeling onions, 'cause their eyes never start to water.

Older pupils watch *news* programmes more frequently but their reactions and retention of information is varied. Some contrasted the impression given by television with their own experience. For example:

- I: Do you think you learn much about France from the television?
P: It depends, like, when there was a lot on the news about the French farmers and that, everybody took the English side, but it wasn't all the French people that were doing that, it was just some of them. I didn't really believe what they were doing because they are not like that when we go over. They all welcome you and everything. It's nice.

French *films* on television seem to have very little following, either among pupils or their parents. The use of sub-titles seems to be a major factor:

- I: What about French films. Have you ever seen any on the television?
P: My mum always turns them off 'cause she can't understand them, 'cause they're all sub-titles.

One boy had quite specific reasons for not watching French films:

- P: I don't really watch many films. I don't know but to me the French seem romantic and I'm not all that much into romance.
I: What gives you that impression then?
P: I don't know, just the way they talk; they are so smooth and going on about the women and everything.
I: Yes, go on, where did you get that idea from then?
P: Well, you can see them going around kissing anybody and you just think, oh, romantic. I don't know, you just pick bits up from here and there.
I: Yes, well go on, that's what is interesting — where you pick the bits up from.
P: Well, when you see them on T.V. you see photos of them; yes; every now and then you will see a picture in a newspaper of a Frenchman doing something.
I: You can't pin it down any more than that?
P: . . . Like I said before, the way they are always going on kissing each other. Don't know how but I just get the impression that they are a romantic race.

The fourth approach to interview analysis was to consider *all the interviews from one class together*. On the basis of this, a combination is made of that part of the investigation based on pupil interviews and tests, and that based on observations in class, as well as interviews with teachers. It would be too complex to illustrate here, but it is evident that many pupils are fully aware of the significance of the teacher's contribution to their knowledge:

. . . Probably learn a lot more from the teacher than I do from the textbook because they've usually had, like, more experience and that, and they're easy to understand than just reading it 'cause if somebody tells you it sticks in your mind than just reading it.

The analysis of the third kind of data — which I have so far referred to as classroom observation — reveals that in fact more than classroom observation was involved although this was a major part of the task. The analysis falls into two broad categories. The first is tied to the ethnographic level, to the level of the data themselves. It consists of descriptions of the processes in the classroom, analysis of the textbook, and interviews with teachers.

The second level of analysis involves an extraction of characteristics from the detail of the processes in order to compare the teaching styles of four selected teachers and their classes. These characteristics arise out of the observations rather than being imposed upon them. Since the observations were carried out by a sociologist with no teaching experience, we hope that the characteristics are as little influenced as possible by preconceptions of what is or ought to be happening in the foreign language classroom.

Again it is difficult to do justice to the detailed accounts of individual studies. Each teacher is different not only in personality and experience but also in terms of professional qualifications and responsibilities. Nonetheless four features relevant to cultural teaching were identified as common to the four teachers. The first takes us back to the question of aims expressed by many teachers, irrespective of whether and how they are realised in classroom practice. The views expressed concerning the role and importance of cultural study can be divided roughly into two kinds, those which relate to the personal development of children, and those confined to the conduct of the lesson. When asked if and why cultural learning is important, the teachers generally talked about how it is important for children to know about other ways of living which may or may not be better than their own. Through such knowledge they may become more tolerant of other peoples and less restricted in their own lifestyle. One teacher says:

You have got to be adding something to the kids' lives other than the ability to say 'Je suis Anglais' . . . They have got to be able to say at the end of it, yes well I have learnt this and that or that about French people or about France so that you have actually changed their concepts, especially around here . . .

Another says:

. . . I always tell them straightaway that there is more to life than Newfarm because they honestly can't see more and that one way out is to travel and see what other possibilities there are and that they will improve as people if they can see how other people are and they needn't be wasting their time say not knowing what to do in Newfarm. This helps me of course because I say — have a language, do something with

it and off you go. Obviously plugging my subject. But I feel the quality of life differences should be stressed because children like them miss out and don't realise it.

So there is a general philosophy among these teachers of positively developing children's personalities. In addition, cultural information is seen as a pedagogic device for capturing the interest of pupils, contextualising their language learning, giving light relief or filling in lessons where pupils' language learning ability is believed to be limited. This second function is briefly expressed in the second teacher's description above "plugging my subject". Other teachers talk about how important it is for the country to be made real to the learner rather than "a nondescript place" or "never never land".

The third common factor was the extent and nature of teachers' experience of France. This tended to be the result of, in the main, visits to, or work in, schools in France, or alternatively brief holidays; it was usually a combination of the two. Their personal experience of France as a source or stock of knowledge on which to draw is therefore quite limited in range, despite the frequent visits made by some teachers. The significance of the fourth factor — the textbook — is therefore all the more marked. Even the most independent of the teachers charts a course through three volumes of the textbook topic by topic. At the very least, it provides a strong core around which he or she builds his or her lessons. Very few lessons are conducted without opening the textbook and many lessons consist of a series of exercises from the book. The textbook provides an over-all structure to the information children receive about the language and culture in terms of topics.

The textbook itself was analysed in terms of its cultural content and criteria of realism developed from literary criticism. On the one hand, the textbook aims to prepare pupils for a tourist-consumer visit to France and on this basis it is largely successful. The result is what we have called the 'royal visit' image, in which everyone smiles, greets, and is attendant to the visitor's needs. The less attractive or more mundane features of life do not appear. On the other hand, judged by criteria of balance and realism, the textbook image is superficial and biased. It does not provide the basis for developing the insight and positive attitudes which the teachers talk about, and which is discussed by the national inspectors quoted above.

The second level of analysis of classroom observation is an attempt to generalise within the four case studies. Eight factors were identified as being significant with respect to the amount of cultural information introduced into lessons and the ways in which the information was presented. By grading each teacher's style with the particular class on each of the eight characteristics, it is possible to establish a basis for comparison which is abstracted from notes taken in lessons over several months. These characteristics remain tied to the particular cases observed and no claim is made that they can be generalised to other teachers. They may be a useful starting point for other teachers to analyse their own teaching practices, but that remains to be seen.

In the more immediate future, the task is to combine the three kinds of data into a description of the interaction between teaching process, pupil attitudes and knowledge, background factors and other influences on pupils' learning. This promises to be a difficult task.

Conclusion

In this final section, I do not intend to draw up a list of 'conclusions'. Despite popular views of empirical research, I do not think the kind of investigation I have described can on its own produce conclusions on how to improve existing practices. The word 'improve' introduces a lot of new questions, which can only be answered by a combination of theory, empiricism, politics and philosophy.

I want instead to anticipate some of the questions which may arise. For example, what is the significance of a study of children and teachers in schools in the North of England? Can it be generalised to other schools and other countries? Does it tell teachers anything they don't already know, intuitively, about their pupils and themselves? Does it help teachers change their techniques? Does it tell textbook writers how to write better books?

Remember that the original question was: Is there any justification for my assumption that teaching pupils French "broadens their horizons". Personally, I now believe that the assumption is not inevitably justified. Teaching French as it is done now and as was done in the 1970s does not automatically give pupils more insight and tolerance. It can do quite the opposite. Furthermore, teaching French is only one of the factors which determine insight and tolerance, and the feeling which teachers often have of swimming against the tide is explicable in terms of the background influences evident in pupils' interviews. What "my auntie says" often has a very powerful effect.

Of course, it is not possible to generalise from a study of particular cases. This empirical investigation has got to be seen in the wider context: of theoretical writings, of other investigations, of discussions of the politics and philosophy of language teaching. The value of an empirical investigation is that it gives some sense of urgency and credibility to the need for a re-assessment of issues. The history of language teaching — especially in the post-war period — has been dominated by discussions of methodology of teaching, of psychology of learning and acquisition of linguistic competence. The shift to 'communicative competence' has been in some ways a disappointment. It has introduced us to the need to teach language in use, but it has still been concerned with linguistic skills and performance. Certainly this represents progress, but I think we should build on the progress. In practice, we have been too concerned with teaching the skills of 'communicative *performance*' and assessing those skills in terms of 'communicative *behaviour*'. In its fullest and richest meaning communicative *competence* as opposed to performance includes the notions of insight and positive attitudes we have been

investigating. That competence which underlies performance is not a question merely of skills or behaviour. It involves fundamental aspects of pupils' personality and experience. Teaching which gives pupils what we might call 'intercultural communicative competence' is doing more than providing them with a skill they can sell in the market place. It is doing that too; but it is also making an important contribution to their education. That is what, in my view, language and culture teaching should be doing, and I hope our empirical investigation will help to make that a little more evident to all of us.

Note

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The Cultural Context of Foreign Language Learning in Great Britain

Roy Dunning

I shall begin with what Kenneth Burke terms a “representative anecdote.” A few years back, during the world cup matches in Spain, I was listening to a BBC TV reporter talking about the inevitable crowd trouble at an England game. He was interviewing a young man who had been involved in a physical confrontation with some Spanish spectators. He asked him if the Spaniards had understood what the English had been shouting at them. “No,” he replied, “they don’t understand the lingo, do they?”

At first sight, it may seem unreasonable to regard that young man as the spokesperson of anything other than the sub-culture of the terraces but somehow he is representative of more than that narrow class of trouble-makers at football matches. Why should it seem natural to him to be in a foreign country insulting foreign nationals – and, presumably, being insulted by them – just as if he were at home abusing the fans of the opposing team? Why should it seem unremarkable to him that the language they did not understand was not spoken in their country? Why did he not comment on the fact that he and his friends could not speak Spanish? Why should he assume that because the interviewer shared his language, he also shared his cultural assumptions? His choice of syntax and lexis make it abundantly clear that such relativities do not lie within his concerns. We are dealing with absolutes here: the Spanish cannot be expected to understand English for no other reason than that English belongs to the English and not to foreigners. If we are to try to situate foreign language learning in secondary schools in Great Britain in its cultural context, from where shall we acquire our data and how evaluate them? In a relatively homogeneous, mono-cultural society, the task of a writer describing language learning as a cultural event would be much simplified by the social framework in which the event took place. But even in such a society, the writer would have difficulty in evaluating the role of the teachers. One might categorise and catalogue traditional and innovative orthodoxies, separating out grammatical from

audio-lingual, notional-functional from communicative — or whatever clusters and fusions seemed preferred — but there would still be little real evidence of what teachers actually do in classrooms.

Our society is not mono-cultural, it is rather patchily multi-cultural. As Dumas observed, “*Toute généralisation est dangereuse, même celle-ci!*”. The problem is rendered more opaque by the absence of serious ethnographic research in the area. Cuts in the social science departments of higher education, the shortage of research funds have played their part in this while also being themselves aspects of the cultural context — the blindness to any need to know. What I propose to do firstly, is to look at what Palmer calls “this language-learning business” as a multi-level abstraction, profiling some of the more prominent features which have cultural relevance to the present state of the art. Then, in the latter part of the article, I describe an attempt in which I have been personally involved to direct energies in a more positive direction. I am acutely aware that what some readers may find interesting insights, others will dismiss as unsubstantiated assertions.

HM Government have now decided to include a foreign language in the National Curriculum. This tardy response to the situation has profound resource implications which the Government’s policies will implacably refuse to meet. Over the last 20 years, the decline in the numbers of children taking O Level in French has continued to reduce the numbers of those taking A Level. The Graduate Teacher Training Registry shows that the substantial dropping off in the numbers of students applying to train as foreign language teachers in 1987 will drop further in 1989. As foreign language teachers are now in short supply, it is difficult to attach much credence to government statements of intent in this area. The discontinuity between profession and action is, however, itself a feature of the culture: only the rhetoric changes. The dominant presumption of our culture appears to be that English is not only a necessary but a (self-) sufficient condition for being human. The imperialist legacy will not be rehearsed here, but there is little evidence that the nation’s leaders seriously mean to shrug it off.

Let us start with the education of the teachers. Most University foreign language courses are, with some outstanding exceptions, literature based and taught in English. The students spend most of their academic time on the literature of the country whose language they are studying. They write essays in English, evaluating the literature according to the critical canon. Their competence in the language is developed by translation work and conversation with the Assistant. They are assessed on their ability to write the language accurately in prose and essay. Their oral competence will be assumed to improve as a result of their spending a year abroad as an assistant in a school or a foreign university. On their return (if my students are any guide), that increased fluency will be largely ignored by their tutors.

As a result, students are hardly likely to emerge from university foreign language departments bearing the message that communication counts.

In many years of interviewing students for the PGCE foreign languages group at Leicester University School of Education, I have rarely met a student able to say that their course had been conducted entirely or even mainly in the foreign language. The situation contrasts unfavourably with continental practice where language is seen as part of culture and not separate from it. If we turn to the schools as institutions, it is evident that the time devoted to foreign language learning reflects local conditions. The variation between and within LEAs is not to be accounted for solely in terms of available staffing. Nor can the relatively poor takeup of foreign languages at the optional level (usually year four in secondary schools) be taken at its face value as a reliable indicator — either positive or negative — of the motivation of the learners. LEAs and schools have for many years been aware of the country's need for foreign language learning in at least a European context. However, option systems in schools reflect society's values and in many schools powerful interests ensure that the most able learners — those from whom language users will be recruited — take combinations of subjects which exclude foreign languages. Early specialisation and the need to maintain or increase status ensure that children are seen as a market to be won: success means survival or enhancement of one's discipline; failure means retrenchment or decline.

Within the institutions in which they work, foreign language teachers may be seen as emerging from the state of shock induced by the introduction of comprehensive schools in the early 60s, with the consequent widening of the language learning population. Although it is probably true to say that most foreign language teachers accept the ethos of a foreign language for all, elements of a yearning for the lost status of yesteryear may be discerned in much language policy.

In some ways, the institutional messages conveyed by schools are ambivalent. On the one hand, foreign languages have low social status — as confirmed in the culture — but, on the other, they have high academic prestige in that they are traditionally difficult subjects to do well in.

Most foreign language teachers are women, the graduates among them being used to obtaining high grades in a difficult but alien subject. The low social status of the subject is confirmed by this fact that it fails to attract boys as learners or men as teachers. Power groups in and outside schools are male dominated. Rejection of foreignness may be seen as a reinforcement of male orientation in a largely xenophobic society — what is colloquially often referred to as the Falklands factor.

The marginalised position of foreign language teachers in secondary schools is, of course, only a subset of the position of teachers in society. Within schools, sub-cultures of both teachers and taught have their own salient features; and the foreign languages teachers are no exception. The simple fact that the foreign language *is* foreign tends to highlight the subject specialist image of the department. Indeed, most are likely to be called “modern” rather than “foreign” languages departments. The

throwback to the classical/modern dichotomy situates the subject in its specialist historical role as privileging the European languages as uniquely suitable for study in schools. Other specialists, English or history teachers for example, also profess a subject, but they are likely to feel some sense of contiguity with other areas of the curriculum — even with those which most appear to threaten their identities as separate subjects. Foreign languages teachers feel no such bonds — unless it be conceptually with other subjects deemed to be equally linear. And, where such links exist, for example in inner city schools, the association of ESL with the remedial department or of community languages with non-specialist teachers, may seem to some a most unwelcome reminder of their own lack of status. Consequently, even if the bonding is not actually resisted, it may not be actively sought. The existence of community languages may appear as competition for available space on the timetable and for the most able learners.

Pedagogically, foreign languages teachers favour high standards of accuracy. It is significant that grammatical accuracy — especially in the written language — tends to be prized more than accuracy in any of the other language systems. Even concepts of accuracy in the spoken language tend to derive from grammatical descriptions of the written forms, no other being readily available. It may not be fanciful to see in this somewhat disproportionate concern with one aspect of language use, a mirroring of that hypersensitivity of lower middle class New Yorkers studied by Labov (1972). The grammatical features he isolates as subject to hypercorrection are seen as reflecting the linguistic insecurity experienced by a group uncertain of its social status. If we move to the level of the classroom, the population beginning to learn a foreign language will be, for the most part, confronting a culture other than their own for the first time. Many will, of course, be speakers of languages other than English; some will be functionally competent in more than one language, at least in their spoken varieties. Those who approach foreign language learning from a background of competencies in other languages are unlikely to have learned those languages in schools or for school purposes. Their own culture and language will show elements of bi-culturality. They will all have experienced at first hand the host culture's reception of deviance. Learners will show a wide differentiation in their perceptual awareness of the nature of the differences between languages and of the commonalities between them. The political disenfranchisement of the teacher is reflected in the pedagogical disenfranchisement of both teacher and learner in the foreign language classroom. Although communication is said to be on everybody's lips, language learning still takes place in classrooms in which about 30 learners are taught together in timetable slots and at frequencies owing more to administrative convenience than to a concern for the optimisation of learning.

The cultural predispositions of the teacher, the quality and focus of initial and in-service education, the size and timetabling of classes — all conspire to make much foreign language learning a class teaching

event, with the teacher mediating a textbook to children seated in rows. Whatever is to be learned is in the textbook. It is the author, not the teacher who controls the content and purpose of the learning: the teacher's function is to pace the learners up steps cut out by others.

This dominance of the magisterial mode and of the near-universality of the textbook privilege print over sound and teaching over learning. In such a paradigm, learning has to do with convergence: successful learners accept their subordinate status and conform to what teacher and textbook dictate. In the schools where it operates learners will not, for example, be encouraged to work out, say, grammatical patterns for themselves, they will simply listen to the explanation and learn the forms for homework.

It would not be true to say that foreign languages teachers have been disenfranchised by the deliberate acts of others: their collusion in their own lack of autonomy is a response to the culture which authenticates it. It is a sad reflection on the state of affairs that a nationally imposed GCSE is deemed necessary to ensure that foreign language learning leads to some sort of competence in communication!

At the point at which the learners become socialised in the foreign language classroom, they have to learn that it is not they but their teacher who is the prime mover in determining progress in learning. Whereas in some other subject areas they will be encouraged — as they had perhaps been encouraged in their primary schools — to express their own views, to tell their own stories, to give their own opinions and to make guesses on the basis of their own experiential learning, in the foreign language classroom they will be playing some kind of game in which the teacher alone knows all the rules. Of course, all classrooms manifest systematic, unconscious teacher behaviour which learners can manipulate in their own interests of economy of effort, but foreign language classrooms constitute a special case.

The transfer from primary to secondary school, with all its implications of growing up, will for many children entail dramatically different learning modes and patterns. There will not necessarily be a single, clean break — many of their practices will be continued at secondary level — but the multi-subject curriculum confronts children with a variety of teaching and learning styles. Although it would probably be unwise to speculate, my guess would be that, if first year pupils were asked to cluster their learning experiences analogically, listing like with like, the foreign language experience would either stand alone or not cluster easily with other subjects.

The parameters within which foreign language learning takes place makes the lessons culturally isolated events. Instead of there being a dialogue in class about a topic — Stonehenge, vectors, an experiment, a poem, etc — in the course of which meanings are exchanged, in the foreign language classroom the learners, having initially no foreign language, have to learn somehow that they are expected to use whatever the teacher says in order to be able to say whatever the teacher asks or instructs them to say.

As they are unlikely to achieve instant mastery of the phonological, lexical, grammatical and discourse systems involved, their teacher will correct them in the thoroughly laudable attempt to teach them the systems. The learners' attempt to cooperate verbally with the teacher will therefore expose them not only to the possibility of error, but to the inevitability of its public correction. Obviously this correction can be done in a variety of ways, but the important thing is that it takes place. Immediately, the status of the individual learner relative to the others in the class is put into sharp focus. The mere fact of correction may underline for some learners that their learning is inadequate or faulty. The possibility that these mistakes are tentative, initial hypotheses to be abandoned later for more positive and secure systems will not occur to many. As a consequence, some learners may soon feel that foreign language learning is only for the clever ones, or for teacher's pets!

Since successful language learning does require the acquisition of the systems — not complete mastery, but sufficient to make the learners feel successful — adequate exposure to the data from which these systems may be derived is clearly essential. Unfortunately, learners vary greatly in their capacity to process data: what some appear to master immediately, others need time to acquire, and yet others will (it seems) never grasp. In a learning environment in which accuracy is at a premium — and where apparently trivial features assume salience — what are perfectly normal differential learning rates easily become stumbling blocks to further learning: trial and error is categorised as failure, and the necessary instability of learning is interpreted in a way highly detrimental to the formation of a positive self-image by both learners and teachers.

It is the perception that the differential rate of learning is more important than the capacity to learn that predisposes many foreign languages teachers to stream their learning groups, even to offer them different courses. Some schools will start off with mixed ability groupings in the first few years, but very few will maintain heterogenous groupings for long. Teachers, pointing out that a good takeup at A Level must be ensured if recruitment to the profession is to be maintained, will argue that the most able need to be catered for separately from the rest. It is maintained that the least able are discouraged by competition from the more able; that the most able are bored and frustrated by the teacher's preoccupation with the least able in the class — arguments originally adduced in favour of the tripartite system itself. Doubtless these views are held by many teachers from a variety of disciplines, but I guess that they will be more commonly held by foreign languages teachers than any other group.

The concerns expressed in favour of streaming constitute real problems. Whether the problem is primarily one of organisation is, however, another matter. The patterns from single sex schools will be different, but in mixed schools the upper sets show a predominance of girls. Taken together with the observation of HMI that oral activities (favoured by boys) are

neglected in foreign languages classrooms, the social message is spelled out that foreign language learning is not for boys (Powell and Littlewood, 1983).

If we turn now to textbooks, there has been a welcome change in content in the last few years. When I was learning foreign languages at school, the textbooks presented no view of the culture at all: if the natives made an appearance, they were always surrounded by cooks and gardeners. Nowadays, textbooks distorting reality in that way simply would not sell. The roman fleuve type textbook, in which language learning was based on the everyday lives of fictitious middle class families, has been displaced by more functionally orientated courses. What makes these courses different from their predecessors is not only their content but also the fact that they are accompanied by a teacher's book: the course book sets out the programme and the teacher's book tells how it is to be delivered. Whether or not teachers make use of these suggestions — or, indeed, how they interpret them — is of less importance than the assumption that they are needed at all. They are simply invitations to teachers to reduce teaching to a recipe. Instead of teachers working together with the classes they know, with the aim of finding ways to enable the learners to make progress, they are told how to assemble the kit.

Publishers are well aware of what will sell in today's market. The increasing functional orientation of foreign language coursebooks reflects this awareness. Contemporary market leaders proclaim their compatibility with the National Criteria governing the GCSE. The pedagogy required of teachers is now said to be communicative. Suddenly, language learning is about learning how to communicate.

The explicit assumptions of the National Criteria are that language learning has to do with the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing; and that, therefore, the assessment of competence in foreign language learning must take place through the assessment of those four skills.

It is, of course, true that language users speak, listen, read and write — indeed, there are not too many alternatives available where language is concerned — but it does not follow that their use is discrete or that learners' competence can be assessed in those skills discretely. As Widdowson (1978) remarks, the four skill model of language may be helpful when considering usage, but it may turn out to be misleading when considering use.

The simple fact is that the model does not derive from an analysis of communicative use at all, but from the much older language learning typology of the audio-lingual school, with its associated base in behaviourist psychology. The working party assembled to construct the National Criteria started from the only theoretical base available, irrespective of whether or not it was relevant to the task in hand. Foreign language teaching has suffered from the fact that its practitioners have no foundation in applied linguistics. Taking pride in pragmatics means

contempt for theory. Change means learning a new vocabulary for describing what you continue to do unchanged.

The four skill model has further implications in that it encourages a pedagogy of serialisation: the following of an activity in one medium by an activity in another, mindless of their interrelationships in the learner's own learning networks or in the communicative process itself. Somehow, it is assumed, the learners will integrate what teachers, textbook writers and examiners have been at pains to keep apart.

One of the consequences of using the model for assessment purposes is that comprehension — surely, at the base of all language activity — has to be invented as a separate capacity in order to enable listening and reading to be assessed. In communication, language users tend to use what they have heard or read in the carrying out of other purposes. For GCSE, the National Criteria specifically exclude gist comprehension as an assessment mode — surely, a potentially communicative act? — on the explicit grounds that the best way to test comprehension is by asking questions in English. As a result, they will produce a publishers' rash of just such comprehension materials and promote a pedagogy of increased English use in foreign language classrooms. The concern for quantifiable accuracy — the basis of the assessment model of the curriculum — becomes the sole criterion at the expense of language use for a purpose. The original myth surrounding GCSE was that it would represent a valid, criterion-referenced assessment of the learners' foreign language competence. The fact is that the secondary examination system has always been a selection mechanism for higher education. This feature is preserved in two areas of the GCSE. Firstly, the award of the top three grades (A, B and C) remains in the remit of the old GCE boards, operating in the new examination groups. Secondly, although all four skills were said to be equal, the then Secretary of State decreed that writing was more equal than all the others because no candidate could be awarded a C grade (the equivalent of the old GCE pass) without passing the test in writing. Now, the interpretation of that rubric may vary between the examination groups, but the message is clear: writing still represents an obstacle to access to higher education in conformity with its historic role in the selection process.

The format of the GCSE owes something to the success — and limitations — of the graded objectives movement in Great Britain, which in turn owes its functional framework to the Council of Europe's Threshold Level. The concern for communicative purpose, which is the essence of the work of the Council of Europe, was grasped in Great Britain as a lifeline by teachers struggling to find something more palatable for the less able in comprehensive schools. In the early days of graded objectives, there was no question of displacing the academic curriculum in favour of the functional orientation of the Threshold Level. It was for many years by no means uncommon to find schools using graded objectives (or, more likely, graded tests) for their low ability groups, whilst reserving a different syllabus for their more able learners.

The language of the Threshold Level, revised to relate it to the assumed needs of the secondary population, focuses principally on using language for leisure purposes, especially in a tourist context. As a consequence, the functions expressed both in graded objectives and GCSE syllabuses favour transactions in the public domain. This orients language use to the product of the exchange in specific settings, with the consequent danger that reductionist interpretations of the communicative event concerned will be at the expense of process. Any syllabus which restricts interaction with the outside world to the commercial runs the risk of eliminating the personal. And the predictably patterned exchanges encouraged by the focus may substitute a phrase-book model of language use for the more subtle dialectical strategies needed for communication.

The content of such functional teaching may be criticised on the grounds that the learners have no real experience of the settings — hotels, youth hostels, camp-sites and the rest — in the target culture to which the assessments relate. (The criticism applies equally to the teachers!) It is probably inevitable that the learners' experience of the settings will derive more from the demands of the assessment than from the reality of the settings as the cultural framework for communicative acts. An assessment which predicates language acts on a cultural deficit is bound to be responsible for distortion by oversimplification. The major burden of valid criticism in this area does not however lie here: it lies in the narrowness of the framework which will stereotypically orient teaching towards a product for which the learning has been a rehearsal.

It has been a preoccupation with language as process, with the individual learner playing specific roles in a variety of settings, which has animated the "French for Communication" project (Dunning, 1983) in the East Midlands. Here, researchers, advisers and teachers, aware of the positive advantages for learning of clearly stated, short and long-term objectives, but also mindful of the baneful effects of examinations backwashing over classrooms, have tried to produce curriculum-led assessments, beginning with a staircase of three levels of graded objectives and culminating in Midlands Group Mode 3 GCSE.

Our concept of process is of a total dynamic: it encompasses not only the language content of the units described in the syllabuses, but also the detail of their ongoing construction, implementation and revision. At its heart lies cooperation: cooperation between the teachers to decide both the content and form of the assessment procedures; cooperation between the learners to accomplish the communicative tasks. Central to that cooperation is the autonomy of the teacher who, having been responsible for the formulation of the guidelines for the assessments, is expected to be able to construct appropriate tasks and to assess the learners' performance according to agreed criteria.

"French for Communication" differs from all other graded objectives schemes in a variety of ways. Firstly, it was intended from its inception in 1979 for the whole ability range. Secondly, no centrally produced tests are available: the syllabus requires the teachers to produce appropriate

assessments within the framework of the guidelines for their own pupils. Thirdly, writing and reading are assessed as options open to all abilities from Level One. Regular in-service meetings enable teachers to share their experiences and formulate their needs as both teachers and assessors of a communicative syllabus.

Assessing the performance of the learner as a communicator means that the syllabus is role and task oriented. The learner appears in a variety of roles and settings, using language in a variety of media. Although these settings inevitably reflect those associated with graded objectives and prescribed by the National Criteria, the syllabuses seek to develop language use for personal expression. Whereas most syllabuses develop language use in public situations, they tend to neglect the need for language users to situate themselves at the centre of their own learning and expression. Users need to be able — as in their own native language — to tell stories about themselves and others, and to make clear their own views and their opinions of the views of others on matters of concern to them. These areas of language experience are not adequately developed in the National Criteria and are neglected in most syllabuses. “French for Communication” seeks to remedy these deficiencies in order to put foreign language learning more in tune with native language use.

However, although the project has been a success in its capacity to increase both the motivation and autonomy of teachers and learners, it still bears the marks of its cultural setting. The initiative for a project on the assessment of communicative language teaching came originally from the East Midland Regional Examination Board and was conceived as embracing all the Board’s constituent authorities. It became apparent, however, quite early on that only a minority of teachers were prepared to undertake a radical transformation of what they taught and of the way they assessed it.

The differentiation seemed to take place on a purely geographical basis. Only in Leicestershire did the project receive the full backing of the adviser; only in Leicestershire were the teachers prepared to remodel their whole foreign language syllabuses from year one up. Elsewhere there was considerable resistance.

The reasons were not far to seek. Foreign languages were already well resourced in the County; the advisory service was respected and celebrated for its innovations; and the teachers were used to attending in-service meetings in their own time. The County had the advantage of being geographically compact, with the University of Leicester, the centre of the project, readily accessible. But Leicestershire had other advantages: the schools system in the County was divided between High (11–14) and Upper (14–18) schools. The High School teachers who were mainly involved in the experimentation were thus able to contemplate restructuring their syllabuses without inhibition from the consequences of that restructuring in years four and five in the Upper Schools.

The LEAs outside Leicestershire consisted in the main of 11–18 schools.

Their teachers taught traditional GCE and CSE syllabuses. They were unwilling to reconstruct their syllabuses for the first three years out of synchronisation with their unreconstructed GCE/CSE syllabuses. They could contemplate something special to accommodate the least able — indeed, one LEA had already developed such a limited scheme — but were not willing to experiment with graded objectives across the whole ability range from year one up. Subsequent developments in these areas have shown a preference for the use of centrally produced graded tests. Clearly, the demand for teacher autonomy is by no means universal. Even in Leicestershire, where the situation might be described as much more favourable to the growth of an autonomous foreign language syllabus, the process has not been without impediment or upset. Many Upper School teachers perceived the radical departures of a communicative syllabus as a threat to language learning itself, expressing their anxieties about grammar in the traditional way. Teachers expressed doubt as to whether children taught communicatively would be able to cope with the rigours of the conventional (mainly GCE) examinations of the time. Given that the appropriate 16+ examination was not then in place, such worries may appear reasonable. But the fact remains that underlying these worries was a concern which went well beyond a pragmatic concern for the examination results of their pupils: a not articulated but internalised view of the nature and purpose of foreign language learning.

On the positive side, the increases in takeup have been constant in all schools and dramatic in most. Moreover, that increase has included a significant increase in the numbers of boys opting for French in year four. Also, the morale of the teachers, owning their own syllabus, creating their own methodology and materials, and responsible for their own assessments, is very high. The sense of belonging to a sharing community is very marked. This is evident not only from the cooperation of teachers across the various levels of the project, but also in the classroom where attempts to empower the learners are evident in a wealth of imaginative ways.

As I said earlier, generalisations are difficult in this area. The strong cultural frame which works to the prejudice of foreign language learning as a successful endeavour for both boys and girls, does not prejudice all institutions equally everywhere. There will be schools where the strength of the personalities concerned, their length of service, the predispositions of the headteacher, senior staff or LEA will make the foreign languages department one of the most powerful of the sub-cultures. The fact that boys seem not to favour foreign language learning may have a variety of sources. Doubtless, there will be different patterns of takeup between different types of institution. It may also be that macho associations of foreign language learning are on the wane. Whatever the constellation of causes and the mix of their relative strengths, it is evident that boys and girls do not find the same rewards in foreign language learning. If we are to reverse the

decline, where should we look if not into our culture and the messages it transmits?

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English Language and Culture in Soviet Textbooks

Pamela Fearey and Olga Lalor

The paradox of Soviet foreign language teaching lies in the dichotomy between political goals and goals of educational excellence. There is an immediate contradiction, for ideology restricts the authentic presentation of the culture of other lands and languages.

In the teaching of English, the goal is to give technical, linguistic accuracy. The theory of the language, phonetics, intonation, grammar, vocabulary are very thoroughly presented and the proficiency of language achieved by students specialising in English in Higher Education is outstanding. But no matter the level of technical excellence, the students, from the youngest to the most senior, do not have access to a representative picture of the English-speaking world. The consequence is frequently knowledge without understanding.

The substance of these conclusions is based on classroom observation, both at school and at higher education levels in the Soviet Union, and on personal interviews with both students and graduates from several Soviet higher educational establishments.

In our survey of the textbooks for secondary schools and a sample for higher educational establishments, it became clear that there still exists a policy of imposed ideological goals which smother cultural authenticity. The exception is probably extra-curricular readers although, in their turn, these also raise problems of out-dated material.

It should be stated that the Soviet system of education has complete political integrity from its own point of view. Ideological goals are clearly set out at all levels of education (Fearey and Lalor, 1988), and educational practices, and textbooks, substantially conform to these goals.

The dilemma for the teachers, created by these ideological goals, is that there cannot be, concurrently, faithful representation of the culture they are teaching. In other words, integrity towards the subject matter is clearly, and seriously, in question.

A number of Soviet teachers of foreign languages are not unaware of this problem although the main source of their cultural information is

the textbook itself. Articles in the Moscow magazine *Foreign Languages in School* sometimes confirm the limited access to sources which provide an alternative to those imbued with the dominant ideology.

For instance: In a textbook (1983) currently in use for students in pedagogical institutes, *Methods of Teaching English* by the very much respected Professor G.V. Rogova, the stated goal of teaching a foreign language is the following (note that this is a textbook for teaching English in Teacher Training Colleges, and not a party political manifesto):

In teaching a foreign language the Soviet teacher is called upon to inculcate in pupils the scientific outlook and communist morality, to prepare the young people for an active participation in production and other types of socially useful activities . . .

Teachers of foreign languages as well as teachers of other subjects make their contribution to the education of pupils, to their ideological education.

At the school level, it can be argued that the time allocated for teaching foreign languages is not a large proportion in the Soviet educational system:

Class 4: 10 year olds. 4 hours of English each week

Class 5: 11 year olds. 3 hours of English each week

Classes 6 & 7: 12–14 year olds. 2 hours of English each week

Classes 8, 9, & 10: 14–17 year olds. 1 hour of English each week

The number of lessons is small but that proportionately increases the emphasis on communist outlook and ideology and decreases the cultural content of the target language. A typical text from a text book (Starkov *et al.* 1982) for teaching English to 10 year olds is:

My friend's family is small. He has a father, a mother and a sister. Igor's father, Yakov Vasilievich, is an engineer at a shoe factory. He is forty-two. He is a Communist. Yakov Vasilievich is tall. He has black hair and brown eyes. Igor's mother's name is Zoya Trofimovna. She is a small woman. She has fair hair and blue eyes.

Igor's sister Natasha is a nice little girl. She is like her mother. She is small and thin. Her hair is fair too. She has a round face and a short nose. Her hands and feet are small.

It is a very good family.

For 10 year olds, this textbook in English, praised for its methodology, does not mention anything about any English-speaking countries at all. Whereas in the book for Class 6, where two of same authors (Starkov *et al.* 1982) are involved, there are only two references to English culture and life and these are ideologically committed. In a letter from an allegedly English girl, Mary Smith, about holidays in Britain, May Day demonstrations and workers wishing to change their lives and be free of the capitalists take pride of place.

If we leave aside ideological observations and look at these textbooks from a linguistic standpoint, it is remarkable how stylised and unnatural

the language is and how they epitomise Soviet rather than British speech idiom. As an old Russian proverb suggests:

You pull out your tail, your beak sticks;
You pull out your beak, your tail sticks.

An extra-curricular reader (Kopyl, 1982) is provided for the keen pupil from Class 5 upwards. The balance of texts here clearly leans towards English culture, with only an eight page section devoted to Lenin. However, in the same book the two texts about the United States of America are dated, respectively, 100 years and 40 years ago, the latter with a clear message of racial prejudice.

The 120-page extra-curricular English reader for Class 6 (Kopyl, 1982) gives more insight into English culture but does not include contemporary material. Adapted excerpts include passages from Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Rudyard Kipling and Lewis Carroll. The English texts are interspersed with subjects such as 'The First Days of the Great October Socialist Revolution', 'Soviet Army Day', 'A Monument in Berlin', and texts about Lenin.

Even in this area concerning the selection of extra-curricular material, we find a leading Soviet educationalist stating that:

Since extra-curricular work is voluntary and based upon pupils' activity, initiative and creativeness, the Young Pioneer and Young Communist League Organisations should render help to the teacher to carry out this work. The teacher recommends various kinds of non-class activities to his pupils, selects the material and elaborates methods and techniques as to how this or that work should be carried out. (Rogova *op.cit.*) Even here the pupil does not seem to have much right of selection for himself.

The official goal presents the teacher with a challenge. This goal is perceived as necessary politically and therefore lip service, at all times, must be given to it. But note the contrast elsewhere in the Rogova book, "modern textbooks for teaching a foreign language should meet the following requirements: 'The textbooks must reflect the life and culture of the people whose language pupils study.'

Despite the statement on the same page that "textbooks must arouse pupils' interest and excite their curiosity", the enthusiasm of the policy makers frequently meets with the indifference of the students. As in every country, the student will examine the subject in terms of its relevance to his own experience, present and future. In the Soviet Union, the opportunity to practise foreign languages is limited. Even in Gorbachev's Russia foreign travel is still rare, and meeting foreigners, especially from England, is an exceptional event for the ordinary Soviet citizen. Furthermore, there is limited access to foreign resource material and virtually no access to computer data.

More importantly, there is very little incentive to learn when the topic matter is stylised and does not awaken a spirit of discovery, compounded by the fact that the number of hours devoted to the foreign language curriculum diminishes with each succeeding year in the non-specialised

school. In an English textbook, almost all a Russian child learns is about Soviet life and it should be borne in mind that Russian children comprise only half of the Soviet citizens learning English with these textbooks. Consider the dilemma of children of any ethnic minority in the Soviet Union which does not have the status of a Federal Republic. Being given such an inflexible approach generally, it is therefore surprising, and perhaps pleasing, to find that the textbooks for teaching English in some Federal Republics do not follow the Russian model. The archetypal opposition to the norm is found in the Baltic Republics.

The 10 year old in Estonia (Class 4) will receive, from his regular textbook, an impression of English rather like the simpler Ladybird series, with the exception of an occasional reference to the Soviet youth organisation, the Pioneers, and one text, 'A Russian Friend', about an Estonian girl who has a young Russian friend in her class. The texts are about birthdays, holidays, toys and games with authentic English Nursery Rhymes included. Overall, the text is not heavily weighted in any way towards Soviet perceptions of society.

Latvian 12 year olds will know much more, from their basic textbook, about English architecture, literature and the English educational system than their Russian peers. It can be noted however that the textbook for this older age group includes more reference to Soviet history and ideology.

The permeation of the Russian ethic in the regular textbooks for teaching English can be disconcerting to that proportion of children who are not of Russian stock. In some cases, the criteria for facial features and human beauty are promoted according to Russian norms whereas there will be many children using these textbooks within the Soviet Union who are members of other races. These children will be learning English through the linguistic and cultural medium of Russian, with a possible diminution of English cultural impact but possibly also, greater awareness of cultural differences.

The benefit of a measure of independence from Soviet cultural dominance is expressed, as described, in the Estonian and Latvian textbooks for teaching English. The desire for target, and native, language authenticity supercedes political dogma, but is not to be construed as a love of all things British. Rather, it may convey the wish to be protected from an overt Russification. A measure of independence applies not only for the Federal Republics but for the Eastern European states of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In these countries, English and American native speakers have assisted in devising and preparing textbooks, thus conveying greater cultural authenticity in the target language. The Soviet Union, however, continues to set the pattern for the Eastern European countries.

By contrast, Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges in the past six years have provided ongoing links and new opportunities which are vital in understanding the dilemma that Soviet teachers of English often face.

A higher education teacher, only two or three years after graduation, found his six week visit to Great Britain in his 4th year of training, provided the vehicle for rousing genuine interest among his primarily non-Russian students. Teaching English in another part of the country later on, in an institute specialising in technical and scientific topics, he almost despaired of rousing, and keeping, the interest of his students, firstly because of the students' heavy curriculum and, secondly, because of the need for specialised technical English relevant to the immediate topics of the main course. Only popular music from the West seemed likely to turn the tables — and even then what the students wanted to hear was two to three years behind the current 'pop' scene. What had been promoted in the Soviet Union as the 'errors' of Western modern music had, in fact, already been forsaken by the majority of the Soviet students' contemporaries in Great Britain. So the teacher found that even contemporary culture had little foothold in the Soviet students' perception of the language they were studying part-time. In fact, the value set on the foreign language in the latter institute is illustrated by the fact that though the institute merited a staff of 60 foreign language teachers in 1987, the subject was not even mentioned in the preceding year's prospectus.

In 1985, teachers in authority (heads of departments or year groups) in a higher education establishment avoided questions pertaining to cultural integrity with carefully qualified answers. However, they indicated that some unadapted books were read by first year trainee teachers as part of their home reading project. These books, from an approved list, are examined by the students, in their own time, for expressions they find interesting and pronunciation problems, but there is no retelling of the story in class. These teachers all felt that "culture and language should be taught together" and an authentic topic is important. However, these topics would be examined for (1.) literary style, (2.) the characters, (3.) analysis in terms of this country (i.e. the USSR).

In higher education, the introduction of the subject 'stranovedeniya', a national overview of the geography, political system, educational system, courts and justice, industry and natural resources of the foreign country was a relatively recent innovation (two decades), introduced to widen the students' knowledge of the country of the language studied. But in this area too, it was acknowledged tacitly by the Soviet interviewees and explicitly by the English interviewer, that the pressure of the curriculum did not allow time for consideration of the implications of this knowledge.

Some teachers attempt to convey as much as they can of their perception of the culture without deliberately flouting the ideological criteria constantly held before them. Others are completely comfortable with the objective of the political goals and can be observed in class construing English text material exclusively from that point of view: turning a social situation into a political dilemma, for the purpose of emphasising the political goals of the Soviet ideal.

Interviews revealed that teachers from some other Republics, and with different native languages, have other challenges. How to learn English without learning Russian or Sovietised English? The desire for the genuine article frequently goes very deep.

In Tashkent in 1984, a Soviet teacher of English confirmed that the teachers in his institute would like to have textbooks at least partly written by Englishmen. This teacher hoped to purchase English language tapes in Great Britain, designed for foreign students of English, to convey *modern* English to his students.

Similar feelings were expressed when teachers from both Dushanbe and Alma Ata were interviewed. A Tadjik teacher said the first supply of tapes by native speakers to her university had been acquired through a refresher course one of her colleagues had attended in Leningrad where there was a native English speaker.

This being said, it is important to note Rogova's statement:

Teaching materials acquire special importance in gaining cultural aims. From the earliest stages, thanks to visual aids, pupils are introduced to the foreign country and its people.

In this connection it is necessary to mention the qualities teaching materials should possess:

Authenticity. Whatever is presented to the pupils, whether linguistic or cultural material, it should be an authentic representation of the language or culture of the foreign country (countries).

The passage goes on to discuss: *Clarity*, for comprehension, *Practicality*, in access and cost, *Appropriateness*, for the age groups and abilities of the pupils.

In interview, G.V. Rogova, who in the 1950's had devised her own black and white visual aids album for (school) Classes 9 and 10, specified that its purpose was "to help people to understand each other". She saw the prime need in teaching to create desire and motivation in the pupil, and the need to supply the material that would satisfy the desire to know more.

She reiterated her conviction, held over decades in relation to language teaching, that "Each word carries the culture". She felt there was a need to recognise the "cumulative function of the language in preserving the culture" and her desire was "to try to reflect (these aspects) in our textbooks". She felt that the aspect which is interesting for students is to "feel the culture in the material they work with".

The teaching of English literature reflects the same element of selection. Arising from an impressive list of extra-curricular reading, provided by a student, relevant to the fourth year of the teacher training programme, and a review of the textbook (Arakin, 1978) for all first year students in English faculties of pedagogical institutes, it becomes clear that fundamental literary and religious aspects of English culture are omitted from the Soviet student programme.

In translation, from Russian to English, Soviet perceptions of life, perhaps unsurprisingly, tend to dominate:

I live in a new building. In our flat are all modern conveniences: electricity, gas, plumbing, central heating, rubbish disposal and telephone.

In the English texts which include discussions about the traditional English breakfast, one of the theme families is that of a general practitioner, Dr Sandford. A visitor calls and asks:

'Do you receive the 'Morning Star'?'

Dr Sandford replies: 'Certainly. All the members of my family read it.'

Discussions of clothing and going to swim or to the beach, which are common to both cultures are interspersed with passages such as this image of London:

Gradually it gets darker: a thick fog is spreading over London. The lamps are lit in the streets and in the shops and offices; cars and buses put on their lights and can only crawl along. As one friend bumps into another, he says, "Isn't it a beastly day?" — "Yes," replies the other, "you can hardly see a yard in front of you."

The authors selected in this book are A.J. Cronin, Jerome K. Jerome, Somerset Maugham and the most up to date item is a 10-line passage credited to Iris Murdoch.

A controversial question was put informally to a leading English specialist on the staff of a Soviet higher education institute: "Bearing in mind how thoroughly your students study the English classics, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jonson, both for their content and their contribution to the English language, why do you not study that masterpiece of the English language, the King James Version of the Bible contemporaneous to Shakespeare and Jonson which has given so much to the culture, development and richness of the English language?"

The conversation was not developed very far but the questioner did suggest that for its linguistic and cultural value, it should be given a legitimate place in the study of the English language.

Aside from this particular literary omission, it frequently appears that Soviet teachers and students of English seek to compensate for cultural loss or diminution by the finesse of technique they develop. The immaculate presentation of the 'handbag' scene from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with barely a trace of a Soviet accent or intonation, is an outstanding example from fourth year trainee teachers. Postgraduates pursue technical detail, specialising in very fine areas of language reproduction, for example the Soviet PhD student studying the diphthong in English pronunciation, so that, in his words, we "can speak English like an Englishman". There is no doubt that this is an area where high calibre students excel.

Both in classroom observation and in subsequent interviews, conducted both in the Soviet Union and in England with visiting or exchange higher

education students and teachers, it becomes clear that pursuance of political goals in education is strongly influencing the presentation of subject matter. The product is technically excellent, even outstanding, but linguistic success frequently prevents the student from realising how much the substance and reality of the culture is absent from his awareness, especially in its contemporary forms and in terms of modern idiom terms. It is amazing that Soviet students of English achieve what they do. The tragedy is that their knowledge, cannot be backed by depth of cultural understanding.

We do not, of course, claim that language textbooks produced in Britain are free from ideology, but British practice is certainly more subtle, much more restrained, and free from overt and clumsy political constraints.

Note

We would like to thank Bruce Monk for allowing us access to his collection of Soviet textbooks.

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Socio–Political Changes and their Implications for Second Language Learning: the case of Malaysia

Mildred Thiyaga Rajah

Introduction

The social milieu in which a second language is learned plays a major role, even when the process of acquiring it takes place in the formal classroom situation. The significance of sociological variables is heightened when the issue of second language learning is viewed in the context of political and social changes. This is especially so, when the role and status of the second language in question have undergone substantial changes, as in the case of Malaysia.

The English language has been slowly but surely replaced by Bahasa Malaysia (i.e. the national language) in almost all domains considered vital in the development of the Malaysian identity and in the redressing of the socio-economic imbalance existing prior to the country's independence. One of the domains thought to be important, if not the most important, appears to be education. Current thinking in Malaysia holds that it is through education that future generations will be encouraged to identify with national values and aspirations and the less privileged will, therefore, benefit more from a system of education where the national language is the medium of instruction. As a result, there has been a complete switch from the English language to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction at all levels of education starting with the first level of primary education in 1971 and ending with final year undergraduate courses in 1984.

1985 saw the first batch of graduates who had had their entire education in Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. With this comes the assumption that Bahasa Malaysia has become the language of learning, play and the expression of values and attitudes for this new generation of educated Malaysians. This is perhaps the greatest social change since Malaysia gained its independence, for

historically the English language has been the language of the educated elite. Considering the circumstances of change in the roles of Bahasa Malaysia and the English language in clearly defined terms at the national level and that the post-1970 generation of Malaysians have all gone through a uniform national system of education in Bahasa Malaysia, it can also be assumed that changes in competence levels, frequency of use, attitudes and perceptions of needs with respect to the English language will have taken place over the last decade or so. Therefore a study was carried out to establish what such changes were, and to relate the findings to present demands for English in the prevailing domains of use.

The Language Situation

Historical antecedents have to a large extent determined the present status and role of the English language in Malaysia.

Prior to Malaysia's independence in 1957, the English language was widely used by virtue of the fact that the country was then under British rule. It was the language of power and social prestige and a common channel for communication among the nation's multi-racial educated elite.

However, the very language which consolidated into a unit the different racial groups found among the urban population, also served to separate the non-urban population from the educated urban elite. This was because, whereas the educated urban population was mainly taught by Western Christian missionaries through the medium of the English language, the rural population attended vernacular schools run by the various communal groups. Thus a disparity in language proficiencies, abilities, skills and knowledge, and most important of all, the economic value of the education received, was created between the urban and rural population.

Political efforts to mend this rift are clearly seen in the government's post-Independence national policies. One such move is its language policy. In its determination to restructure society and correct the prevalent economic imbalance, it was seen as necessary to remove English as the language of the political, economic and social dominance which the educated urban elite had so far enjoyed.

The seat of power and prestige thus vacated by the English language has become occupied by Bahasa Malaysia, the national language which has now become the official language of the country in most domains of use. The exceptions are the maintenance of trade and diplomatic relations with the outside world and, to a large extent, the running of the judicial machinery since this is still based primarily on the British legal system.

It was felt that current economic and social inequalities had been engendered by the elitist system of education propagated under British rule. The less privileged populace was automatically debarred because of

their lack of proficiency in the English language and, therefore, the obvious counter measure was to replace English with Bahasa Malaysia as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education. This seemed only logical considering the reinstatement of Bahasa Malaysia as the official language in almost all domains of national use, coupled with the fact that it is the mother tongue of the great majority of Malaysians.

The urgency to enstate Bahasa Malaysia as the sole medium of instruction from primary to tertiary levels of education is all the more compelling in view of the fact that education has always been seen as the ladder to both economic and social mobility in Malaysian society. Therefore, it was argued that if the greater populace were to enjoy more economic and social benefits from the new egalitarian based national system of education, then it was imperative that they should be assured of successfully participating in it via the language in which they were most proficient and with which they were most familiar. Hence the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education has been carried out with great seriousness of intent and commitment.

However, the value of English as an important international language has continued to be recognised and since it would amount to foolhardiness to discard a language which in itself has brought progress and prominence to the country in the world arena, English is to be kept as a second language. But the term 'second language' as used to refer to English in the Malaysian context has to be qualified, as it does not refer to a second language in the true linguistic sense. Instead the term is used to mean that English is second only to Bahasa Malaysia in importance for all official purposes.

It is in keeping with this policy of retaining English as a 'second language' that it is still taught as a compulsory subject in the national school curriculum from Primary 1 to Form V. However, though the English language is compulsory to take it is not compulsory to pass in the public examinations up to the Fifth Form. Also, the context of learning English has changed dramatically from that of a real second language (when it was the medium of instruction) to that of an almost foreign language. This is because while previously the learners saw English as enabling them to learn other subjects and to communicate with their peers and teachers, now the majority of learners have little access to the language outside the formal classroom situation.

Given the present constraints faced by both learners and teachers in terms of the lack of an immediate incentive for mastering the language and the absence of an overall supportive learning-teaching environment it is beginning to be seen that the process of English language acquisition is entering a new phase which will have significantly different outcomes. The implications of these outcomes will be worth considering as, national aspirations and dreams aside, a very high level of proficiency in English is still required from the country's educated elite, if not from the masses, to keep the progress machinery moving in the right direction.

In terms of practicality, English is still needed in higher education, science and technology, for research and communication with the world, intellectual community and for maintenance of trade and diplomatic relations. It is ultimately the educated elite who will occupy the focal position in this conflict between the supply and demand of Malaysians who are suitably proficient in English since the onus is on them to hold the fort in the domains of use where English is crucial. It would therefore be of interest to investigate and establish how socio-political changes such as the language policy described earlier, have affected this class in terms of present competence levels, frequency of use, attitudes and perceptions of need where the English language is concerned.

The Study

In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the effects of socio-political changes on English language learning in Malaysia, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- (i) Who forms the emerging educated elite and what are their demographic characteristics?
- (ii) What is their present level of competence/performance in the English language?
- (iii) How frequently, in which situations, with whom and for what purposes do they presently use English?
- (iv) What are their attitudes to English and perceptions of need in the English language?

An in-depth study to investigate these areas was carried out via an extensive cross-sectional survey involving the use of proficiency tests, interviews and questionnaires between October 1985 and September 1987. In this paper, however, I shall concentrate mainly on the last of the questions above, since attitudes to English imply attitudes to English culture. I will, however, summarise findings in the other three areas.

The Emerging Educated Elite

For the purposes of the study, sixth formers and final year university students were taken as representing the emerging educated elite. It differs markedly from the present educated elite in that the latter is largely an urban and middle class body with its roots in the colonial period. It has been Malaysian government policy since Independence, however, to give access to secondary and higher education through positive discrimination to the deprived and disadvantaged rural and semi-urban groups (as defined in the Malaysian Population and Housing Census of 1980). It so happens that most of those categorised as deprived would be Malays (bumiputras) as opposed to members of other racial groups, precisely those whose access to English during the colonial period would have been very limited.

Actual Competence in the English Language

Since in Malaysia formal English language instruction ends at Form Five, it was felt that sixth formers' competence levels would be a good measure of the final outcome of the National English Language Curriculum and would provide insight into the impact of socio-political changes on English language learning and testing in Malaysia.

As an objective measure of competence, the sixth formers were given the British Joint Matriculation Board Test in English, June 1986 paper. Without delving too much into the statistical analysis which ensued, the following picture emerged:

- (i) proficiency levels varied widely, from near perfection to incompetence;
- (ii) those who did well or badly in one part of the test tended to do well or badly in other parts, except in the Summary Exercise, where 95% of students scored 20% or less;
- (iii) Malaysian students taking the test fared much worse than the generality of overseas students taking the same test in the UK. If grade 5 is taken as a fail grade, then 80% of the Malaysian sample failed, as opposed to 42% of overseas students in Britain.

Thus legitimate national egalitarian aspirations in the secondary education system (mediating the curriculum in Bahasa Malaysia and diminishing the status of English) can create problems in tertiary education where competence in English, and, in particular, study skills in English, are still held to be vital.

Perceived Competence in English

To summarise a long and detailed argument supported by statistical analysis, most students thought themselves more competent than they actually were, as measured objectively. In the JMB test, 13% of the sample were 'good' in the skills of reading comprehension and writing, and 30% 'average', whereas, using a similar scale, 38% saw themselves as 'good' at reading comprehension and 52% average; 21% saw themselves as 'good' at writing and 45% average. An analysis of variance showed that students' perceptions of their own competence were heavily influenced by their English grades in the Malaysian Certificate of Education.

Another finding of the study is that 25% of the sample in schools and universities cannot cope effectively with the use of English in such basic language activities as understanding the intention of the speaker, answering and asking questions and reading newspapers and magazines, even though these objectives are clearly spelled out in the English language syllabus. It is therefore suggested that many members of the emerging educated elite will no longer be able to use English as and when they want to or are obliged to do so. The students have suffered from the ravages of socio-political influences on the teaching-learning milieu.

Frequency of Use and Domains of Use

Unsurprisingly, frequency of use correlated highly with actual performance, but there were marked differences here between school and university students. University students of low competence use English more frequently than sixth formers of similarly low competence by virtue of the fact that the university environment demands that they do so. The university students also used English more frequently with members of the public and officialdom, for carrying out transactions in the sales and service sectors as well as with their friends and peers, commensurate with their wider experience, as final year students, on the brink of the 'real world'. This suggests that this greater frequency in the use of English in the university context has a spill-over effect, resulting in a greater confidence in the use of the language for other purposes. Sixth formers typically use English to fulfill their entertainment needs, whereas university students viewed the language more seriously as a tool to be used in promoting their academic pursuits.

Attitudes and Perceptions of Need

A large majority of the emerging educated elite measured positively in their attitude toward English. The analysis revealed that there is an overwhelming awareness of the benefits of being able to use English for academic and occupational purposes and also, at the personal level, for enjoyment and self-satisfaction. Great motivational intensity was also demonstrated. 93.8% of the sample agreed that they would like to study more English and master the language while 79.5% thought it a good idea to introduce the English language as a subject in the sixth-form.

However, there is little to show that they desire to integrate into the target culture. Only 14.3% of the sample think English people have good qualities and are to be admired. This finding can be substantiated by the fact that since English is the *primus inter pares* of international languages it is often accepted as an a-cultural language by foreign learners who merely seek to utilise what English has to offer as an international language.

Very often, as in the case of Malaysia, proficiency in English correlates with measures of personal satisfaction derived from using the language and also with the fact that the subject's position in his own society in part depends on success in English. This can be substantiated by the relatively high percentage, i.e. 79.5%, of positive responses to the item "Being able to speak English gives me great personal satisfaction" and also the finding that 67.6% of the sample agreed that "A good knowledge of English enables me to gain social recognition".

A general awareness that an overall proficiency in English reaps benefits and practical advantages, both socially and economically, is further indicated by the finding that a large majority (81%) of the sample perceive the need to have a competent mastery of English and be proficient in the four main component skills of listening, speaking,

reading and writing. Findings in terms of their *present* frequency of use of English, however, reveal that 70% of them speak very little English and hardly write at all in the language owing to their lack of competence to do so.

The emerging educated elite, on the whole, also perceive a definite need for English for general, academic and occupational purposes. The grand mean scores for each of these three categories of needs fall around 3, which is interpreted as 'necessary' on the 4-point need scale. This suggests that the English language still plays a dominant role in Malaysian society, particularly since these three categories are seen by sixth formers and university students as top priority areas of concern. It seems that both groups of students are aware of their need for English in spite of the changes in the role and status of the English language brought about by the new economic and language policies.

However, the immediate environment in which the students operate, which to a large extent determines their exposure to English and how frequently they use it, is seen to have a direct influence on their perception of particular needs in each of the 3 main categories (i.e. general, academic and occupational).

For example, while sixth-formers perceive listening to English for purposes of entertainment as their most important general need, university students rank the ability to speak English fluently in social situations as a topmost priority within the category of general needs for English.

Similarly, university students consistently rank being able to read and understand English as their foremost need for both academic and occupational purposes, whereas sixth-formers feel that the ability to understand spoken English is most crucial for the same purposes.

This difference in focus appears to be the result of their immediate experience of the use of the language. University students function in an environment where there is a greater need to both speak and read English. Sixth-formers, on the other hand, operate at the more passive level of listening as the school context neither compels them to speak nor read as much as is required of university students.

Likewise, university lecturers also perceive a greater need of English among their students than the teachers of sixth-formers. The lecturers also foresee the importance of English for their students' professional development upon graduation.

It can therefore be predicted that as the world of the emerging educated elite progressively expands, their need for English will also correspondingly increase.

Concluding Remarks

Post-Independence socio-political changes, the effects of which have become increasingly accentuated after 1970, have decidedly influenced

the present position of the English language in terms of competence levels, frequency of use, perception of need and attitudes toward the language.

Changes in Malaysia's language, education and socio-economic policies bear heavily on the creation of a new learning-teaching milieu for the acquisition of the English language. This is apparent not only in the erosion of motivation to perform well in English at school level (for reasons already discussed above) but can also be seen in the fact that increased opportunities for all to participate in the country's educational programme has meant that resources have to be spread thinly to cater for national needs. The insufficient supply of suitably qualified English language teachers, coupled with the shortage of other resources such as appropriate instructional materials, have resulted in an overall increase in the number of young Malaysians who have had the *opportunity* to learn English but without any guarantee of the *quality* of these learning experiences; hence the general fall in proficiency levels.

The other major socio-political change that has affected the general acquisition of English among educated Malaysians is the government's New Economic Policy. Since the primary objective of this policy is the restructuring of society, it has resulted in the creation of a fast expanding, middle class, educated elite whose members, however, come from a more balanced variety of socio-economic, regional and racial backgrounds.

This has given rise to an educated elite of a variegated nature whose only common bond in the business of acquiring the English language is perhaps the shared awareness of the practical benefits and advantages to be derived. However, positive attitudes alone are insufficient to surmount the practical constraints imposed by the particular learning context. While the urban middle class learner continues to have the support of greater exposure, parental encouragement, extra-tuition, etc, the semi-urban and rural learners face severe handicaps as they operate in an environment lacking in all those factors which promote the effective learning of English.

Findings from analysis of variance indicate very clearly that regional backgrounds and socio-economic status contribute significantly to differences in competence levels, patterns of frequency of use and perception of need of English. The findings also suggest that English is indeed still an urban phenomenon in Malaysian society.

Since it is undeniable that a high proficiency level in English (as the present Education Minister of Malaysia, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, himself acknowledges) gives any student "a headstart over others" academically, and later professionally (and therefore also ultimately, socio-economically), it is quite clear that there are chasms existing within the educated elite caused by the different competence levels in English.

Socio-political changes have therefore created an emerging educated elite united by the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, but divided by the 'second language', English. This is because although the government

has undertaken the promotion of Bahasa Malaysia proficiency as one of the country's most important national projects, the acquisition of English language competence is very much dependent on personal efforts which go beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

The average individual is almost powerless to effect his own competence in the English language, overwhelmed as he is by socio-political factors which shape the character of the nation (including the language profile of the people). It appears, therefore, that Malaysia may join the ranks of most other South-east Asian countries where the majority of the educated elite speak some kind of non-standard English, and a privileged minority continues to keep intact their untarnished standard English. The unquestioned prerogative of the educated elite to speak and write correct standard English as was the case prior to the 1970s will become a relic of the past, unless, of course, there is another round of socio-political changes which reverse the present trend.

Socio-Cultural Content in ESL Programmes for newly-arrived and NESB and Aboriginal schoolchildren in Western Australia

Marion Myhill

In this paper, the cultural content of English as a Second Language (ESL) programmes for newly-arrived NESB (non-English speaking background) and Aboriginal schoolchildren in Western Australia (WA) will be examined. The most commonly used and widely available ESL programmes have been selected for this purpose.

The Commonwealth Department of Education has been very influential nationally in the ESL area by developing ESL teaching programmes and materials which have been widely used across the country (e.g., *Learning English in Australia*, 1975; *Smile*, 1982). However, although the Commonwealth Department materials have often formed the basis of the teaching programmes, teachers have also taken considerable initiatives in developing ESL materials and programmes. New ESL programmes have been developed by teachers to suit local conditions and needs, adaptations made to existing programmes as well as suitable programmes being shared between states. The *Tracks* (1979) series of early reading materials for Aboriginal children, for example, was developed by the Northern Territory Department of Education for use with their large population of Aboriginal children. The series, though, is also widely used in the isolated and remote rural northern and eastern parts of Western Australia, where the school population may be composed almost entirely of Aboriginal children. These children live in conditions which are quite different from those which most other WA schoolchildren (including Aboriginal children) live in, as, for example, in the Perth metropolitan area. In addition, the mother tongue of these children is most likely to be one of the many Aboriginal languages spoken in these areas of WA, rather than English. The ESL needs of these children, therefore, are very different from the needs of most newly-arrived NESB immigrant children

in the WA school system, who have mostly come in recent years from Southeast Asia, Southern Europe and South America and who usually live, at least initially, in the Perth metropolitan area.

Variability in ESL teaching and materials has also been influenced by the widespread acceptance by ESL teachers of a 'situational' approach (as described in Australia) in their teaching methods. This approach has given teachers considerable autonomy, not only in how they conduct their classes, but also in what English language content they select into their programmes. The content seems to be selected on the basis of an assessment both of the children's immediate English language needs, i.e., level of proficiency, but also of the children's present and prospective needs as school students and Australian citizens. Teachers are aware, for example, with the NESB immigrant children, that they will be integrated into the mainstream school system as soon as possible — and automatically, in WA, after a maximum of twelve months' intensive ESL instruction, regardless of level of proficiency.

As might be evident from the previous comments, ESL programmes for children in WA are best considered for present purposes as forming two main groups: (1) those ESL programmes used with newly-arrived immigrant NESB schoolchildren; and (2) those ESL programmes used with indigenous Aboriginal schoolchildren. This distinction can be drawn on the grounds that the target groups for the programmes differ on a number of significant variables. For example, the NESB children in WA live largely in the Perth metropolitan area, while the Aboriginal children who receive ESL instruction live mostly in the isolated/remote rural parts of northern and eastern WA. The living conditions and physical environment of the two groups are therefore very distinctly different. More important, however, is the fact that the aims of ESL teaching in each group are not the same, which is why the ESL programmes and teaching situations also differ greatly. ESL programmes for Aboriginal students, for example, are usually part of a stated bilingual educational policy, which also aims to maintain the children's Aboriginal mother tongue. There is usually no such explicit bilingual aim for the NESB children, despite recent multi-cultural policy recommendations (e.g., Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, 1988). As a consequence of the above, the context and the content of the two groups of ESL programmes have little in common. It is also most likely that the impact they make on the students in cultural terms is also dissimilar.

The ESL programmes used with immigrant NESB and with Aboriginal schoolchildren, therefore, will be discussed separately below. For NESB immigrant children, these ESL programmes are *Smile* (1982) for 3–8 year olds, *Learning English in Australia* (1975) for 8–12 year olds and the Queensland ESL Secondary Schools Programs *Course Outline* (no date) for high school aged students. For Aboriginal children, the *Tracks* programme (1982) will be used. This latter programme was

devised largely for children in the first few years of primary school, particularly for those just beginning to read.

Firstly, however, a framework for assessing the cultural content of ESL programmes for schoolchildren in WA will be outlined. This framework will be used in this paper to examine separately the cultural content of ESL programmes for immigrant NESB and Aboriginal children. The possible influence of the cultural content of the various ESL programmes will then be discussed and some conclusions drawn as to its impact on the students.

Levels and types of cultural content in ESL programmes

In order to examine the cultural content of the various ESL programmes used by teachers with schoolchildren within the WA education system, it seemed appropriate to examine the programmes in terms of three different *levels* and two distinct *types* of cultural content.

Levels of cultural content

Three levels of cultural content were identified, ranging from general to specific. Cultural content was identified at the general level when it related to the introduction of broadly-based vocabulary and concepts, which were an expression of very commonly-found ideas and views in an English-speaking Western European culture. As many of the children participating in ESL programmes in WA are from non-European backgrounds, this can be seen as an important aspect of English language instruction and cultural development in schools. Its purpose is to give students some common cultural background to share with their English-speaking Australian peers, as a basis for mainstream classroom instruction and social integration.

At a more specific level, ESL programmes in WA are most likely to have clearly *Australian* cultural content, to introduce immigrant NESB children, in particular, to the unique aspects of Australian life. Finally, even more specifically, the cultural content in ESL programmes can be seen to have a very particular content, which was related to the special culture of the school environment.

These three levels then were defined for the present purposes as:

General: i.e., cultural content which is related generally to life in an English-speaking, Western industrialized society. Examples are: any discussion that includes mention of the way society is organized, days of the week and holidays, shopping and methods of transport, etc. This information is not related to any particular cultural environment, such as the Australian one, but is also common to the UK and USA settings.

Australian: i.e., cultural content which is related to the unique aspects of the Australian context. Examples are: the identification and naming of Australian cities (e.g., Perth, Sydney), flora and fauna (e.g., gum trees, koalas and kangaroos), as well as dialect words (e.g., sandshoes

(=plimsolls), thongs (=flip-flops)) and idiomatic expressions commonly used in the Australian spoken dialect (e.g., we're watching TV (=we are watching television/looking at the television)).

School: i.e., the cultural content which is related to the unique aspects of a school context in Australia. Examples are: identifying the names of classroom objects (e.g., blackboard, desks, chairs, etc.); and indicating the requirements of classroom 'etiquette' (e.g., ways of addressing the teacher and other members of the class, requesting permission to speak or asking to leave the room, etc.).

Types of cultural content

The ESL programmes may also be examined in terms of two different types of cultural content, which will be referred to as *explicit* and *implicit* types of cultural content. It became obvious in examining the ESL programmes, that some aspects/types of cultural content had been introduced deliberately and explicitly and that teachers would undoubtedly be aware of this clear attempt at acculturation/socialization. The primary aim of the language exercise was, therefore, to introduce culturally-related material. This was termed the explicit type of content. For example: teaching primary schoolchildren how to ask for their lunch at the school canteen or introducing pre-school children to the stories that are commonly read at home to English-speaking Australian children.

However, there were also instances where the cultural content was implicit introduced, as it was embedded in some other aspect of the programme. In this case, teachers and children may have been less aware of the acculturation process, which was not made explicit in the content or the programme's instructions to teachers. The primary aim of language exercises of this type is usually not to introduce cultural information, but to introduce a particular grammatical construction (e.g., present tense). Thus the focus is on the syntax of the language example, rather than its semantic content. However, quite obviously, students are still affected by the cultural message contained in the semantic content of the language example. Implicit cultural content then, refers to the content of ESL programmes, that has not been introduced to have a clearly cultural purpose, although its socialization/acculturation function is identifiable, if indirect. For example, primary schoolchildren are introduced to common Australian pastimes (e.g., sport), clothing (e.g., sandals, thongs, slippers, etc) and food (e.g., pies, sausage rolls and chips) largely through pattern practice for particular syntactic constructions.

Cultural content in ESL programmes for NESB schoolchildren

General

The teaching of English in NESB immersion classes is geared specifically and explicitly to fitting the new arrivals into the linguistic, intellectual and cultural context of their local Australian school. There is a considerable amount of explicit and implicit general cultural information conveyed in the ESL programmes for NESB immigrant children of all ages. In the *Smile* programme, for example, younger children (5–8 years) are quite explicitly introduced to ESL materials that have a clear sociocultural content. Teachers are instructed, for example, to introduce children early on to stories which are common in British/Northern European-based cultures, such as *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Gingerbread Boy*, *The Giant Turnip*, *The Musicians of Bremen*, *Little Red Hen*, and so on. This is a clear attempt to make children familiar with the assumed common cultural background of mainstream English-speaking Australian children. It also stated quite explicitly to teachers that they should introduce common nursery rhymes, such as *Little Miss Muffet*, *Little Bo Peep*, *Three Blind Mice*, etc., to their ESL classes, because “ESL children often do not learn these at home as native speakers do” (*Smile*, p.27). The assumption that can be made from this is clearly that the ESL programme should serve both a linguistic and a cultural purpose in preparing children for the school classroom, as they will be required not only to be familiar with classroom-based activities and knowledge, but also with more general social and Australian cultural knowledge, which Australian English-speaking children are assumed to have already gained in the home.

For the primary school ESL students (8–12 years), the most explicit introduction of cultural content comes mostly in the vocabulary development sections of the ESL programmes. Pictures of common objects are shown, for example, and the relevant vocabulary introduced, a language role-play may be set up around a setting such as the puppet-show and different types of national dress are discussed (*Learning English in Australia*, 1975).

Secondary school students (12+ years) are introduced to ways of talking about such topics as the weather (e.g., A: *What’s the weather like today?* B: *It’s very cold. It’s 8 degrees*), their health (e.g., A: *Are you sick?* B: *No, I’m fine*) and possessions (A: *Tom has a new TV. It’s an expensive colour set*). These topics are also presented in the language models designed to practise certain constructions (e.g., ‘What is _____ like?’). However, they have an obvious socio-cultural function and are set in situations which are labelled for teachers as “socializing”, in the sense of being involved in informal social discourse. They are aimed clearly at giving students implicit instructions on how to interact with others in everyday situations. (*Course Outline*, (no date))

More subtle yet is the formation of values and attitudes which comes with the implicit acculturation in the selection of what is to be talked about and what is not to be talked about. For example, the importance of age in a Western culture is underlined by the introduction to young children of the *How old are you/I'm six* sequence as a means of practising the question/answer construction (*Smile*).

Secondary students are also given an implicit indication that it is acceptable to comment on another person's characteristics and appearance, and in what terms these characteristics might be expressed. Although the explicit aims of the exercises is to give students structural practice (e.g., to help students develop skills in the logical sequencing of information), the examples given to students for practice, indicate implicitly how they can discuss these topics in socially acceptable ways:

Example 1

This is Jean-Paul. He's 14. He comes from France. He has black hair and blue eyes. His sister is 16. She has brown eyes. She's the first child. They live at Inala.

(*Course Outline: Unit 28*).

Implicit information on how one should behave towards others is also given. Secondary school students are presented with the following model of how to verbally refuse another's offer of help:

Example 2

A: Whad'ya doing?

B: Mending the wheel.

A: Wanna hand?

B: I'm OK, thanks.

(*Course outline: Unit 58*)

An implicit assumption which underlies this interchange, of course, is that help should be offered in the first place. (It is interesting to note also the use of the informal register of the Australian dialect in these situations – which teachers are also directed explicitly to note).

Australian

Australian cultural material is also introduced both explicitly and implicitly in the ESL programmes. As might be expected, the most obviously different and unique aspects of Australia and Australian culture, e.g. the flora and fauna, are often explicitly introduced. For example, in the first lesson of the *Smile* programme, the younger ESL students (5–8 years) are introduced to the information that *Kookaburras are birds* and learn to identify the names of the most common Australian wild life, particularly birds and insects. Later on in the same programme, the students are introduced to a ditty that identifies some common animals, insects and birds, including the Australian 'budgie' (=budgerigar) and cockatoo: *An ant, some bees, a beetle and a budgie, too/A butterfly, a camel plus a cockatoo.*

An event of major historical significance to Australians, such as Captain Cook's voyage to Australia, is introduced to secondary ESL students in a way which presents both explicit and implicit socio-cultural content. The details of Cook's journey are presented, albeit in a rather abbreviated and 'sanitized' form, as an example of how to tell/write stories:

Example 3

Captain Cook's journey to Australia

Captain James Cook left England in August 1768 with a party of about 90 people. After he entered the Pacific Ocean he went to Tahiti, and then to New Zealand. After he left New Zealand he sailed to Australia. On April 29th 1770 he stopped at Botany Bay. He saw Aborigines there but white people didn't live in Australia in 1770. He went up the Queensland coast and gave names to some mountains, islands, reefs and rivers along the way.

Joseph Banks went with Captain Cook. He drew pictures of the strange animals and took many leaves and plants back to England. Cook and his party returned to England on 23rd October 1770.

(Course Outline: Unit 87)

This example is interesting, not only because of the clear and explicit introduction of cultural content, but also in terms of the implicit treatment given to the topic. The clearly white and "Anglo-centric" view of the author/s is evident in the comment about Aborigines and the content chosen for inclusion in the story.

Similar implicit acculturation is also introduced in the programme for primary schoolchildren. In the *Learning English in Australia* programme, for example, an attempt at positive multicultural attitude formation seems to be being made in the obviously deliberate use of children's names from a wide range of ethnic groups. In the practice sentences, ESL students learn to speak not just about the exploits of 'Tim, Mary, John and Susan', but also of 'Pedro and Carmelita, Hans and Ingrid, Aly and Fatima, and Zelko and Klirja'. Adult names are also cosmopolitan, to reflect the local environment of many of the children undertaking the ESL programme. 'Mrs Brown' and 'Mr Baker' join 'Mrs Comino' and 'Mr Ivkov' as shopkeepers and customers in the sentences which are provided as practice models for oral language production in role-playing situations. A reflection of the reality of the school environment is, however, probably also indicated in the teacher-student role play sequences, where the student is named 'Carlos' but 'Miss Parker' the teacher, is clearly a white Anglo-Saxon Australian *(Course Outline)*.

School

Explicit and implicit aspects of the cultural content of the school are also clear in the various ESL programmes. In the *Smile* programme for the youngest ESL learners, for example, the children are introduced explicitly to classroom etiquette. The appropriate way to make requests

is introduced in the practice sequences *Please give me a book* and *Can/May I have a pencil?* The sections on Shopping and Class Instructions (*Smile*, p.16) also provide clearly explicit cultural training. Practice of classroom instructions, for example, such as *Come in/Go outside/One at a time/Don't push/Stay in your places/Go back to your places/Come here/Line up/Listen/Sit down/Stand up/Be quiet/It's your turn/You're first*, etc. (*Smile*), give a clear indication of what is considered appropriate behaviour inside the classroom and how the mainstream classroom teacher will expect the student to behave, as well as provide practice in conforming to these behavioural norms.

A similar explicit introduction to social rules and school etiquette is given to primary schoolchildren in language role-plays (*Learning English in Australia*). In, for example, a 'school canteen' role-play, pupils are introduced to the 'canteen lady' — presumably as an important member of the school community — and practise asking her *Can/May I have a pie/sausage roll/bag of chips*, etc., please? (*Learning English in Australia*, Unit 26). This role-play, of course, also provides an implicit introduction to pupils of the Australian school 'cuisine'.

Summary

The above examples are ample to indicate that the ESL programmes for newly-arrived NESB students in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools provide not only an introduction to and practice of, the variety of language functions and structures necessary for learning English, but also very clearly contain both explicit and implicit socio-cultural information. This socio-cultural information can be seen at three levels: general, Australian and school.

The socio-cultural context is also explicitly defined and identified in terms of its place in the ESL programme. The 'socio-cultural situation' is outlined as comprising the following aspects: (i) on-going activities; (ii) the goals of on-going activities; (iii) the roles and relationships and attitudes of the participants; and (iv) the setting in time and space. Examples given of such socio-cultural situations are 'shopping in the supermarket' and 'studying in the library'. The cultural context of the language lessons is therefore an integral and explicitly acknowledged aspect of the whole programme.

The implicit socio-cultural information in the ESL programmes seems to be related more to general social attitudes, than to specific features of cultural/linguistic knowledge. Its implicit purpose seems once again to be to help newly arrived NESB students to 'fit in' to Australian society in general, and to the school system in particular. Despite an Australian Federal Government policy in recent years of 'multiculturalism', which contrasts with the earlier 'assimilationist' policy, the ESL programmes examined still seem to reflect something of an assimilationist attitude. Scant attention, for example, is paid in any of the programmes to the learners' mother tongue or culture. The *Learning English in Australia* programme does pay limited attention to the diversity of its learners in

cultural terms, e.g., by introducing the range of student names beyond the usual Anglo-Celtic ones. However, even though this may be a positive step, the *Learning English in Australia* programme was first published in 1975, so that the names used in this programme reflect the backgrounds of the main immigrant groups at that time. These names have by now become faintly anachronistic to current ESL students, with the changing composition in the cultural backgrounds of the more recent immigrants. New arrivals no longer come mainly from the southern, eastern and middle European countries, as they once did, but are much more likely to come from South-east Asian or South American countries, instead.

This discrepancy may well just be a function of the age of the ESL programmes. However, it may also be a reflection of the programme developers' own perceptions of the 'social reality' of the school and other social contexts into which the students are introduced, rather than of the philosophical ideals of Government social policy. These perceptions may in turn be an unintended, although natural, outcome of a situational/functional approach to ESL teaching. The aim of ESL programmes based on this approach seems to be to provide students with the pragmatic linguistic skills necessary to operate in social situations *as they are now*, rather than as how one would like them to be in some future, ideal world. Therefore, the ESL programmes function to provide students with the skills necessary to survive in the world as it is (or as the programme developers think it is), rather than as one would like to believe it is, or as the most recent Government policy asserts.

As an aside, it is interesting to note, what little attention is paid in any of these ESL programmes, based on the situational/functional method, to the students themselves, either as learners or individuals. Psychological and educational researchers into student learning would find this an unusual omission, particularly in terms of student motivation and the retention of information learned.

The cultural content in ESL programmes for Aboriginal children

The socio-cultural content of ESL programmes for Aboriginal schoolchildren was also investigated. The *Tracks* series was examined for evidence of this content at each of the three levels (i.e., general, Australian and school) and the two types (i.e., explicit and implicit) of cultural content outlined.

In the ESL programmes for Aboriginal children, there is a clearly different focus from that in the ESL programmes for newly-arrived immigrant NESB children. The story readers and sentence readers of the *Tracks* programmes, for example, reflect almost exclusively the lifestyles and circumstances of Aboriginal children in the rural and remote areas of Australia (e.g., northern and central areas of Western Australia and the Northern Territory). The characters in the books, for example,

are almost solely Aboriginal (except for the white male and female school-teachers) and the actual physical environment of these children is faithfully and realistically reflected in the illustrations and language used in the readers. An Aboriginal mother, for example, is shown in several of the readers cooking the family meal, while sitting down beside an open fire outside the house.

The view presented is not so much the romantic or historical one of the tribal Aboriginal life lived in the pristine bush, nor is there much attempt made to show the varieties of uniquely quaint Australian fauna and flora. What is shown in the illustrations and described in the language is the children's actual life-style, which is rural/fringe-dwelling and fairly spartan. The housing, for example, is shown as fairly basic, as in an illustration of an Aboriginal campsite, with a 'humpy' (i.e., a lean-to shelter made of tree bark or corrugated iron slung over wooden poles).

A school lesson is also shown being conducted outside under a tree, with the pupils sitting on the ground around a teacher who is writing on the blackboard. The language of the *Tracks* readers is, however, the standard Australian English of the school, rather than the Aboriginal English dialect.

There appear to be few overt, explicit attempts to socialize the Aboriginal ESL students to a different (i.e., white, urban and European) culture in the *Tracks* programme. Unlike the ESL programmes for newly-arrived immigrant NESB children, this ESL programme for Aboriginal children seems to concentrate almost exclusively on reflecting the life that the children already know, rather than preparing them for the life they might be in the process of assuming. In many ways, the English language introduced into the ESL programme for Aboriginal children appears to be more like a translation of what the children would be saying or talking about in their mother tongue (i.e., an Aboriginal language), rather than a reflection of a European-Australian world of white people and the urban environment.

General

There seem to be very few explicit attempts to introduce socio-cultural content into the sentence and story readers of the *Tracks* programme. Most of this content in the readers is implicit in that it reflects the world of the Aboriginal child as background to the English syntax and appears to make no attempts to introduce the ESL learner to other environments, or to socio-cultural content in any explicit way. The content introduced, therefore, probably acts implicitly and in a way which endorses positively the attitudes and norms of the child's environment.

Even if the language and general concepts expressed in the language of the readers is familiar to most young children, the social and environmental context shown in the illustrations which accompany the texts refer uniquely to the rural Aboriginal child's environment. For example, the experience of getting food is used as a basis for the introduction of the

present continuous tense, as in *They are going to buy some bread/milk/sugar/flour* (*Tracks* Sentence Reader, Level 3:2). The illustration accompanying the text shows a shopping centre which one is likely to find in the country areas of Australia in particular, but would also be familiar enough for city children to recognize. However, the same reader continues the pattern sequence with *They are going to look for some crabs/berries/sugar bag*, which would be a food-gathering context familiar only to the Aboriginal children for whom the readers were produced, in any direct experiential way.

The family is the socio-cultural context for much of the language introduced, as with any early reader, with mother, father, brother, sister, baby, pet cat and dog all featuring prominently. All the people shown, however, in the *Tracks* readers are shown as Aboriginal (apart from the school teachers and nurse) and the homes and surroundings shown are also realistic within the context of the children's world. For example, one of the stories in the story readers takes place in the family setting of the home where the older sister (Janita), her mother and baby sibling are sitting outside the house on the pavement. Janita is supposed to be keeping an eye on the baby, while the mother is busy cooking on an open fire. However, Janita forgets to look after the baby and it crawls away towards the street and danger from an oncoming truck: 1. *Come here, Baby*/2. *Janita is sitting by the fire*/3. *Baby is playing*/4. *Mother is cooking*/5. *Janita is not looking at Baby* (Story Reader. Level 1:2). It is also interesting to note the implicit norm that is expressed in this story: i.e., Janita, as the older sister, has the responsibility for looking after the baby while the mother is busy. This norm is expressed to some extent in the verbal message of the sentences used, but perhaps the message is expressed more powerfully in the pictures.

Australian

There is very little broadly Australian content evident in the readers, apart from the uniquely Aboriginal content, of course. The urban world of the majority of Australian children is not referred to at all. There is also little explicit mention of the uniquely Australian flora and fauna, which are found in the ESL programmes for newly-arrived immigrant NESB children. This is hardly surprising, however, given the environment in which the children are living, where they would already be very familiar with kangaroos, dingoes and goannas in their natural habitat and as an integral part of their everyday lives. It does, of course, contrast with the content of the ESL programmes for newly-arrived immigrant NESB schoolchildren. It is also interesting to note that no attempt is made to introduce the Aboriginal children in the readers to other animals common in the Australian landscape, such as sheep, cattle and horses. Presumably, these are not animals important in the lives of these children.

School

The school features to some extent in the readers, but not as prominently

as the child's home and the bush environment. The interesting feature of the school-based content is that it shows both implicit and explicit types of socio-cultural content.

Explicit content is introduced, for example, in several of the readers. One whole story reader, "Going to pre-school" (Story Reader, Level 4:1), has as its theme an Aboriginal mother taking her young daughter to pre-school on her first day. It expresses the child's feelings and behaviour and also the behaviour and speech of the teacher (female and white) and the teacher's aide (female and Aboriginal). Explicit models of the teacher's speech are also given in other sentence readers, such as *Do you want to help the teacher?* (Sentence Reader, Level 4:5) and *Do you want to paint a picture?* (Sentence Reader, Level 4:6).

These examples, however, also indicate the implicit socio-cultural content in the sentences related to school. The behaviour of the teacher and expected behaviour of the child in the school setting are shown. For example, there is an illustration, where a teacher in a pre-school setting is shown with young Aboriginal children trying to encourage one (new?) child to participate in activities. The child is depicted as rather anxious, uncertain and reluctant to participate, while the teacher is shown as seemingly kindly, concerned and understanding of the child's feelings.

Aboriginal

The socio-cultural content of the *Tracks* ESL readers is clearly and predominantly Aboriginal. However, it reflects the world of rural Aboriginals, living and working in and around country towns, rather than those from traditional tribal settings, or even in urban settings. The Aboriginals shown in the illustrations, for example, are usually dressed in European clothes, do their shopping in country town stores/supermarkets and go to church (e.g., *After church, they will go to the beach* (Sentence Reader, Level 4:10)). The Aboriginals, however, seem to mix a Europeanized life-style (e.g., buying bread, flour and milk from a shop), with some more traditional customs, such as gathering traditional food from the bush, ocean or river (see Figure 3). This slant is probably a result of the fact that these ESL readers will have been written by (white) teachers most familiar with this kind of Aboriginal life-style – and, of course, they would not have much access to knowledge of tribal customs, nor the English vocabulary to express it.

There is considerable explicit mention of an Aboriginal life-style. Much, of course, of this comes from the illustrations, which show Aboriginals almost exclusively. Some unique features of the Aboriginal life-style are also included in the text as well as in the illustrations. Spears (e.g., *All the spears are long* (Sentence Reader, Level 4:9)), Aboriginal dancing (e.g., *Yebinda is dancing* (Sentence Reader, Level 1:1) and musical instruments (e.g., an illustration of a boy playing the didgeridoo) are all featured. An Aboriginal boy named Yebinda features in a number of the readers and he is shown dancing, holding a goanna (e.g., *Yebinda has a goanna*) and playing with his friends (all Aboriginal). Aboriginal names

are used for characters (e.g., Yebinda, Janita), although the names are also often English ones (e.g., Timmy, Peter).

Implicit socio-cultural content is most often conveyed in the illustrations in this ESL programme. This content shows the life-style and conditions of Aboriginal children living in the country, as they are in reality (e.g., see Figures 1, 2 and 3). In this way, the readers provide an implicit endorsement of the Aboriginal children's life-style and conditions. There is no attempt to show other, more urban or white life-styles and conditions. Although the houses, life-style and food shown in the reader illustrations are quite different from those of children living elsewhere in Australia, no attempt is made to draw attention to these contrasts or to indicate that there are other possible ways of living — either explicitly or implicitly. The readers reflect their own world to the Aboriginal children and legitimate it. This approach is probably based on motivational notions and the idea of developing reading skills through using familiar concepts and situations. The promotion of a positive self-concept in the children would also be sought, by indicating that their knowledge and life-style is suitable for inclusion in school textbooks. There is probably also the assumption that, in the bilingual situation which is the goal of such ESL programmes with Aboriginal children, English will remain the second language for these children. The teacher's role, therefore, is to encourage and support the children's Aboriginal customs and language, not to replace them with white, European ones.

The sentence and story readers, therefore, reflect a combination of home, community, school and the more general world of the Aboriginal child. These early ESL readers, as do most beginners' readers, reflect the children's immediate world and direct experience. They, therefore, describe settings which are first located in the child's home and immediate environment and then move out into the wider community, including the school. There is, therefore, almost no attempt in the readers to introduce any socio-cultural content, which is not extremely familiar to the Aboriginal child. The closest attempt at introducing new socio-cultural content is to be found in those readers where, for example, the young pre-school child's first day at school is introduced. This provides sentences which describe the activities that occur in the Kindy/pre-school classroom; it also describes how the teacher behaves towards the child, and what the expectations are of the child's behaviour in the pre-school setting.

Summary discussion of the socio-cultural content in ESL programmes

The ESL programmes for newly-arrived NESB and Aboriginal school-children, which were examined briefly above, show a number of interesting similarities and differences. The most obvious similarity is the attempt in all the ESL programmes to take the interest and knowledge level of the target age-group of children into account in devising the presentation of materials. This is particularly obvious in

the programmes for younger children (e.g., *Smile* and *Tracks*), where visual stimuli and special features are included to keep children interested and motivated. There is perhaps also a similarity in the basic English language structures provided, particularly for the younger children, and in the prominent use of a school context for the presentation of language structures and communication contexts and also for the introduction of both explicit and implicit cultural content.

The *Tracks* programme for Aboriginal children, however, clearly contrasts with the other ESL programmes in the way in which it explicitly reflects to the children their own socio-cultural and physical world. Familiar people, objects and events are used as the background context for the language content. It makes little attempt, as the ESL programmes for NESB children do, to introduce the Aboriginal ESL learners to other sociocultural contexts, attitudes and mores.

The differences clearly reflect the different aims and purposes of the various ESL programmes. Those developed for newly-arrived immigrant children clearly see their main goal to be that of helping school-age children to function independently in the mainstream Australian school system and community, and to achieve this as quickly as possible. Thus there are already defined socio-cultural, as well as linguistic, aims for the programmes. The programmes, therefore, clearly and explicitly serve the purpose of inducting the children into Australian culture. This is intended to both ease their social transition into the school and wider Australian community, as well as to assist their functioning in academic areas.

The Aboriginal ESL children, however, are clearly in a different situation when they start to learn English. They have not arrived in a foreign country, where they are immediately forced to change their cultural and linguistic habits in order to survive. The Aboriginal children are already 'at home' in a familiar world which is not being drastically changed. They are learning English in a bilingual setting, for the most part, where their mother tongue is acknowledged and used. The purpose of learning English is to allow them to continue their schooling into higher grades and to enhance their academic performance.

The impact of the ESL programmes on students in socio-cultural terms is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the examination of the amount and type of socio-cultural information present in the programmes and conveyed to students (and teachers) both explicitly and implicitly, suggests that the impact is quite different for the two groups of ESL learners.

The impact of the ESL programmes would be greater in socio-cultural terms, one would have to assume, on newly-arrived NESB children than on the Aboriginal children. On reflection, it seems surprising that there is perhaps not a greater balance in the ESL programmes for the two groups of learners between the socio-cultural world that they already know, and the one outside their present experience. In other words, the programmes for newly-arrived NESB schoolchildren learning English might have

reflected the students' backgrounds to a greater extent, in order to enhance their self-esteem and to provide a bridge between their past and future worlds; the programmes for Aboriginal students might have taken them beyond the boundaries of their immediate environment to introduce them to wider perspectives, which in turn might enhance their academic progress.

It would also be useful to assess the degree to which ESL teachers using the programmes recognize their socializing role with the students, and to what extent the programmes should be monitored for the suitability of the socio-cultural content and the attitudes explicitly and implicitly conveyed.

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A Visit to Gujarat: A Linguistic Odyssey

Arvind Bhatt

Arthur C. Clarke wrote about a mission to Jupiter to make contact with the Monolith — the cradle of stars. I embarked on a similar — much less dramatic — odyssey to make linguistic and cultural contact with the cradle of my existence — Gujarat in Western India. The visit, lasting some four weeks in the winter of 1987-88, had a profound effect on my psyche. Even now, nearly a year later, I am unable to come to terms with the deep perturbations and quakes in the core of my being. Could it be that I find the English language inadequate to describe such a bilingual/cultural shock — could any language cope with such inner feelings? Immediately I arrived back in England and began to attempt to write about my experiences, I was faced with linguistic helplessness.

Although originally from Gujarat, my family had migrated to Uganda, East Africa, during the troubled times after the Partition of India and Pakistan. Many Gujarati families had already settled in Uganda and the uncertain future in India and Pakistan had increased the size of the settlement. They were engaged mainly in trade but were increasingly involved in local government under British rule. There was racial segregation and my early education took place in an exclusively Asian school. There being no suitable provision for further education in Uganda at the time, my parents decided to send me to England with a bursary from the Ugandan Government. On my departure for England at Entebbe Airport (in Uganda), our family priest gave me chewing gum and chocolate with the injunction: 'Stick to you studies like the chewing gum and be sweet like the chocolate'. I am not sure about the latter, but the former I did manage quite well. My family had given me the usual warning about 'shameless white women' but this I ignored as prejudice and married an Englishwoman. I now have a mono-lingual, mono-cultural family (except me!), heavily dominated by English. The chewing gum, I realise now, became mixed up with another powerful adhesive.

The Indian writer and critic, Nirad Chaudhury (1965), refers to India as a continent of Circe. Circe, in Greek mythology, was a daughter of the Sun

and the sea nymph, Perse. She lived alone in a palace on an island and turned all who visited her into animals. To many in my situation, Britain too is a continent of Circe. I love and cherish my family but regret the loss of bilingualism and bi-culturalism in it. Is it possible to synthesize and integrate when one of the cultures is so predominant? It seems to me that surrender is the likely outcome. That implies the loss of self identity, loss of at least one channel of communication, loss of a window on the world.

It was to open the window, to unblock the disused channel, to meet my existential essence that I went to Gujarat. As I am involved in teaching Gujarati and also have links with institutions like the Institute of Linguists and the Royal Society of Arts, I wanted to gather authentic materials and make useful contacts with educational institutions in Gujarat.

Four weeks seemed inadequate for all these objectives but that is all the time I had at my disposal. Were I teaching French or German, there would be little difficulty in arranging longer visits. Apart from the distances involved, Asian languages suffer from lack of status. Local Education Authorities in Britain seem to me not to be inclined to encourage educational visits farther than Europe — except to America. In a sense, I was attempting to set a precedent and to smooth a path for others. Perhaps the seeds of my subsequent distress were inherent in the number and nature of the tasks I had set myself. The gap between promise and fulfilment was bound to be painfully wide. Unlike a tourist, I had set myself particular goals. Was this yet another cognitive style I had imbibed? Rather than taking things as they come — leaving an open agenda as my culture would have enabled me to do — I imposed a European pattern on an essentially non-European experience.

A week before the date of departure, I was panic-stricken. Although I had corresponded with my sisters in Gujarati and English, I suddenly felt all confidence ooze out of me. My competence in Gujarati is, I know, adequate: Performance in Gujarati I became increasingly anxious about. I became frightened that my Gujarati would be inappropriate, laughable, a point of shame. What should I say to my sisters after all these years? How was I to behave to their families? Would my family accept my relations and vice versa? What did I have to show after all these years — that I had become anglicized, a brown Englishman? That I had adopted one culture, one outlook at the expense of another, equally valid? That I taught Gujarati to other people's children but not my own? Was there here an irony, a hypocrisy? Suddenly, I felt all the weight of the paradox of a community language teacher. Teaching any other subject or any other language (European), does not imply a moral commitment. A French teacher's child does not have to learn French. A teacher of English does not necessarily produce a child totally competent in English. Similarly for the Scientist and the Artist. The word 'community' in Community Language implies a sort of merging of the self and the family in the speech community. To teach Gujarati is to take on the communal, the political and the religious as well as the linguistic baggage.

I panicked on another level. Hindu religion so permeates the everyday life of its adherents that it is inconceivable to be a Hindu and an atheist. Having taken on board the English way of life, I had rejected the authority of Hindu religion. I had ditched the injunctions and the rituals in the English Channel. I find the rituals connected with the progress of the Hindu life from the cradle to grave — and beyond — irksome and irrational. They are like the bones of long dead dinosaurs. Yet I was now going to have to take cognisance of life's little protocols. Hordes of forgotten relatives were going to expect me to visit them, to give them gifts and to perform for them — these performances mainly involving money in one way or another. I had despised these little financial deals. Now I dreaded them. Would my atheism and the consequent rejection of these medieval rituals shock them and cause them to reject me? Would I be an embarrassment to my sisters? How would my wife be received — is she the Circe? Have I been seduced by the Christians? Would my children be seen as 'varnasankar' — an unwelcome mix of races? Coming from the Brahmin caste, this is a heinous sin. We have given our two children both English and Gujarati names (James and Gita, Girish and Corinna). But does this imply some eclecticism on my part? The question of synthesis (or integration) or surrender, when two cultures face each other, arises again. I was afraid that all our 'sophistication' and 'foreign returnedness' would be seen as a 'cop out'. For once, I feared judgement and rejection by those whose code I had rejected.

But panic was useless — the arrangements had gone too far. As they say in Gujarati: once you have wetted your beard, you might as well finish the shave. And so, with anxiety and exhilaration, I took my family to Gujarat.

When we landed in Bombay, I was prepared to absorb the shock of the old. There was complacency in my tone as I prepared my wife — we already had read lots of books and talked to relatives and friends who had been to Gujarat. The bureaucracy at the airport was nothing new. Even so, it irritated. While waiting for the passport checker to finish his tea and chat, I looked around for examples of communicative, authentic material. Most of the notices were in English and Hindi — a rather formal kind of Hindi. Dutifully I noted them down for the preliminary stage of the Institute of Linguists' examination. My mental balance was restored by such objective activity. The lull before the storm.

Out of the relatively plush surrounding of the airport, we hit the real India. That the thin, whining beggar children spoke Gujarati amazed me — shocked me even. My wife wanted to give them some food but was culturally conditioned not to give to beggars. She also was concerned that our children could form 'wrong' impressions about children in India. Neither of us wanted to register this and so we busied ourselves with securing places on the bus to Santa Cruz airport to catch the connecting plane to Rajkot. Passing the 'zhupadpatti', the make-shift huts along the road, I felt depressed. Some children, cleanly dressed in white but shoeless walked along the planks, holding their school books. Did these children

live in the 'huts'? How did they do their homework, my children asked. I confessed I did not know. My mind went back to my childhood in Uganda. I too was shoeless — I hated shoes and socks. We lived in a proper house and walked three to four miles in the dew of the African morning. How would I have looked to the Europeans who passed us occasionally in their cars? Am I a part of some European's visual memory of a shoeless Indian child? Like the hero in Arthur C. Clarke's "A Space Odyssey", I felt between two universes, belonging to neither, or rather that my corporeal body was in one and my existence in another world, another time.

As I have said, I had kept in touch with my relatives — my sisters mainly — by letter. It was not a regular correspondence. I first began to write in Gujarati and then lapsed into English as my bilingualism began to be unbalanced. My sisters almost always wrote in Gujarati. Then, when I began teaching Gujarati, my letters began to be in Gujarati and ranged over wider subjects than just family chat. The balance of bilingualism was closely tied to use. It was during this lucid Gujarati stage that I had begun to form ideas about the personalities I was corresponding with. Of course, we had exchanged photos but these gave no clues to personalities. So it was very exciting to see how my mental images coincided with reality. It was an anticlimax. The identification went without a hitch and the excitement and sentiment did not hinder communication in Gujarati. I tended to translate a little bit too much for my wife, until I was reminded by her and my sisters that there was no need — they could speak in English. My assumed role of translator/interpreter was to cause me much embarrassment and heart-searching. But for the moment, I was aware that regardless of willingness to use English, my family would not be able to participate fully in the linguistic and cultural experience I was going through. As time went on, I was also aware of the control I exercised on communication between my family and my Gujarati relatives. I could filter information, distort it or totally ignore it. The subtlety of control reminded me of my own research on the role of the interpreter in my research on the *Bilingual Medical Consultations* (1987).

However, my first task was to bond my relationship with my sisters and their families. With my eldest sister the relationship existed in time but not in space. We reminisced about our childhood pranks and quarrels. Her husband and children and my family were mere observers. Perhaps because my sisters and I tended to use Gujarati for intimate recollections, my family was even more on the outside. In relating to my relatives whom I had not seen at all except in photographs, language played a crucial role. Without our use of colloquial Gujarati, phatic communication would have been impossible and the relationships would have remained formal and superficial. My children had little inhibition and, like children everywhere, took situations as they came and related to my nieces and nephews without self-consciousness.

My youngest sister, Rekha, formed a close friendship with me. We had communicated almost exclusively in Gujarati and talked and wrote about

our opinions and feelings about our society. We shared, through Gujarati, our reformist zeal and philosophical outlook. Without Gujarati, this could not have been possible. We discussed long into the warm nights — she and I alone out on the swing under the bougainvillea — the theme of Nirad Chaudhury's *Continent of Circe*. (This book, I think, was banned in India but my sister seemed to be aware of its content — perhaps independently reached.)

One interesting consequence of such long conversations was that my bilingualism again became off-centre. I found it difficult to communicate smoothly with my wife in English. Curiously, I would remember only the general definition of the word I was looking for or a higher order hyponymy. For instance, I was trying to explain the process of hand-made cloth and weaving. I just could not remember 'weaving'. Instead, I indicated lattice-like working with my hands (as if weaving) and used phrases such as 'under and over'. It was painful and frustrating to watch my wife's face cloud over with puzzlement. It was a tremendous relief when she said, 'oh! you don't mean weaving, do you?'

I found myself getting impatient with English whereas I could show much more tolerance with Gujarati. My oral discourse began to lose its coherence and, at times, cohesion. Gujarati syntax as well as the vocabulary was gradually — no, rapidly — taking over. Indeed, there were several times when I naturally talked to my wife in Gujarati. I only became aware of it when she pointed out that she had not quite understood what I was on about.

I must say that all this did not disturb me in the least. On the contrary, I was proud that I had made the switch — linguistic and cultural — so easily after such a long gap. I felt that I had lived in Gujarat for years and could easily negotiate myself out of any situation. This overconfidence or complacency was soon to be knocked on the head.

One other implication of this shifting bilingualism was more embarrassing. I find it painful even now to admit it. I am a late convert to bilingualism and my children, to my shame, are monolingual. The amount of interpreting and translating I did was an indication of this gap between theory and practice. I had failed to inculcate bilingualism in my children. I failed to teach my wife how to communicate in Gujarati — perhaps she failed to learn it (thus confirming the inability of the English to learn other languages!). Be that as it may, I have not practised what I preached. On the other hand, I am acutely aware of the same process in the second generation of Asian children in Britain. Too busy earning a living, Asian parents have, by and large, neglected to pass on their language to their children. Some have even imbibed the racism inherent in accepting the dominance of English as a means of making social and economic progress. Their children have rejected the language of their initial socialization and family communication. And yet, these parents and their children often hark back to their roots, visit Gujarat or the Punjab and remain in the Asian fold. Learning English, they realise too late, is no passport into English society. I have

seen my pupils, who have visited Gujarat with their parents, come back with no indication that they had contacted their original culture or language. They have been mute and sullen witnesses to rituals, ceremonies and family communications. Without competence in Gujarati, they were unable to participate in any cultural and linguistic renewal. I too had been blinded by Western civilization and had begun to reject my own as inferior. What has 'saved' me is the fact that I studied Gujarati as part of my 'O' levels in Uganda. Left to the community, as the Swann Report (1985) suggests, Gujarati would have atrophied a long time ago and the process would have been irreversible. But I cannot get away from the fact that I was ashamed to have to translate and interpret for my monolingual family. I found it confusing and frustrating to explain behaviour and to relate to my wife both as Jenny the person and Jenny the English person.

My relatives and friends and visitors were not aware of this irony. (At least they did not show it!) In Gujarat, English is valued highly. My children were seen, not as poor monolinguals, but as well developed English speakers. Their evaluation of my family was irrespective of their lack of Gujarati. But it affected *my* evaluation of my family, and, by implication, my self-evaluation. If my wife had been an English-born Gujarati who had lost the command of the language, the evaluation by my relatives and friends would have been much more severe. As it was, she was excused on the grounds that she was a foreigner anyway.

My apparent confidence in using Gujarati came into question during our journey to Delhi and back in a taxi. Having given instructions about our itinerary, I believed that the driver understood. When the taxi began to make unscheduled stops and our plan to go awry I requested the taxi driver to make up the lost time. I thought that I had built up a good relationship with the driver through colloquial Gujarati. The hidden message that I was no innocent tourist — ignorant of the language and culture — was, I thought, fairly plain. I had overlooked the fact that I had imposed the communicative pattern of one culture onto another. In English, one often disguises a command as a request: "Would you mind . . ." This apparent politeness gave away my true self — a 'soft' tourist. I should have used the Gujarati equivalent of "stop here". This command I could not give in Gujarati which does have the polite form. However, the polite form carries with it the overtones of a master commanding a servant — albeit politely. This master-servant relationship, I felt I had rejected with colonialism. I am not arguing that I should have behaved like a brown sahib — that would not have produced results. It is that I had used a Gujarati request overlaid with an English communicative pattern. I wonder if bilinguals are prone to such culture-communication interference. If we call the first language L1 and its culture C1, is there a possibility of L2C1 and L1C2 combinations? Is there a kind of delay in switching from C1 to C2 when a switch has already been made from L1 to L2? I believe that this may have been the case

with me. In English, the longer the sentence, the more the speaker distances himself from the command. In Gujarati, the relationship between superior and inferior is sharp, wider and made evident in different linguistic forms. To the English ear, a request from a Gujarati speaker in English would sound like an abrupt command for in Gujarati there is no such thing as the 'hidden command' — for example, the phrase "Could you stop here, please" has, in English, the force of a command, but to the Gujarati ear it is merely a wish. The perceived inappropriacy of linguistic form in each case would thus create a distance and miscommunication would inevitably be the result.

The taxi driver was not the only person to expose my 'weakness'. A similar mismatch occurred when I hired a video camera and a cameraman to film a town in Gujarat. Although I paid the piper, it wasn't my tune which was produced. The video film, though interesting, is not what I had planned. There is almost an element of farce here — much like the British television programme *Fawlty Towers*. Basil Fawlty, the hotel owner and Manuel, the Spanish waiter, have more than linguistic confusion to contend with — and that perhaps is the real joke. When I came back to England, the reverse happened and I felt a bit like Manuel. I crossed the road without looking, nearly forgot to say sorry, omitted to say please when asking for stamps and was abrupt with the telephone operator. Although I had switched from L1 (Gujarati) to L2 (English), I had not yet completely switched from C1 to C2. A similar mix of L1C2 or L2C1 is apparent in many young Gujaratis who have tended to remain within the community both mentally and geographically. In their case, there may be the added complication of loss of bilingualism.

I began this essay by comparing my journey with a space odyssey. I came back from Gujarat with an overwhelming feeling of having touched something deep inside my psyche. Bilingualism seemed to me an iridescent concept — it looked different in the variegated light of my experiences. I became acutely aware of what the loss of one's language can do. I felt sorry for young Gujaratis who are unable to communicate in their first language of socialisation. I became angry and frustrated at the barely disguised racism of the assimilationist nature of the so-called bilingual model followed in some L.E.A.s in Britain. I also became profoundly depressed by the loss of collective identity amongst us, the Gujaratis. It filled me with outrage that the national curriculum can ignore Community Languages and thus systematically destroy the self-concept of young Gujaratis and deny them the opportunity of undoubted cognitive development through bilingualism at all stages of their lives. I became guilt-ridden by my own neglect of bilingualism in me and my family. My own research in the bilingual doctor-patient consultation process became much more real when I realised the extent of alienation amongst Gujaratis born in this country and unable to communicate with older members of the family in Gujarati. What a waste of linguistic talent and potential is perpetrated in the name of integration and the learning

of English. What pernicious poison is racism that both the perpetrators and victims of racism are partners in this process of destruction. The spectre of concentration camp victims who collaborated with the Nazis – the ‘muselmanner’ (‘Prisoners who came to believe the repeated statements of the guards’) described by Bruno Bettelheim in his *The Informed Heart* (1970) – was too much to contemplate.

I am still working through the implications of my visit to Gujarat. It has raised many questions about bilingualism and acculturation. When two cultures and languages meet in an individual, there is a loss of identity and a consequent sense of guilt and frustration when the extent of the loss of tribal identity is grasped. Bilingualism, then, is not just an academic, static concept to be discussed mainly or purely in linguistic terms. It is dynamic and has a large underbelly derived from psychology, sociology and anthropology. Examining bilingualism on an individual level and in all its domains – affective and intellectual – yields positive insights into the dynamic balance between language, society and the individual. In a country which prefers a mono-lingual and mono-cultural ethos, the precarious nature of a bilingual has, I hope, been reflected in this article.

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