*A Paradigm Shift for English Language Teaching in Asia: From Imposition to Accommodation**

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For decades, the Western paradigm of English language teaching has occupied a prestigious position in Asia. It is now generally recognized, however, that the varieties as well as the uses of English differ from place to place. Furthermore, language teaching and learning is affected by a host of factors ranging from the macro political and cultural environments of a country or region to the micro perceptions and practices of individual teachers or learners, which calls for different methodologies for different learners or learning situations. By taking a close look at all the local features that affect the choice of the varieties of English to be learned, the content of learning and the approaches to teaching and learning in the Asian context, this article attempts to reveal limitations in the established theories and practices in English language teaching. It calls for a paradigm shift within the Asian region that is

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responsive not only to indigenous traditions of language learning but also to the increasing use of English as a language of contact between non-native speakers across national boundaries while at the same time continuing to welcome the theories and practices of English language teaching from outside the region.

Key words: English language teaching, the Asian context, paradigm shift, local needs and traditions

INTRODUCTION

For decades, English language teaching (ELT) professionals in Asia have embraced the paradigm of teaching developed in Western countries. It has become increasingly apparent, however, that the varieties as well as the uses of English differ from place to place, which brings into question any notion of a standard English. Furthermore, language teaching is affected by a host of factors ranging from the macro political and cultural environments of a country or region to the micro perceptions and practices of individual learners and teachers. All these considerations lead us to challenge the legitimacy of the Western paradigm of English language teaching in the Asia region.

Moreover, recent research in second language acquisition suggests that certain traditional practices in Asia, such as memorization and form-focused learning, which were believed to be ineffective, may have an important role to play in teaching and learning. Hence for English language teaching in Asia, we need to take a more realistic look at "what" is being taught and learned, "where" the teaching and learning is taking place, and "who" is involved in the teaching and learning. Our goal is to develop a common framework for teaching English in Asia where the language increasingly serves as a 'lingua franca' between various countries in domains such as government, education, and business.

What Is Being Taught and Learned?

The Mythic Nature of Native-speaker Norms

When it comes to designing any specific ELT program, a problem naturally arises concerning the norms of the language to be adopted. A natural tendency has been to look for native-speaker norms. But where are these norms to be found?

The search for native norms, in most cases, has meant choosing between British and American English. This is a difficult decision to make in the first place. But the situation becomes more complicated when the varieties of English used in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are added to the list. Furthermore, even if one settles on a desired variety, say, British English, there are more puzzles to be solved for "it only takes a moment's thought to realize that there are many varieties of English within the British Isles, each with its own vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar" (Harmer, 2001, p. 7).

Even when an ELT program designer can make a distinction among different norms, the choice can still be a difficult one. In countries where one of the recognized native varieties of English is spoken by the majority or in programs that are sponsored by people from certain regions such as the U.S. or the U.K., the choice may seem obvious. But the great majorities of ELT programs in the world are being offered by the local people in countries and regions where English is spoken by the minority of the population or simply as a foreign language. For these programs, the choice may become extremely difficult because it may involve not only linguistic but also political, economic, and cultural considerations.

Problems Concerning the Attainability of Native Speaker Norms

In addition to the elusive nature of native speaker norms, ELT programs in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts have to consider issues concerning the attainability as well as the desirability of native speaker norms.

Based on research that seeks to define the "native speaker", Lee (2005) finds that the most fundamental feature of a native speaker is that "the individual acquired the language in early childhood … and maintains the use of the language" (p. 155). In order to qualify as a native speaker, one has to have a command of "appropriate use of idiomatic expressions," "correctness of language form," " natural pronunciation," "cultural context … including response cries …, swear words, and interjections," "above average sized vocabulary, collocations and other phraseological items," "metaphors," "frozen syntax, such as binomials or bi-verbials," and "nonverbal cultural features" (p. 158). Furthermore, a native speaker will also "possess the ability to manifest and perform" "spontaneous, fluent discourse," "circumlocutions," "hesitations," "predictions of what the interlocutor will say," and "clarifications of message through repetition in other forms" (p. 159). Based on these requirements, Lee concludes that "it is impossible for any learner of a language, … to become a native speaker unless he or she is born again" (p. 159).

Problems Concerning the Desirability of the Native Speaker Proficiency

The omnipresent comparison of linguistic products of non-native speakers with those of native speakers in second language research (see McKay, 2003a for a summary of criticism of this approach to second language acquisition) and the urge to introduce English in increasingly lower grades both suggest that attaining native speaker proficiency is the default target of ELT programs (Jenkins, 2006). However, in most EFL programs and even in some English as a second language (ESL) programs, complete native-like competence is not only unattainable, but also in certain cases undesirable.

When summarizing the findings of related studies, Lai (2008) claims that "the notion of communicative competence has been criticised as being utopian, unrealistic, and constraining" (p. 40) for an EFL setting. In Asia, although there are regions or communities where English is the first language (L1) for a certain proportion of the population, the majority of the learners

are learning English as a foreign language. The distinction between second and foreign language learning is often acknowledged in second language acquisition research, but the difference is often considered too trivial to be worthy of separate studies. So findings made in second language (L2) contexts are often generalized to foreign language contexts. Currently, there is a clear lack of understanding about the gap between the two kinds of learning (Ellis, 2008). As far as learning objectives are concerned, research shows that "foreign-language classroom contexts can be distinguished from second-language classroom contexts in that native-like cultural and pragmatic competence is not a high priority in the former" (Ellis, 2008, p. 302). For example, in the vast rural areas in China, where there is still a severe lack of learning resources and qualified English language teachers and where there are few obvious signs of the future use of the English language for purposes of either further education or career development, the overwhelming majority of the students simply take English as a school subject and passing examinations is the only goal of learning.

Even in contexts where English is used for genuine communication purposes, whether native speaker norms should be observed still remains a question. Sometimes, insisting on the use of the so-called standard pronunciation may "make the speaker sound pretentious and insincere" (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 406) or "negatively affect one's group membership and sense of identity" (Pillai, 2008, p. 44).

The Rising Status of the Local Varieties of English

The rapid development of international communication has resulted in the phenomenal globalization of English. The English-speaking population in what Kachru (1992) calls the "outer and expanding circles" has outnumbered that of the "inner circle" countries (Crystal, 1997; Rubdy, 2009). While the traditional concept of English-language communication often assumes a non-native speaker interacting with a native speaker, in much of the English-language communication taking place in the outer and expanding circle

countries and regions, "English is increasingly used more in multinational contexts by multilingual speakers rather than in homogeneous contexts by monolingual speakers" (Rubdy, 2009, p. 162). In Asian countries such as China and Japan, English is increasingly used to facilitate communication between non-native speakers in major domains such as government, education, and business. Given the growing importance of Asia in international affairs, this particular use of English merits special attention in curriculum development and teacher preparation.

As "the globalization and differentiation of English are two sides of the same coin" (Beittel, 2006, p. 87), with increasingly more people in the outer and expanding circles speaking English either as their first language or as a lingua franca, there have developed more varieties of English in the world. These new varieties are characterized by systematic differences in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. For example, there have been numerous studies on the systematic features of Asian varieties of English such as Hong Kong English, Singapore English, Malay English, Sri Lankan English (Bolton, 2005, 2008; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Meyler, 2009; Pillai, 2008; Sewell, 2009). These new Englishes used to be regarded as containing erroneous forms of the target language (Kachru, 1992) and would not be accepted in a formal situation. But with the deepening in people's understanding of the systematicity, the form-function matching, and identity-bearing nature of the new varieties, "*English* has thus joined words such as *wine* that are both countable and uncountable—and as with *wines*, *Englishes* emphasizes the many and distinctive varieties of the generic product" (Beittel, 2006, p. 87).

Along with the adoption of the new term "World Englishes" there is also the issue concerning the adoption of one or more varieties as the target(s) of teaching and learning (Bruthiaux, 2010; Prodromou, 2007). Some researchers, while accepting the importance of local varieties of English, still remind learners of the importance of native-speaker norms which enable them to communicate not only with other L2 speakers who share these norms, but also with native speakers (Prodromou, 2007). But other researchers point to

the fact that so long as the local or other non-standard varieties are intelligible, they can also serve as the target of learning. While following native-speaker norms may ease communication in certain contexts, such a practice has the effect of downplaying the values of local cultures and conventions imbedded in the local varieties (McNamara, 2010).

Where Are the Teaching and Learning Taking Place?

All language programs take place in specific social contexts that unavoidably affect the way the programs are conducted (Stern, 1983). The different social and political status that is given to English, and the unique political and cultural practices, conventions, and institutions will have some bearing on the general objectives, content, and processes of learning and teaching. It would thus be unwise to neglect these contextual factors in the planning and implementation of ELT programs.

Differences in the Use of English

To begin with, the three-circle model proposed by Kachru (1992) clearly sets Asian countries and regions apart from inner-circle countries and further distinguishes countries like Singapore or India from those such as China and Vietnam. So here we see that in some Asian countries, because of their colonial background or other historical conditions, English enjoys an official status and is a popularly preferred medium for political, business and even educational communication, while in other countries, English is used only in very restricted situations by a very small number of people for genuine communication purposes.

Moreover, within the above-mentioned countries, we can observe vast differences in the status and use of English. In Singapore, an outer-circle country, while English is given an official status for school instruction, there are a large number of people whose first language is Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil. In mainland China, a representative of the expanding-circle countries,

situational contexts differ vastly from the developed coastal regions to the underdeveloped inland villages, not only in the resources for teaching and learning, but also in the general social environment outside the schools (Bruthiaux, 2010; Hu, 2003).

If it is true that in ESL settings much of the targeted communication is expected to take place between native and non-native speakers, in EFL settings an increasingly greater amount of English communication is taking place among non-native speakers from different cultural backgrounds who have to rely on English as a lingua franca. Specific sociocultural systems and particular communication contexts within Asia not only determine the variety of English to be taught and learned, but also shape the specific communicative competencies to be developed in our students.

Differences in the Content of Learning

Language learning and teaching almost always go together with the learning and teaching of actual content. For the selection of such content, the dominant practice is to choose knowledge systems that represent the cultures of the target country. In ELT, the most desirable content used to be the cultures of such inner-circle countries as Britain, the U.S., Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. Students were often urged to integrate themselves with the target culture for research suggested that learners with integrative motivation seem to progress faster than those with instrumental or other motivations (Dörnyer, 2001).

But as suggested above, in the Asian context, for most learners, especially those of the expanding-circle countries, integration with the target culture is far from being a realistic target of learning. Research into students' motivation for learning shows many of them are functionally or instrumentally motivated (Liu, 2007; Rahman, 2005). In some cases, the teachers' effort toward this kind of integration can even be harmful to learning because it may have the danger of diminishing the learners' sense of their own identity (Ellis, 2007).

Furthermore, researchers and educators increasingly realize that communication does not happen in one direction. Ideally, for a competent speaker of both the native and the foreign language, one need not only be equipped with the knowledge systems of the target culture for the purpose of comprehension, but also have the ability to express the native culture in the foreign language for the purpose of production. Research (Lan, 2010; Yuan, 2006; Zhang, 2006) suggests that because of the overemphasis on the learning of the target culture, Asian students are seriously handicapped in communications that involve local traditions and ideologies.

Once the paradigm shift is made from the English as a native language (ENL) model to the English as a lingua franca (ELF) model, the need for learning the target language culture becomes less important (McKay, 2003a). On the contrary, there is a need to develop learners' competence in communicating local values and traditions to the people of other cultures, whether they are from English or non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, with the EFL-learning population increasingly larger than the population of English-speaking countries, there is a reverse need for the native English speakers to develop an understanding of the cultures of the non-English speaking countries to facilitate intercultural communication.

Differences in the Traditions of Teaching and Learning

Even a cursory examination of English language teaching syllabuses around the world shows that the most dominant theories and concepts are those developed in Western countries that are often characterized by a decentralized system of politics and education. However, many countries and regions in Asia have adopted a rather centralized sociopolitical system and English is hardly used except in highly restricted domains. Even in countries and regions with a decentralized system, many of the cultural values and beliefs differ from those in Western countries. Thus educational theories and practices that have proven successful in one place may not bear the same fruit when transplanted. For example, the philosophies of constructivist and

experiential learning that correspond well with the bottom-up style of governance in many Western countries may be difficult to implement in cultures that advocate discipline, uniformity, and planning. Such favorite approaches to language teaching as communicative or task-based language teaching are often challenged in a non-Western context not only by practitioners who are used to the teacher-fronted way of classroom teaching, but also by students who can feel disoriented in a non-traditional classroom (Bruthiaux, 2010; Hu, 2002, 2005; G. Wang, 2006).

Furthermore, different cultures have different social conventions and traditional values which are determining factors in shaping how learning takes place.

Consider, for example, China. During its 5000-year history, China has generated rich cultural traditions, some of which are represented in statements such as "Be diligent and inquisitive;" "Respect teachers and value education;" "Respect the elders and care for the young;" "Interests of the group go before those of one's own;" "Value one's 'face' above everything else;" "The birds that head a flock will be shot first;" and "Fluent reading of the 300 Tang poems makes you half a poet." Many of these values and beliefs seem to run counter to the most favored principles that form the basis of the communicative approach or the task-based approach to ELT. A blind imposition of the teaching approaches that grew out of one culture onto an entirely different culture will hardly succeed, and may even be detrimental to the entire educational program (Hu, 2002).

Who Are Involved in the Teaching and Learning?

To serve as a language teacher, as Ur (1996) claims, one has to have a good understanding of basic processes of teaching, techniques of teaching different language skills, and making and implementing lesson plans as well as detailed knowledge of the language that is being taught and the students who are doing the learning. Fundamental to this understanding are the roles taken by teachers and students in language learning.

Expected Roles of the Teacher

Operating from a Western perspective, Harmer (2001) thinks that a teacher can play the roles of a controller, an organizer, an assessor, a prompter, a participant, a resource, a tutor, or an organizer in different activities. The specific role a teacher plays at a specific time in class depends on the nature of the teaching activity. But what underlies the requirements of the different roles played by the teacher is the principle of student-centered learning. Learning starts from the student. Any role "is designed to help students learn" (Harmer, 2001, p. 57).

But according to the Chinese tradition, a teacher's role is to "propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts of the learners." According to this tradition, learning starts from the teacher. It is the teacher who determines what is to be learned and how the knowledge is to be imparted. Of course the teacher is also expected to answer questions. But the questions students ask are only those that show lack of understanding of the knowledge being taught rather than those that are generated by the students based on what they are learning. Furthermore, when a teacher is approached by students with questions, he or she is regarded as an authority and is expected to provide an authoritative correct answer.

Actual Roles of the Teacher

English language teaching in Asia has long been characterized by its emphasis on receptive knowledge and a requirement for grammatical accuracy in language production (Bruthiaux, 2010). Though teachers in this region have been exposed to and, on the surface, show approval of communicative language teaching, in practice, the teacher-fronted model of teaching still prevails in most English language classrooms (Howard & Millar, 2009). Teachers still serve primarily as information providers and performance assessors.

Being taught with the direct method of teaching, the famous Chinese

professor of German, Weilian Zhang (W. Zhang, 1988) had a negative opinion about the method when it was adopted for the teaching of German in China. According to him, in whatever method the students are taught, they cannot avoid resorting to Chinese when difficulties arise concerning word meaning or sentence understanding because most of the explanations that they will get from people or reference materials will most likely be in Chinese. He claimed that different teaching methodologies should be adopted for learners of different ages, nationalities, and learning objectives.

Research by McKay (2003b) shows that, although communicative language teaching may have some advantages, it is very difficult to implement due to extremely large classes and students' general unwillingness to speak. Hu, (2002; 2003) also reports that this approach was difficult to use in Chinese classrooms.

Research on Korean teachers' attitudes toward task-based language teaching (Jeon & Hahn, 2006) reports negative comments on the use of this method, which is attributed to the teacher's lack of "knowledge of task-based methods and limited target language proficiency" (p. 135).

Ellis (2005) proposes ten principles for instructed second language acquisition, which obviously have taken into account the contextual differences between ESL and EFL. But still when asked about the applicability of these principles to the specific context of teaching English in Korea, Korean teachers responded in a survey (Howard & Millar, 2009) that, on the whole, they would accept these principles in theory, though they would find it hard to implement most of them. In their responses, "Three barriers, in particular, were mentioned repeatedly: the emphasis on preparation for predominantly grammar-based examinations; teachers' lack of oral L2 proficiency; and large, multi-level classes" (p. 48).

One of the questions in a recent survey of English teachers in China (Wang, 2011) asked about the effectiveness of different ways of organizing classroom teaching and learning. The result shows that teachers still have a strong belief in the effectiveness of the more teacher-centered way of teaching and certain reservations about a learner-centered way of learning.

Favorable attitudes toward teacher lecturing were identified by researchers not only in Asia but also in Europe. In a study of a reform project in Italy (Hawkey, 2006), both students and teachers ranked "listening to teacher talking to whole class" the highest among 13 different classroom activities.

A new Look at some of the Traditional Approaches to Teaching

In SLA research, a distinction is often made between "Focus-on-Form" (FonF) and "Focus-on-Forms" (FonFs), the former drawing occasional attention to the language form during meaning-focused communicative activities, and the latter involving activities specifically designed for the teaching and learning of certain language forms (Doughty, 2003). One of the features that is often considered characteristic of English language teaching in Asia is its focus on grammar and accuracy. This is a typical kind of FonFs instruction and was a target of criticism even before the advent of the communicative approach. However, research increasingly suggests that, while students in an ESL setting may benefit from FonF instruction, in an EFL setting, focus-on-meaning activities combined with sufficient FonFs episodes can be more advantageous for students (Klapper & Rees, 2003).

Another distinction often made in SLA research is explicit instruction vs. implicit instruction, with the former involving rule explanation or students generating rules from given texts, and the latter including neither. While many principles of western methodologies advocate implicit instruction, research findings are increasingly pointing to the effectiveness of explicit instruction, especially for the learning of difficult or abstract rules. It can not only have immediate effects but also lead to long-term acquisition (DeKeyser, 2003).

As for specific methods of classroom organization, a typical traditional arrangement is the PPP approach (the three Ps representing "present," "practice," and "produce"). Within this approach, there are often activities that involve much repeated reading, reading aloud, memorization, and other kinds of form-focused practices. With the advent of communicative language

teaching, these traditional practices are often regarded as ineffective. But recently interest in the once-discarded traditional practices is reemerging and there is evidence that suggests more value in the old practices than was anticipated. For example, in a study that compares the effectiveness of repeated reading and extensive reading, Chen and Ying (2009) found that the former had a significant effect on both fluency and comprehension. One of the possible explanations for the effectiveness of such an approach may be related to the repeated opportunities for the learners to be exposed to the same language material. "There is now sufficient theory and empirical evidence to make the case that input frequency plays a major role in L2 acquisition" (Ellis, 2008, p. 246). While it may be true that mechanical repetition of language materials is not meaningful input and therefore does not lead to acquisition, there is now evidence that in many cases, repetition does involve meaning processing and repeated reading does contribute to better comprehension (Dahlin & Watkins, 2000).

Another feature of the traditional approach is focus on the teaching of "language points," i.e., the words, phrases, and structures that are considered by the teacher to be important. Since this kind of instruction does not take place in meaningful communication, it can also be considered as an example of FonFs instruction. Recent SLA research (e.g. Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Ellis, Simpson-Vlach & Maynard, 2008; Jiang & Nekrasova, 2007) that studied the functions of lexical bundles or formulaic expressions shows that both native and non-native speakers process formulaic expressions faster than non-formulaic expressions and frequency of exposure to the expressions helps non-native speakers more than native speakers. Since the "language points" that are specifically taught in an EFL classroom overlap to a great extent with formulaic expressions, the new contributions in corpus linguistics clearly lend further support to this traditional approach to teaching.

Expected Roles of the Students

Language learners not only differ in biological aspects, such as gender and

age, but also in their social and psychological inclinations. As language teachers, we accept most of these differences, but still expect that all our students will be motivated and take an active part in learning. Students are expected to have a positive attitude toward English and the peoples and cultures of the English speaking countries, and are even encouraged to assimilate themselves with target language speakers (V. Cook, 1996). Principles of communicative language teaching imply that learners will have the acquisition of communicative competence as their goal of learning through activities that are "*process oriented, task-based,* and *inductive,* or *discovery oriented*" (Savignon, 2001, p. 27). All these clearly show the assumptions of "idealized" situations with "idealized" learners. However, such situations are not easily found in real ESL contexts, not to mention the EFL settings, especially in resource-poor areas, like the western part of China.

Actual Roles of the Students

Looking into the motivations for English learning of 2,278 Chinese university English majors and non-English majors from 29 provinces and autonomous regions, Gao, Zhao, Cheng, and Zhou (2003) found that the students were learning English mainly for seven different reasons, i.e., "1) intrinsic interest; 2) immediate achievement; 3) learning situation; 4) going abroad; 5) social responsibility; 6) individual development; 7) information medium" (p. 28). While most of these reasons may correspond with either integrative or instrumental motivation, the second and the fifth are not specific to language learning and "might be characteristic of the Chinese EFL context" (ibid). The research also finds that English majors were more intrinsically motivated than non-English majors and low proficiency learners were more eager to achieve immediate development.

An earlier large-scale survey involving 5000 university students in China (Wen & Wang, 1996) reveals a clear difference between what students think is right and what they actually do. To be specific, students tend to accept the ideas of communicative language teaching but almost always conduct their

learning in traditional ways and hardly ever engage in any communicative activities for English language learning. They know that translation is not the best method for learning, but in actual practice, they have to rely on Chinese for understanding and production.

Addressing the issue of Chinese students' perception of communicative language teaching, a recent survey in China (Q. Hu, 2010) finds that the subjects generally held negative attitudes towards this approach. Based on the interview data of the survey, the author attributes the lack of interest and trust in the imported method mainly to the familiarity of the traditional way of learning and the practical need to pass all kinds of examinations. This is supported by two case studies by Gao (2005) that vividly demonstrate the heavy pressure of examinations on students and their reliance on teachers for general guidance as well as providing external support that urges them to greater efforts. In this kind of situation, it is hard to imagine that students would sustain their interest in any new approaches to teaching if these approaches attempt to completely alter their familiar way of learning or cannot help them to be successful on the examinations that can give them access to jobs or opportunities to study abroad.

A New Look at some of the Traditional Approaches to Learning

If the emphasis on the creative spirit in language learning is what sets Western learners apart from their Asian peers, the spirit of diligence and active use (Ji, 1988) may be what characterizes most Asian students. Text memorization and imitation, while being the victims of modern pedagogical theories, have always enjoyed a special status among Chinese parents, students and even language teachers. A study of successful English learners in China (Ding, 2007) shows that "Text memorization and imitation are methods many successful English learners extensively use and regard as effective" (p. 278). The researcher attributes the success of these methods to the possibility that they help learners notice new forms of the target language and provide them with a chance to practice what they have noticed, thus

contributing to acquisition in the long run. Furthermore, these methods provide evidence for the dual-mode system, i.e., rule-based and frequency-based models of acquisition (Ellis, 2008, 431) in that memorization and imitation help learners retain a large number of formulaic expressions which, when used in subsequent communication, will ease the burden of cognitive processing. And this, in turn, may lead to more successful communication.

Text memorization and exacting repetition are deeply embedded not only in Chinese tradition but in many other traditions throughout Asia. In India, for example, this approach to language learning can be traced to ancient Vedic texts, which were analyzed by scholars such as Pāṇini in order to facilitate memorization and ritual performance (indeed, it has been claimed that the depth and rigor of this ancient analysis of Sanskrit foreshadows modern linguistic theory). Certainly, a highly analytic approach—texts tend to be carefully deconstructed for memorization and repetition—is used in English classrooms throughout India.

Investigating the effects of reading aloud, another traditional approach to learning generally practiced by students, Gibson (2008) finds that, contrary to the belief that the approach is dull and ineffective, both teachers and students regard it as a good method to practice their speaking skill, especially with respect to pronunciation and intonation. Furthermore, students read aloud for the purpose of "making graphemic-phonemic connections, diagnosing pronunciation problems, improving fluency and practising reading skills" (p. 34).

Gorsuch and Taguchi (2008) look at the effects of repeated reading (RR) on the development of reading skill and find that it contributes to the improvement of reading fluency and may have a potential effect on the improvement of comprehension as well. Furthermore, "In English in foreign language settings, where a paucity of acquisition-friendly L2 input is likely to be an issue in the decades to come, RR offers an effective method to help readers become independent" (p. 269). Cook (1994) also claims that "repetition and learning by heart, though condemned by pedagogic and acquisition theorists, are two of the most pleasurable, valuable, and efficient

of language learning activities, and that they can bring with them sensations of those indefinable, overused yet still valuable goals for the language learner: being involved in the authentic and communicative use of language" (p. 133).

Another empirical study (Li, 2004) that examines the traditional approach of rote learning shows a generally positive attitude from Chinese students toward this old way of learning and attributes the reasons of the popular acceptance to the following factors.

1. Chinese educational/cultural background;
2. EFL environment;
3. Traditional habit;
4. National situation/examination demand;
5. Chinese linguistic background/the way of learning mother tongue and
6. Failure to try out "best" ways.

(Li, 2004, p. 209)

From One-way Imposition to Two-Way Accommodation

Standard Language

As English is becoming an international language increasingly used for communication between non-native speakers, native speakers are no longer the sole owners of the language (Lai, 2008). This development has the following implications:

First, learners in an EFL setting do not necessarily have to imitate a native norm;

Second, bidialectalism and multidialectalism, instead of the traditional bilingualism and multilingualism will become a common phenomenon (Rubdy, 2009);

Third, English learning will not be a task only for non-English speakers but also for native speakers when the latter are in a situation where a non-native dialect of English dominates (e.g., in India). In this case, native

speakers may need to receive special training in order for them to communicate effectively (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Rubdy, 2009).

Given the above changes, we are again confronted with the old issue of norm selection and the new issue of intelligibility. In curriculum construction, the conservatives are suggesting that, when compared with the local varieties, the native models still have their merits and therefore should be retained. Others of a more radical turn of mind want to put aside native norms and give official status to the local varieties of English in the contextualized curricula.

In the face of such a dilemma, Sewell (2009) suggests that the same teaching program can adopt both local and native norms at the same time so that learners will be able to switch between different varieties appropriate to particular situations. One problem with this suggestion lies with the additional confusion it can cause the learners. Another problem is that the local variety cannot be accepted unless "local stakeholders – learners, parents, teachers, principals and bureaucrats – can be persuaded that a local accent exists, and that certain of its features do not threaten international intelligibility" (Sewell, 2009, p. 42).

The issue of intelligibility refers to whether one variety of English can be understood by the speakers of another variety, whether they come from L1 English speaking countries or non-native English speaking countries or regions. Research by Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) found that speakers of the same variety can understand each other better when their language contains certain "non-standard" features. Even for speakers of different varieties, only those features that are not shared by both varieties may cause difficulties.

Admittedly, intelligibility is a double-edged sword. Lack of intelligibility will cause difficulties in communication. But "too intense a focus on intelligibility may even have the effect of discouraging the use of local varieties" (Sewell, 2009, p. 42), thus posing a threat to the local identity of the speakers concerned.

Given the difficulties of choosing appropriate norms and settling the issue of intelligibility, it may be appropriate to deal with the matter from an

entirely different perspective. Instead of making decisions in a vacuum, educational authorities may give a voice to the instructional program directors and, more importantly, students who are doing the learning. After all, these are the people who know why they are teaching or learning the language and what is best for them. In discussing the impact of educational setting on learning outcomes, Ellis (2007) points out that "success in L2 learning cannot always be measured in terms of a set of norms based on a standard form of the language. Learners may be targeted on a nativized variety of the language or on a local dialect. There may be a conflict between the norms the students are targeted on and the norms the educational setting promotes" (p. 23). So, instead of waiting for the conflict to arise, it may be prudent for decision makers to focus on the actual needs and wants of the students and establish agreement with local environments.

Cultural Content

Positive attitudes toward the target country and its people and intrinsic motivation, especially integrative motivation, are regarded as good incentives for successful language learning. But as English is becoming increasingly international, a good knowledge of the English speaking countries and an integrative motivation are no longer prerequisites for successful English language learning. More and more communications are taking place among people whose L1 is not English. Depending on the specific contexts of the instructional programs, it may not be of vital importance for students to have a good command of the cultural backgrounds of the English speaking countries. Instead, "when teaching English as an international language, educators should recognize the value of including topics that deal with the local culture" (McKay, 2003b, p. 139). In addition to a competence of working with issues of the local culture, students will be informed by research in needs analysis of the kind of people with whom they may be expected to communicate in English in the future, so that they can prepare themselves with the necessary knowledge of the target group of people. For

example, if a group of Korean students are learning English in order to conduct trade with Russians and Arabs, they will need to be informed about Russian and Arabic cultures and traditions.

In other contexts where English is simply a school subject and there is a shortage of teaching and learning resources, there may be no need for any special arrangement to teach the particular kind of cultural knowledge at all. Even when there is a need to learn the cultural content of a particular country, say an English-speaking country, there is not always the need to cultivate in the students an integrative motivation, for integration may not be the ultimate aim of the students concerned.

Furthermore, both native English speakers and English language learners should be prepared to respect differences in beliefs and practices and to cope with communication breakdowns. They should be allowed to assume either local or global identities, according to contextual requirements or personal preferences.

Teaching and Learning

With almost every advance in the educational, sociological, psychological, and linguistic sciences, there have been innovations in English language teaching methodology. History tells us that no pedagogy works best for everyone. A balanced pedagogy is needed that incorporates locally developed traditional practices with imported practices that are welcomed by the students and can meet the requirements of local institutions and actual needs of the students (Mangubhai, 2006; McKay, 2003b; Xiao, 2006). On the surface, many of the locally generated traditional approaches to teaching may seem to stand in contrast to some of the modern theories of teaching and learning. But the fact that most of them work well with the majority of students suggests that there are aspects in these approaches that are yet to be explored by researchers and teachers. "Rather than just being trained in a restricted set of pre-formulated techniques for specific teaching contexts, teachers will need a more comprehensive education which enables them to

judge the implications of the ELF phenomenon for their own teaching contexts and to adapt their teaching to the particular requirements of their learners" (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 228). In this way, their teaching will not only find theoretical support from internationally recognized approaches, but also satisfy local needs (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996).

This change of attitude towards appropriate pedagogy is in accord with the calls for a paradigm shift in ESL/EFL teacher preparation from the "rationalist learn-the-theory-and-then-apply-it mode" to the "theory of action" (Ur, 1992, p. 57-58), or from the learning and application of *models* to the examination of *ideas* "in the light of teachers' own classrooms and experiences of learning and teaching an L2" (Ellis, 2011). The validity of a theory of language acquisition or teaching lies in its capacity to solve local problems just as the strength of a teacher is in the application and generation of ideas in the process of teaching in order to produce the best results of learning.

With regard to teacher preparation, special mention should be made about the need for retraining native speaker teachers, who used to be, and in some situations still are, regarded as superior to local teachers. But with their sole ownership of the English language being weakened and with less needs for learners to perfect themselves according to the native speaker norm, there is need for native speaker teachers to recognize their inherent disadvantage (McKay, 2003b) and to be retrained to familiarize themselves with the local social and religious beliefs and practices which have important bearing on how the students go about their learning (Adamson, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion of English language teaching in Asia suggests that the time has come to rethink the established paradigm imported from the West and to formulate a common framework for teaching English in Asia. The need for a new framework becomes urgent when we consider the rapid

growth of English as a lingua franca that facilitates communication between Asian nations in a range of domains such as government, education, and business.

In this article we have not fully formulated such a framework but we have pointed out certain elements that need to be present. With respect to content, there should be greater attention to the ways in which English is being used as a basic language of communication between Asian nations. Those who are developing curriculum need to incorporate material that reflects such usage in various domains. With respect to methodology, there should be greater attention to traditional approaches to language learning such as memorization and repetition that continue to play a vital role for many contemporary learners of English in Asian countries. It is especially important to integrate these approaches with the digital technologies that play an increasingly prominent role in language learning. Certainly these technologies now provide important tools that help learners evaluate how well they are able to imitate native-speaker models.

This new framework will empower theorists and practitioners in Asia as they seek to integrate research and practice on English language teaching in the region. It will also provide space for the incorporation of local cultures and all other cultures of relevance and for the adoption of well-trusted local practices of teaching and learning to be integrated with imported methodologies that can be adapted to meet local needs.

In constructing this framework, appropriate attention must be given not only to the distinctions between ESL and EFL, but also to variations in the social and cultural contexts within the Asian region. In essence, it will involve a fundamental shift from the imposition of external theories and practices to the accommodation of all theories and practices that meet the needs of specific teaching and learning contexts as they are evolving in Asia.

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