

Teaching English as an International Language: The Role of Culture in Asian Contexts

Sandra L. McKay

San Francisco State University, United States

This paper explores the role of culture in the teaching of English as an international language in an Asian context. The paper opens with a description of the features of an international language. Then the author discusses how culture plays an important role in language learning in the teaching of semantics, pragmatics, and rhetoric, in the development of language materials, and in the choice of teaching methodology. Throughout the paper, the author argues that the role of culture in teaching an international language needs to be significantly different from the role of culture in teaching other languages. One of the major aims of the paper is to explore what this means for English teaching in Asian contexts.

Many teachers use cultural content in their classrooms, believing that such a focus will motivate their students. However, as English assumes the role of an international language, the question of which culture to teach and how to teach it raises several important issues. In order to explore the link between culture and an international language, the paper begins with an examination of what is meant by an international language. This is followed by a consideration of the role of culture in English teaching on both a linguistic and pedagogical level. A basic assumption of the paper is that the role of culture in teaching an international language needs to be significantly different from the role of culture in teaching other languages. In order to explore the role of culture in English teaching it is necessary to begin with a

clarification of what is meant by an international language.

ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

Crystal (1997) argues that English is rapidly assuming the role of an international language. He maintains that in inner circle countries, where English is spoken as a native language, there are between 320-380 million native speakers of English. In outer circle countries, where English has an official role as, for example, in India and Singapore, there are from 150 to 300 million second language speakers of English. And in outer circle countries, where English is learned as a foreign language, there are from 100 to perhaps as many as 1,000 million learners of English. Hence, as a conservative estimate, there are approximately 570 million people in the world today who have a native or native-like command of English. As Crystal points out, no other language has spread around the globe so extensively, making English a truly international language. However, the sheer number of speakers is not a sufficient reason to label a language as an international language. If this were the case, Mandarin with far more native speakers than English would be the language of choice today in international exchanges.

What exactly is an International language? Smith (1976) was perhaps one of the first to define the term, noting that an “international language is one which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another” (p.17). Elaborating on this definition, Smith makes several assertions regarding the relationship of an international language and culture; namely that

- (1) learners of an international language do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers of that language;
- (2) the ownership of an international language becomes “de-nationalized”;
and
- (3) the educational goal of learning an international language is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

More recently Brutt-Griffler (2002) has contended that four central features accompany the development of a world or international language. First, an international language is the product of the development of a world econocultural system, which includes the development of a world market and business community, as well as the development of a global scientific, cultural, and intellectual life. Second, an international language tends to establish itself alongside other local languages in multilingual contexts composed of bilingual speakers. Third, an international language, unlike an elite lingua franca, is not confined to the socioeconomic elite but is learned by various levels of society. Finally, an international language spreads not by speakers of that language migrating to other areas but rather by many individuals acquiring the language.

Today English exemplifies most of these features of an international language. To begin, few would question that presently English dominates a variety of economic and cultural arenas. In an issue of the *National Geographic* (Swerdlow, 1999) devoted to the topic of the development a global culture, the editors note that today less than 30 percent of Coca-Cola's income comes from the United States; that Toyota now sells over 1.3 million cars in the United States; that Nestle's now has food factories in 80 countries; and that more than 90 percent of the top money-earning films in history are American productions. In other words, more and more products and trends from a variety of countries are reaching global markets. English both facilitates the sale of these products and trends and spreads because of the growth of these global products and ideas, fueling its spread as an international language. Crystal (1997) offers further evidence of the domination of English in several important arenas including international relations, the mass media, international travel, international safety, education, and communications.

Demographics on the future users of English clearly demonstrate that English possesses Brutt-Griffler's second feature of a world language, namely that a world language establishes itself alongside of other languages. In his paper on the decline of the native speaker of English, Graddol (1999)

uses demographic projections to support the contention that the balance between native and nonnative speakers of English will shift significantly in the next 50 years. He concludes that

based solely on expected population changes, the number of people using English as their second language will grow from 235 million to around 462 million during the next 50 years. This indicates that the balance between L1 and L2 speakers will critically change, with L2 speakers eventually overtaking L1 speakers. (p. 62)

Such projections illustrate the fact that one of the major reasons for considering English an international language is the sheer number of people in the world who will have some familiarity with English. This allows English to act as a language of wider communication in a global sense for a great variety of purposes.

It is more difficult to demonstrate that English exemplifies the third feature of Brutt-Griffler's analysis of a world language, namely that an international language is learned by various levels of society and is not an elite lingua franca. There are few accurate figures to establish exactly who is learning English. One can assume, however, that if English is a required subject in a country, most children going to school will have at least some exposure to English. On the other hand, gaining a high level of proficiency in English typically requires more than the limited hours of English instruction that generally are provided in public schools and hence, those who want to attain a high level of English proficiency seek other means of learning the language, often in private institutes. In this way, those who can afford additional instruction in English often are those who achieve the greatest proficiency in English. This is certainly true in many Asian countries around the world today where there exists a huge industry of private English language teaching programs to help individuals gain proficiency in English, often for exam and professional purposes. Hence, one may question the notion that English is not in some sense an elite lingua franca since those who have more economic resources are often those who are able to attain greater proficiency in English.

The final feature of Brutt-Griffler's model of an international language is that an international language spreads not through speaker migration but rather by many individuals in a speech community acquiring the language or what Brutt-Griffler terms macro-acquisition. The result of this type of language spread is not monolingualism but large-scale bilingualism. In fact, it is this type of language spread that is currently fueling English spread and raising new questions about the role of culture in English teaching.

If an international language, by definition, belongs to no single culture, then it would seem that it is not necessary for language learners to acquire knowledge about the culture of those who speak it as a native language. There are some, however, who argue that a language cannot be taught without knowledge of a target culture. Whether or not target cultural content should be included in English language classrooms is highly dependent on what one sees as the role of culture in language learning. In my view, culture plays a role on both the linguistic and the pedagogical level of language teaching. On a linguistic level, culture plays a role in terms of semantics, pragmatics, and rhetoric. On a pedagogical level, culture is influential in the development of materials and the choice of teaching methodology. In the remainder of the paper I illustrate in what ways culture plays a role in these two dimensions of language teaching with particular reference to the Asian context.

THE LINGUISTIC LEVEL OF CULTURE

Semantics

The semantic dimension of culture in language teaching is evident in the teaching of lexical items. Cultural information on this level is often embedded in common phrases that are introduced in texts with no historical, cultural, or sociological explanation provided. For example, in the United States readers might come across terms such the *Big Three*, *Big Stick*

Diplomacy, or *yellow journalism*, all terms that have developed from the historical and political development of the country. In teaching an international language, teachers are faced with the question of which terms to introduce. Should terms that are highly specific to a target culture such as yellow journalism be introduced? Or should only terms that have developed from more general western traditions such as *Pandora's box*, the *Midas touch*, or the *good Samaritan* be introduced in the teaching of English as an international language? Clearly, an answer to this question rests largely on the language learning goals of the students. Asian students who plan to live in the United States may find it useful to know phrases embedded in American culture while other students may have little need for such vocabulary. On the other hand, if the cultural basis of English as an international language does not depend on inner circle countries then there may be no need to teaching lexical phrases that developed from a Western tradition.

Pragmatics

The pragmatic sense of culture is generally introduced in the teaching of speech acts like giving and receiving compliments, asking for information, or making and refusing invitations. One danger that can arise in approaching this level of culture is that teaching materials often assume that learners want to acquire rather than learn about how particular speech acts are enacted in target cultures. Hence, in teaching about giving and receiving of compliments, many textbooks point out that in the United States it is very typical to accept a compliment with phrases like "thank you." If, however, students are encouraged to receive compliments in this way, then the teaching goal becomes one of accepting rather than learning about culturally bound ways of behaving. Such an approach can present a problem to language learners who, in their own culture, as is true of many Asian cultures, are more likely to scale down or disagree with a compliment. Again if educators are teaching an international language, then, as Smith points out, learners do not need to internalize the cultural norms of another culture.

The teaching of pragmatic appropriateness is frequently based on the assumption that the goal of the bilingual users of English is to achieve nativelike competence. As Kasper (1997) points out, a variety of problems exists in making this assumption. First, the native speakers do not constitute a homogeneous group. Even individuals within the same country and sharing to some extent a common culture can have different standards of pragmatic appropriateness. Second, attempting to achieve nativelike pragmatic competence, even if it were desirable, may not be a feasible goal for adult learners of English since it may be that, like phonology and syntax, there are maturational constraints on acquiring nativelike fluency. Third, in some cases English-language learners may lack the quality and quantity of contact with the second language that would give them the necessary input and occasions for gaining pragmatic competence. These concerns raise additional reasons for not promoting the pragmatic standards used in target cultures as the goal in the teaching of pragmatic appropriateness.

Rhetoric

Rhetorical competence as it relates to the use of English as an international language has been investigated in studies of contrastive rhetoric (Connor, 1996; Leki, 1991). Connor (1996) defines contrastive rhetoric as “an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers, and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them” (p. 5). Hence, according to this definition, contrastive rhetoric attempts to explain bilingual English users’ “problems” in using English by comparing their rhetorical patterns to those of native speakers, suggesting that native speaker discourse is the target for bilingual users, an assumption which needs to be questioned.

In some instances, researchers in contrastive rhetoric have proposed a predominant approach to audience or knowledge as a way of characterizing the rhetoric of particular cultures. Hinds (1987), for example, posits that written texts in many Western cultures can be characterized as “writer

responsible” in that it is the writers’ responsibility to ensure that effective communication takes place by directly stating their intentions. In many Asian cultures, however, Hinds maintains it is the reader who is responsible for determining the writer’s primary intent. This distinction has reinforced the notion, first described by Kaplan (1966), that Western writing tends to be direct, whereas a good deal of rhetoric from Asian countries is indirect in that the main point is often never stated and must be inferred by the reader.

Ballard and Clanchy (1991) argue that rhetorical differences in large part develop from specific cultural approaches to learning. They contend that in many Asian and Southeast Asian countries, learning strategies often entail memorization and imitation, resulting in an approach to knowledge that encourages the conservation of existing knowledge. On the other hand, they maintain that many Western cultures encourage a speculative or critical approach to learning, resulting in an extension of existing knowledge. Because of this, in many Western cultures, writers are encouraged to present their own opinion on a particular topic as they speculate about the various possibilities contained in the issue.

Many argue that if students are to succeed academically in a Western context, they must acquire the predominant rhetorical patterns of Western cultures (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Reid, 1994). Others, however, maintain that in demanding writers to acquire a particular rhetorical pattern of development, educators are asking second language writers of English to accept Western cultural patterns of textual development. Land and Whitley (1989), for example, maintain that asking second language writers of English to use a deductive linear argument when they write in English is basically a matter of colonization. As they put it,

By asking these students [second language writers] to use our signals according to our expectations, we are not taking language to be a “system of abstract grammatical categories”; instead we are at least implicitly understanding “language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as world view” (Bakhtin, 1877/1981, p. 271). We require our ESL students to share and reproduce in their writing our world view, one to which they are,

of course, alien. Such instruction is composition as colonization. (p. 289)

If we examine written texts from a perspective of English as an international language, it is important to consider to what extent using culturally different rhetorical patterns to organize English texts can result in a lack of intelligibility. Unfortunately, most existing research in contrastive rhetoric has sought to determine the features by which texts differ as a result of cultural patterns rather than on how these differences affect comprehension. This is an area in which research is needed. In cases where English is used in internationally circulated papers, if an essential characteristic of an international language is that it has become de-nationalized, then it is unclear why largely Western modes of rhetorical development should be exclusively used. Rather, it may well be that readers of English as an international language need to be, in Hind's terminology, reader-responsible and contribute more to the reading process.

THE PEDAGOGICAL LEVEL OF CULTURE

Teaching Materials

On the pedagogical level, culture plays an important role in the choice of content that is included in teaching materials. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) distinguish three types of cultural information that can be used in language textbooks and materials:

- 1) *target culture materials* that use the culture of a country where English is spoken as a first language;
- 2) *source culture materials* that draw on the learners' own culture as content; and
- 3) *international target culture materials* that use a great variety of cultures in English- and non-English-speaking countries around the world.

How does the choice of the use of these types of cultural information relate to the teaching of English as an international language? As with all language teaching materials, what to include as content depends on the background and goals of the students and teacher. Let us examine how the choice of cultural content is affected by the contexts where English is taught.

Target Culture Materials

Today with the tremendous interest in learning English, one very common classroom situation is when the teacher and students come from the same cultural background, but the materials used in the classroom draw heavily on a target culture. This would be the case as, for example, in a classroom in Thailand with a Thai teacher using materials written in the United States or Great Britain. What are some advantages and disadvantages of such an approach to teaching culture? On the positive side it may be that some students in the class, perhaps due to the popularity of western films and music, may be interested in learning more about English-speaking cultures. Or it may be that some of the students are preparing to visit or study in English-speaking countries.

On the other hand, it may be that some of the materials are irrelevant or uninteresting to some of the students or present cultural conflicts. For example, one of my graduate students told me about his experience using a U.S. published book with his class in Korea. In one exercise in the book, students were asked to look at photographs of various American scenes depicting different periods of history and decide in which decade the picture was taken. As one might imagine, students found the task extremely difficult. Furthermore, he had few resources to draw on to help his students. The presentation of such materials may place teachers in a troubling position since when their students ask about the unfamiliar cultural information in the text, they may not have the answers. This could be especially problematic in many Asian cultures where the teacher is considered to be the provider of information. The important question is whether or not this is useful

information in the teaching of an international language in which, as Smith contends, the language becomes de-nationalized and the educational goal is to enable learners to communicate to others their ideas and culture.

A second situation that can arise in using target culture materials is when the students are from the source culture and the teacher is from the target culture, as might happen with an American teacher working in China. Obviously many of the advantages and disadvantages mentioned above would apply. However, in this situation, if the teacher were from the target culture dealt with in the text, he or she could explain unknown cultural information. However, this may result in the teacher talking more about his/her culture than the students using English to tell others about their culture. In such a case there can be a great deal of teacher talk rather than student talk as teachers tell students about their culture. Once again teachers need to decide the value of such an experience if the students' primary goal is to use English as an international language in order to explain their culture to others.

Local Culture Materials

Textbook materials can also use the local culture as cultural content. For example, one Japanese English textbook approved by the Ministry of Education asks students to describe annual Japanese events like the Children's Day Festival and the Moon-Viewing Festival and traditional arts like Haiku, Noh comedy, and Bunraku puppet shows. These materials could be used with either a Japanese English teacher or an expatriate teacher. What are the implications of such an approach to culture teaching? It is possible that since the students are already familiar with such topics, they are not motivating to the students. It may be, however, that students are not well informed about aspects of their own culture and hence, the text provides them with the opportunity to learn more about these topics. Or if students are familiar with these topics, they may not have the English vocabulary to discuss these topics. Furthermore if, as Smith points out, one purpose of an

international language is to explain one's own culture to others, then a local culture focus in materials helps students acquire the English needed to do this. Finally, in situations when the teachers are from the local culture they likely have the background knowledge to provide students with additional information or at least have access to such information.

It is also possible that local culture texts could be used in contexts where the students come from this culture but the teacher is from another culture. In such a situation, the teacher, if not familiar with some of the cultural topics, can become an interested listener, creating a real context for students to tell others about their culture in English. This would seem to be an ideal context for using English as an international language. What is surprising is that in many non-English speaking countries where I have worked, teachers and administrators prefer to use a target rather than local culture in their English textbooks. This perhaps is due to the belief that language and culture are inseparable and that English by definition still belongs to the countries where English is spoken as a native language.

International Target Culture Materials

A final basis for cultural materials can be an international target culture in which a great variety of cultural information is presented, representing many English and non-English speaking countries. When the students and teachers come from a culture not represented in the text, many of the same problems discussed in reference to the use of a target culture could occur. Students may be uninterested or puzzled by the information in the text and teachers may not have access to additional information needed to explain some of the cultural information in the materials.

Are there then any benefits that might arise from using content from an international target culture in the teaching of English as an international language? This, it seems to me, depends on what cultural information is included and how it is presented. Imagine a text in which non-native speakers of English interact with native and non-native speakers of English in cross-

cultural encounters for trade, tourism, and social contact. Such materials could have several benefits. To begin, they could illustrate cross-cultural pragmatics in which non-native speakers of English, while using English, nevertheless, draw on their own rules of appropriateness in enacting speech acts. They could also exemplify the manner in which English is being used effectively by non-native speakers of English to communicate with others for international purposes. Finally, they would demonstrate that English today is being used globally by bilingual speakers who have chosen not to internalize the norms of native English-speaking countries.

Cultural Values

Culture is also evident in the values that are portrayed in the dialogues and readings. In cases where Western characters are introduced in textbooks, it is often in the context of presenting differences between Western and Asian cultures, often accompanied by an emulation of Western culture and traditions. Iwasaki (2000), for example, points out that in 50% of the Japanese Ministry of Education approved oral communication textbooks there are dialogues contrasting gender roles in Western and Japanese cultures. Often these dialogues, in subtle ways, present an idealization of Western patterns. She gives the following dialogue as one example of this type of exchange.

Example One:

Rye: Jim?
Jim: What
Rye: Is your father always doing the dishes like that?
Jim: Yes. My parents take turns cooking and doing the dishes.
Rye: My father never helps with the housework.
He's too tired after a long day's work.
Jim: I think the Japanese work too much and too long.
What do you think?
Rye: I think so too. But people are taking more holidays than

before My father stays home longer.
Jim: What does he do on holidays?
Rye: Usually, he just relaxes. But you know what?
He started to learn cooking.
Jim: Does he cook well?
Rye: Yes, he cooks very well.
Everything is very very well-done.
(Source: *Echo* (1997) Tokyo: Sanyusya, Lesson 18, Housework)

The dialogue is a vivid example of what Iwasaki (2000) refers to as auto-colonization, in which Japanese often accept foreigner's value systems and do not hesitate to imitate them. In the dialogue, Rye not only appears to apologize for aspects of his own culture, agreeing with Jim that Japanese "work too much and too long," but he quickly points out that his father is imitating Western traditions by starting to learn to cook. As if this is not sufficient evidence of a type of auto-colonization, he continues that his father, however, has not managed to undertake this Westernization very effectively since everything he cooks is "very very well-done."

A similar tendency toward auto-colonization is evident in another example presented by Iwasaki (2000).

Example Two:

International and Japanese

I'd like to tell you something about Japanese food. When Westerners think of Japanese food, sushi, tempura and sukiyaki come to mind. In fact, though, many people have toast and coffee for breakfast. They may have curry for lunch or steak for dinner. Such foods are part of our everyday lives, and they don't seem foreign to us. The same is true with clothes, sports, music, recreation, and the design of homes. So in some things we're very international. Yet when we meet people from other countries we usually feel they're very different from us. Maybe if we live and work together more, we'll learn more about each other. I hope some day we'll become more familiar with those people just as we have become familiar

with the foods and other things that come from their countries.

(Source: *English Street* (1997). Tokyo: Daiichi Gakushusha, Lesson 15)

In this instance the Japanese character seems to want to assure the foreigner that Japanese have indeed assimilated aspects of Western culture, including food, sports, music and recreation. Thus, although in Japan the high school textbooks by and large include Japanese culture as the basis for cultural content, when Western cultures are introduced they are often presented for imitation.

Teaching Methodology

Culture of Learning

Another area of English language pedagogy in which culture plays an active role is in the choice of teaching methodology. The literature on ELT methodology is filled with characterizations of what Cortazzi and Jin (1996) refer to as the “culture of learning” of a particular country. Typically, such discussions provide generalizations regarding the typical roles of teachers and students, as well as the nature of learning, and reflect a view of culture in which a particular culture is seen as a homogenous entity related to a specific geographical region. China is one country for which there exist many such descriptions of the culture of learning. Cortazzi and Jin (1996), for instance, maintain that Chinese children are socialized into a culture of learning in which there is a strong emphasis on memory, imitation, and repetitive practice.

Frequently descriptions of a particular culture of learning also include a comparison of the culture with Western cultures of learning. Cortazzi and Jin (1996), for example, compare how Chinese students view certain aspects of student behavior in contrast with how Western teachers perceive them. For example, they maintain that while Western teachers view volunteering in class as showing strong interest and activity on the part of the students, Chinese students often view this as showing off and preventing teacher talk.

Many Western teachers view group discussion as useful interaction and student-centered learning; however, many Chinese students view it as a fruitless activity that should be replaced by the teacher giving facts and generalizations.

Such descriptions of cultures of learning raise several problems. First, they mask the diversity that exists within any culture. National identities are not monolithic entities; rather they differ by age, social class, and region. Second, in many instances characteristics that are attributed to a particular culture of learning are not supported by studies based on extensive classroom observation. Kubota (1999), for example, points out that a large body of research on Japanese primary schools shows that the Japanese preschool and elementary curriculum does indeed promote creativity, original thinking, and self-expression. These findings clearly undermine the stereotypical images of Japanese education that includes only mechanical learning and a lack of individualism, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Third, and most important in the teaching of an international language, is that such characterizations of cultures of learning often contrast a particular culture of learning with Western cultures and promote the idea that non-Western cultures are less creative than Western cultures. Unfortunately, a discourse of otherness in which particular cultures of learning are depicted as less productive than others underlies much of the discussion of what is referred to as communicative language teaching (CLT). In these discussions, CLT is often viewed as the ideal methodology for English-language teaching; at the same time, some argue that CLT, while the most productive method, is not feasible in many countries because the local culture of learning tends to promote mechanical learning and a lack of individualism and creative thinking.

Communicative Language Teaching

Today many educators, particularly Inner Circle educators, contend that CLT is and should be the dominant method in ELT. Brown (1994), for

example, maintains that the generally accepted norm in the field in terms of methodology is CLT. He notes, however, that although CLT is generally accepted, there are numerous ways in which it is defined. Nunan (1991), for instance, maintains that CLT can be characterized by the following features:

- 1) An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- 2) The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- 3) The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.
- 4) An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- 5) An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside of the classroom. (p. 279)

In many cases CLT has spread not only because of the promotion of the method by Western specialists but also because educators in these countries have advocated the adoption of this method. Japan is a case in point. In 1989 and 1990, the Japanese Ministry of Education released new guidelines for the study of foreign languages in junior and senior high schools. According to LoCastro (1996), one of the primary aims of the new curriculum was to require teachers to promote speaking and listening skills as a way of developing the communicative language ability of the students. Furthermore, teachers were to strive to adopt CLT methods in their classrooms. Korea is another country that is encouraging the use of CLT. Convinced that the grammatical syllabus does not develop students' communicative competence, in 1992 the Ministry of Education published a new curriculum which clearly states that CLT should replace the audiolingual and translation methods currently used in the schools.

The widespread acceptance of CLT, however, has not gone unchallenged. Medgyes (1986), for example, a Hungarian teacher educator, has various concerns about the implementation of CLT in his country, even though he has publicly advocated the method in teacher education courses. His primary concern is the burden CLT places on teachers. To begin, teachers of CLT are

encouraged to base the syllabus on students' needs and interests. Yet, as Medgyes points out, most Hungarian students, like many EFL students, study English for no obvious reason other than because they are required to do so. Hence, teachers face a group of students who often have very little motivation or interest to use English and uncertain needs for English in the future. Teachers are also asked to develop authentic communicative situations where real messages are exchanged. Hence, "teachers have to create favourable conditions for such needs to arise and get expressed" (Medgyes 1986, p. 108). Creating such a context is, of course, particularly difficult in EFL classes in which students would naturally use their mother tongue to communicate in so-called real interactions. In addition, in CLT the textbook is suspect. Hence, teachers are asked to do away with the textbooks and substitute it with a "wide stock of flexible and authentic 'supplementary' material" (p. 110), an extremely difficult task to undertake in countries in which there is not a wealth of readily available English texts.

Given these difficulties in implementing CLT in Hungary, Medgyes asks who would possibly attempt to implement the method. He contends that perhaps the only teachers who would do this are the elite who have had the opportunity to exchange ideas at conferences and "on arriving home, they feel obliged to promulgate all the trendy thoughts they have picked up, never doubting that their message is true and will reach the general public" (p. 111). Often such conferences are held in Inner Circle countries, providing a further impetus for the spread of predominant methods of Inner Circle countries to other contexts. In the end, he believes that what is needed are educators who work halfway between "the zealots and the weary" (p. 112), local educators who are well aware of the complexities of teaching English in the local context.

An Appropriate EIL Pedagogy

Since English as an international language (EIL) by definition no longer belongs to any one nation or culture, it seems reasonable that how this language is taught should not be linked to a particular culturally influenced

methodology; rather the language should be taught in a manner consistent with local cultural expectations. In short, an appropriate EIL methodology presupposes sensitivity to the local cultural context in which local educators determine what happens in the classroom. As Kramersch and Sullivan (1996) put it:

appropriate pedagogy must also be a pedagogy of appropriation. The English language will enable students of English to do business with native and non-native speakers of English in the global world market and for that they need to master the grammar and vocabulary of standard English. But they also need to retain control of its use. (p. 211)

For Kramersch and Sullivan, such a view of an appropriate pedagogy is in keeping with the political motto, “think globally, act locally”, which translated into a language pedagogy might be “global thinking, local teaching” (p. 200). This motto is particularly important for the teaching of English as an international language. English educators today need to recognize the use of English as a global language, where English is used for a wide variety of cross-cultural communicative purposes. Yet in developing an appropriate pedagogy, educators also need to consider how English is embedded in the local context.

CONCLUSION

In summary, recognizing English as an international language has several important implications for the role of culture in language teaching. First, because individuals who learn an international language do not need to accept the norms of native English-speaking countries, the teaching of culture can focus on giving students knowledge about rather than suggesting they accept particular cultural values and beliefs. Second, there is a need to acknowledge that there is a value to including cultural information regarding the students’ own culture. Such an emphasis in cultural content provides students with the

opportunity to learn more about their own culture and to acquire the English to explain their own culture to others, especially to their own teacher if he/she is from another culture. Finally, the way in which English is taught needs to be decided by local educators in keeping with their own understanding of what is the most appropriate method for the local circumstances. Ultimately a recognition that English is an international language highlights the fact that as more and more individuals learn English, the language belongs to no one culture but rather provides the basis for promoting cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly global village.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The section on target culture and source culture materials of this paper appeared earlier in "Teaching English as an international language: Implications for cultural materials in the classroom." *TESOL Journal*, 9, 4 (2000) 7-12.

THE AUTHOR

Sandra McKay is professor of English at San Francisco State University in the master's in TEFL program. Her research interests include English as an international language, language planning and policies, and second language research methodology.

REFERENCES

- Ballard, B., & Clanchy, J. (1991). Assessment by misconception: Cultural influences and intellectual traditions. In L. Hamp-Lyons (Ed.), *Assessing second language writing in academic contexts* (pp. 19-36). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). *World Englishes: A study of its development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1996). Cultures of learning: Language classrooms in China. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp. 169-206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cortazzi, M., & Jin L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching* (pp. 196-219). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graddol, D. (1999). The decline of the native speaker. In D. Graddol & U. Meinhof (Eds.), *English in a changing world* (pp. 57-68). AILA Review 13. United Kingdom.
- Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: A new typology. In U. Connor & R. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 text* (pp. 141-152). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Iwasaki, S. (2000, March). *Evaluating cultural context and content in EFL materials: A study of high school level oral communication (OCA) textbooks in Japan*. Paper presented at the National TESOL Convention, Vancouver, Canada.
- Kaplan, R. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language Learning, 16*, 1-20.
- Kasper, G. (1997). The role of pragmatics in language teacher education. In K. Bardovi-Harlig & B. Hartford (Eds.), *Beyond methods* (pp. 113-141). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal, 50*, 199-212.
- Kubota, R. (1999). Japanese culture constructed by discourses: Implications for applied linguistic research and ELT. *TESOL Quarterly, 33*(1), 9-36.
- Land, R., & Whitley, C. (1989). Evaluating second language essays in regular composition classes: Toward a pluralistic U. S. rhetoric. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing* (pp. 284-293). New York: Longman.
- Leki, I. (1991). Twenty-five years of contrastive rhetoric: Text analysis and writing pedagogies. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(1), 123-143.
- LoCastro, V. (1996). English language education in Japan. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp. 40-58). Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

- Medgyes, P. (1986). Queries from a communicative teacher. *ELT Journal*, 40(2), 107-112.
- Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative tasks and the language curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2), 279-295.
- Reid, J. (1994). Responding to ESL students' texts: The myths of appropriation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 273-292.
- Smith, L. (1976). English as an international auxiliary language. *RELC Journal*, 7(2), 38-42.
- Suzuki, T. (1999). *Why the Japanese people are no good at English*. (Nihonjin wa naze eigo ga dekinai ka) Tokyo: Iwanami.
- Swerdlow, J. L. (1999). Global village. *National Geographic*, 196(2), 2-6.