Going Global: Rethinking Culture Teaching in ELT Contexts

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This paper argues that the manner in which culture is taught to English learners needs to be rethought in light of the globalisation of the English language. It is maintained that change is needed in at least three areas. First, English teaching professionals should discard the notion that the US and Great Britain represent the sole 'target cultures' of the English language. Second, they should rethink the goals of culture and language education to better meet their students' diverse needs. And third, ELT professionals should do more to design and/or select teaching materials that are international and inclusive in scope. The paper concludes that EFL/ESL instructors should better educate themselves and their students on world cultures to promote genuine linguistic/cultural awareness and international understanding.

Language and culture, it could be said, represent two sides of the same coin. As has been noted by numerous authors (e.g. Bhabha, 1994; Buttjes, 1990: 55; Hinkel, 1999; Jiang, 2000; Kramsch, 1998; Witherspoon, 1980), the manner in which individuals express and interpret messages in their own and other languages is heavily influenced by their cultural backgrounds. This language/culture link has great significance for language education, for if learners are to become truly proficient in their target language, it stands to reason they must be familiar with that language's culture. Subsequently, many experts recommend an explicit focus on culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts (e.g. Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram & Risager, 1999; Lange & Paige, 2003).

The globalisation of the English language, however, is posing new challenges for EFL/ESL culture teaching. With English in modern times not belonging to any single nation or group (Crystal, 2001: 21, 130; Jenkins, 2003: 162–168), new forms of English emerging in non-Western contexts (Kachru, 2004), and cross-cultural encounters in English among non-native speakers on the rise worldwide (Byram & Risager, 1999: 156–157), many assumptions concerning culture in the field of ELT appear increasingly problematic. Indeed, it could be argued that English educators, if they hope their craft to remain relevant and up-to-date, must look afresh at how they teach both language and culture. In this respect, English teaching professionals need to rethink the answers to such questions as whose culture should be taught, what goals should guide culture teaching, and how culture-related course materials should be designed and selected.

Culture and ELT

For a proper understanding of the issues covered in this paper, it is first necessary to define what is meant by *culture*. Hall and Hall (1990: 136) aptly state that 'Culture determines what we perceive, how we react to situations, and how we relate to other people'. Hofstede (1984: 31), taking a slightly different approach, views culture as the 'collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another'. Drawing attention to social inequality and class conflict, Spivak (1990: 123) offers a more critical definition, portraying culture as 'the site of a struggle, a problem, a discursive production, an effect structure rather than a cause'. Perhaps the most insightful definition of culture for the purposes of ELT, and the one that will be adhered to in this paper, comes from Kramsch (1998: 127), who associates culture with 'Membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting'.

Although it is often thought that culture and language can be taught separately, culture is present in the language classroom despite any attempts to remove it (Byram, 1997: 52; Kramsch, 1993: 1). Culture is taught implicitly, for example, when teachers correct students' word choices or grammar (Cook, 1999: 194–196). Cultural messages are also relayed through teachers' choices of instructional methods and educational materials, or what has been termed the 'hidden curriculum' (Cunningsworth, 1995). Moreover, students' perceptions of languages and the learning process are culturally derived and may differ drastically from those of their foreign teachers (Anderson, 1993: 102).

A central concern in ELT, therefore, should be to raise awareness of the importance of culture in language education (Wright, 1996: 37). Since culture is woven into language learning contexts whether the focus is explicit or not, the question is not that it *should* be taught but *how* it should be taught.

Whose Culture?

Given that languages are usually associated with specific nations, the 'culture of English' may at first appear easy to pinpoint. For example, since the Japanese language is thought to belong to Japan, the Chinese language to China, the Polish language to Poland, the Vietnamese language to Vietnam, and so on, English should logically belong to a nation as well. Hence, the ELT profession generally portrays the United States and Great Britain as the nations where one can find the 'target cultures' of the English language (e.g. Garwood *et al.*, 1993). Although sensible at first glance, such a perspective does not hold up under scrutiny (Saville-Troike, 2003: 14; Wandel, 2002: 265).

Among its many shortcomings, an emphasis on American or British culture conveniently downplays or ignores the fact that English is a first language in other nations of the Inner Circle[1] such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. It also wrongly hints at a uniformity or homogeneity among native speakers that does not in fact exist; while they may share many things in common, native speakers are far from being identical in the way they think, speak, and act (Sárdi, 2003: para. 14). The ELT profession's fixation with American or British culture at times also appears to wrongly imply that

EFL/ESL learners will never need to communicate with native speakers beyond the geographical confines of Great Britain and the US or will only encounter British or American native speakers in English speaking contexts.

US–UK-centric viewpoints of the kind described above also do a great dis-service to the millions of English speakers in non-Western nations. In Asia, for example, English is increasingly spoken as a foreign, second, and even first language. Indeed, Crystal (2001: 58–59) estimates 37 million English speakers in India, 36 million in the Philippines, 16 million in Pakistan, 2 million in Sri Lanka, 2 million in Hong Kong and 1 million in Singapore. Similarly, McArthur (2003: 22) calculates that in China and India alone some 500 million people either can speak English or are studying the language. With the combined total of non-native speakers of English in Asia and else-where now exceeding that of native speakers in the Inner Circle as much as 3 to 1 (Power, 2005: 42), it makes little sense to equate British and American culture with the entire English speaking world.

The 'world of English' is more complex than is generally acknowledged for another reason: English speakers in the Outer and Expanding Circles are not merely absorbing and parroting the English spoken in traditional centres of influence; they are actively reinterpreting, reshaping and redefining English in oral and written form. As noted by Power (2005: 42), 'New Englishes are mushrooming the globe over'. In the Phillipines, locals speak 'Englog', a 'Taglog-infused English'; in Japan, visitors encounter 'Japlish', 'the cryptic English poetry of Japanese copywriters'; in India, 'Hinglish', a 'mix of Hindi and English', 'crops up everywhere from fast-food ads to South Asian college campuses'; and in South Africa, 'many blacks have adopted their own version of English, laced with indigenous words, as a sign of freedom – in contrast to Afrikaans, the language of oppression'.

African and Asian writers have been in the vanguard leading this unher-alded proliferation of multiple Englishes. Nigerian author Chinua Achebe (1965: 29) once remarked:

> So my answer to the question *Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing?* is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: *Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker?* I should say I hope not.

Offering a Filipino perspective, the poet Gemino Abad asserts: 'The English language is now ours. We have colonized it' (quoted in Carillo, 2003). Indian-born novelist Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children*, agrees: 'What seems to me to be happening is that those people who were once colonised by the language are rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it' (quoted in Crystal, 2001: 135–136).

If we accept that English today is truly a global language we must also acknowledge its dynamic multicultural backdrop. In the world at large, few cultures, if any, exist in total isolation; at international airports, tourist resorts, academic conferences, economic and political summits, sporting events and celebrations, communication among cultures takes place via a

common language and that language is usually English (Rajagopalan, 2004: 112). Hasman (2000: para. 10) puts it this way:

> When Mexican pilots land their airplanes in France, they and the ground controllers use English. When German physicists want to alert the international scientific community to new discoveries, they first publish their findings in English. When Japanese executives conduct business with Scandinavian entrepreneurs, they negotiate in English. When pop singers write their songs, they often use lyrics or phrases in English. When demonstrators want to alert the world to their problems, they display signs in English.

Even within the United States and Great Britain demographic trends are ensuring that English communication is increasingly taking place within multicultural contexts. In the United States, Blacks, Latinos and Asians now represent 30% of the population, and 1 in 9 American citizens are foreign born (Jacoby, 2004: 5). In Britain, immigrants from Asia and the Caribbean are redefining traditional notions of British culture and even adding new words to the English language (Stock, 2004). Far from being unchanging, homogenous and geographically specific, the 'culture of English' is constantly in flux, exceptionally diverse, and, above all, international.

The need to recognise the existence of other cultures beyond a monolithic Great Britain or US is not just an academic issue. Indeed, a focus on either culture is often associated with the belief that FL/L2 learners must 'adapt' to Anglo-American norms. This emphasis on 'adaptation', in turn, is frequently interpreted as a form of 'linguistic imperialism', or an attempt to devalue, subjugate or undermine non-Western cultures (Phillipson, 1992). In Muslim societies in particular, the idea that English learners should mimic Western customs often leads to negative feelings that dampen pupils' enthusiasm for English study (Asraf, 1996). Moreover, in countries with histories of British colonialism or American domination students may be alienated by lessons that promote British or American culture (Argungu, 1996; Sárdi, 2003: para. 26). When Anglo-American values or concepts are not viewed as a threat or resented in such contexts, they may simply be seen as irrelevant or confusing (McKay, 2003: 10).

What is needed is a truly global approach to teaching culture in ELT contexts. Such an approach would recognise that English is not merely the language of an undifferentiated mass of 'Anglo-Saxon' Caucasians within a limited region of the world; it would expose students to alternate ways of perceiving reality and using English from all corners of the globe; it would challenge the myth that native speakers, particularly those from Great Britain and the United States, are the sole purveyors of 'English culture'; and, finally, it would broaden learners' mindsets and hone their linguistic skills to enable them to communicate effectively in socially complex international settings with people from different races, religions and linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This is not to suggest that all references to British or American culture should be removed from the ELT curriculum. Undoubtedly, if these highly influential cultures are ignored by EFL/ESL educators, learners' understanding of the

English language will not be complete; moreover, most EFL/ESL students need to be familiar with the main features of American English, given America's great economic and political influence. However, English teaching professionals would do well to question the overwhelming dominance of British and American culture in their field, demonstrate more sensitivity toward students' cultures, and include room for other cultures within the language classroom. It should not be automatically assumed that America and Great Britain represent all English speakers, and the ELT curriculum should not uncritically focus on and promote Anglo-American norms and values at the exclusion of all others.

Rethinking the Goals of Culture Teaching

Despite its importance for language learning, culture as an explicit subject is generally neglected in the English classroom. More often than not, it is treated as an afterthought, or something to append to regular language lessons (Kramsch, 1993: 1; Paige *et al.*, 2003: 198). Most instructors who consciously integrate culture into their lessons do so merely to add variety or motivate students (Ho, 1998). While these objectives are not harmful in themselves, teaching culture separately from language with no additional goals in mind does little to prepare students for the real world, where people of diverse backgrounds use English in different ways. Thus, English teaching professionals need to first examine the issue of culture more closely and then conceive pedagogical goals that better meet students' needs.

One issue that needs readdressing in this respect is the common belief that English learners require English solely to communicate with native speakers. This notion manifests itself in the plethora of course books that inform students how to communicate in English when travelling or immigrating to the US or Britain (Wright, 1996: 36–37). While these materials may be useful for some students, not all learners plan to travel to the West or permanently leave their countries of origin. Their reasons for studying English vary considerably and may involve improving their local employment prospects, accessing scientific literature, or interacting with compatriots from other ethnic groups (McKay, 2003: 4–5; Saville-Troike, 2003: 14–15).

Moreover, when EFL/ESL speakers do communicate in English with people outside their speech communities they frequently do so with other non-natives. In other words, they often find themselves using English in situations where knowledge of British or American culture is of no practical use. Using the example of a Japanese person and a Singaporean communicating in English, Honna (2003: para. 5) points out that if Anglo-American customs were adopted in such situations, conversations would be awkward and difficult to manage. Since Asians from different nations share similar cultural traits, it is more logical for them to use their own pragmatic norms when communicating with one another. British or American worldviews, Honna rightly argues, are also scarcely relevant during 'English conversations between Turks and Brazilians, French and Swedish people, or any other interactions there may occur on the global stage'.

The so-called 'deficit model' of language education (Cook, 1999: 194–196; Kachru, 1991) is closely connected to the current lopsided emphasis on

Anglo-American culture in ELT. According to this perspective (which is not a formal theory *per se* but a set of implicit assumptions), learners are not true English speakers until they imbibe and are able to replicate the speech patterns of American English (AE) or British English (BE) native speakers. Rather than stressing flexibility in language use or general comprehensibility, a 'deficit' approach to English teaching portrays learners as deviant or sub-standard if they cannot perfectly replicate standard accents or employ English words without committing pragmatic or grammatical 'errors'. Conversely, individuals who closely approximate AE or BE are praised as 'successful' language learners.

Besides failing to acknowledge the present-day global reality of English, the 'deficit model' of English education is problematic for other reasons. To begin, it wrongly characterises English learners or speakers of non-standard Englishes as flawed unless they are indistinguishable from native speakers. Common sense alone would challenge such a notion; no one would suggest, for example, that highly respected world figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Albert Einstein were inept English speakers because they had 'foreign' accents or viewed the world from non-Anglo-American perspectives. As the success and great impact of these prominent individuals attests, what matters most when people use English is being understood by others, or communicating effectively, not mimicking native speakers.

The undue strain the 'deficit model' causes for English learners and non-native English educators is an added reason why it must be reconsidered. Many learners spend years of study and large sums of money in vain hoping to acquire native-like competence in English. When they fail to achieve their goals, they may suffer from feelings of anxiety, helplessness and depression (Honna & Takeshita, 1998; Seidhofer, 1999). The approach's elevation of native speakers as ideal teachers also means that well qualified non-native English instructors face unwarranted discrimination in ELT job markets. Non-native experts in English could serve as helpful role models for EFL/ESL students, yet they are routinely denied employment or their skills go unappreciated even when they do secure positions (Braine, 1999).

Viewed from another perspective, one might argue that native speakers should do more to learn more about non-standard varieties of English and world cultures. As pointed out by Chaney and Martin (2004), globalisation is necessitating that American business professionals, for instance, be more skilled at understanding non-American accents, oral and non-verbal communication patterns, written communication styles and intercultural negotiation strategies. Hodge (2000: 230–231) similarly stresses that Americans, culturally speaking, must go beyond the 'comfort zone' of their 'imaginary cages' as they 'simply can't afford to shut out the real world'. Rajagopalan (2004: 114, 116–117) predicts that if native speakers do not adjust to the changing international landscape of English they might find themselves 'communicatively deficient' or 'handicapped' in crosscultural situations. He goes as far as to suggest that Westerners may one day need to take 'crash courses in WE [World English]' to maintain a competitive position in world markets.

In effect, the ongoing 'nativisation' of English beyond its traditional centres of control undermines the notion that any single culture or nation can lay

claim to the language (Kachru, 1986). The forms English will assume in the future are difficult to predict, but Kachru (1998: 10) observes that non-native English speakers 'are severing their umbilical cord from the Inner Circle, or the original native speaker countries, and are, thus, making English a culturally pluralistic world language'. According to Crystal (1999a: para. 6), the fact that non-native speakers of English today outnumber native speakers and are reshaping English to suit their own purposes means that:

> nobody owns English now. That is the message we have to take on board as we begin the new millennium . . . . Once a language comes to be so widespread, it ceases to have a single centre of influence. The changes taking place in the way English is used in such areas as South Africa, India, Ghana, and Singapore are outside of anyone's control. Not even a World English Academy could affect them.

With English now being used globally across diverse cultures, English educators will not only need to be more culturally and linguistically aware but also able to design curriculums with an international and multicultural focus. Crystal (1999b: 17) speculates that teachers may soon have 'to prepare their students for a world of staggering linguistic diversity'. Proper preparation will likely involve exposing learners 'to as many varieties of English as possible, especially those which they are most likely to encounter in their own locale'. Wandel (2002: 264–265) adds that if the field of ELT is to take 'the reality of English as a "world language" seriously', it 'must enhance its geographical scope and include non-mainstream cultures'. He states further that 'educating students to make use of English as a lingua franca also means developing their intercultural sensitivity. Students should be allowed to get to know a number of different cultural outlooks and perspectives'.

To minimise misunderstandings when communicating within international, crosscultural and multicultural settings, English learners clearly will require heightened cultural awareness, or 'the recognition that culture affects perception and that culture influences values, attitudes, and behaviour' (Gaston, 1992: 2). However, the traditional ELT curriculum prevents students from learning about the crucial ties between language and culture and realising that linguistic and cultural awareness are one and the same. According to Kramsch (1993: 8), 'Culture is often seen as mere information conveyed by the language, not as a feature of language itself; cultural awareness becomes an educational objective in itself, separate from language'. When 'language is seen as social practice', however, 'culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency'. Byram (1997: 52, 57) echoes Kramsch, affirming that 'language and culture cannot be treated separately in the discussion of language teaching theory and practice'. He recommends that a central purpose of ELT be to develop 'critical cultural awareness' in students, or 'their ability to gain a new perspective on themselves and their society and a new critique of its nature and meaning for themselves as members of it'. For Byram, students' 'heightened awareness not only of other

languages, cultures and peoples, but also of themselves as cultural beings is a major contribution of language teaching to their education'.

Rethinking the goals of culture education in ELT contexts will naturally affect methods of student assessment. At present, when teachers actually include overt cultural instruction in their language classes they tend to evaluate students on their memorisation of 'facts' or trivia. Kramsch (1993) observes that this view of culture 'has not enabled learners to understand foreign attitudes, values, and mindsets' and left them 'blind to their own social and cultural identity . . . ' (Kramsch, 1993: 24). Fenner (2000: 143) concurs, arguing that an empirical or fact-based approach to culture falsely separates language and culture and fails to acknowledge that 'what the learners are supposed to do with the facts' is the central issue. As both of these authors suggest, traditional methods of cultural assessment prevent students from acquiring the paralinguistic skills and mindset needed to cope with cultural diversity and contribute little to learners' personal and intellectual growth.

Keeping Kramsch's and Fenner's criticisms in mind, an open-ended and experiential approach to assessment would appear most beneficial for students. Although culture learning assessment is a relatively new area in ELT, several authors have offered helpful suggestions for the language classroom. Byram *et al.* (2002: 23–26), for example, recommend the use of portfolios in which students express their feelings and reflect on their culture learning experiences. Another form of assessment, as suggested by Youssef and Carter (1999), is to use dramas or role plays to gauge student progress. Elsewhere, Warschauer (2000: 529) mentions 'long distance exchange projects in which students debate and discuss issues related to cultural identity' that might serve as a means of assessment. Whatever evaluation methods are used, the important point to remember is that teachers should not merely grade students on their ability to regurgitate facts. The emphasis should be on individual interpretation and the negotiation of meaning with others (Tseng, 2002: 20).

ELT Materials in a Globalised World

Although it is often not realised by English teachers, ELT materials are in no sense 'neutral' or 'value-free' educational aids. Cunningsworth (1995: 90) states that 'course books will directly or indirectly communicate sets of social and cultural values which are inherent in their make-up'. This 'hidden curriculum', he suggests, 'may well be an expression of attitudes and values that are not consciously held but which nevertheless influence the content and image of the teaching material, and indeed the whole curriculum'. Alptekin (1993: 138) clarifies this issue further, pointing out that:

> most textbook writers are native speakers who consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their own English-speaking society – usually the United States or United Kingdom. As such, when learners acquire a new set of English discourse as part of their evolving systemic knowledge, they partake of the cultural system which the set entails.

The culture-bound nature of ELT materials can present serious dilemmas in the language classroom. Images and concepts that appear natural or harmless to the average Western reader, for example, may be viewed as intrusive and/or demeaning by people from other backgrounds. Argungu (1996) contends that 'Muslim students encounter numerous culture shocks in many (foreign) ELT texts even when an author possibly never meant any malice'. In one small collection of textbooks alone he uncovered a litany of themes Muslims could find unnerving such as references to alcoholism and drunkenness, cigarettes and smoking, pre-marital relationships and Christian images/values. 'The examples may appear insignificant', claims Argungu, 'but this cumulative effect on the young Muslim psyche is easily visible'. To prevent further occurrences of such problems, he thus recommends that Muslim educators design customised materials for Muslim students of English.

Matsuda (2002) delineates several other culture-related shortcomings with EFL textbooks in Japan. Critiquing a collection of government-approved textbooks for seventh grade students, Matsuda laments that American English is almost always promoted as the universal 'standard' and American characters and themes dominate dialogues and readings. She questions whether such texts actually promote the Ministry of Education's aim to foster 'international awareness' through English, expressing concern that Japanese students are learning about 'a limited section of the world' and are receiving 'incomplete' exposure to the English language. EFL textbooks used in Japanese schools, Matsuda further worries, could cause students to view non-American forms of English as 'deficient (rather than different)' and make learners 'grow disrespectful to such varieties and users' (Matsuda, 2002: 438).

One strategy that has been used to offset the dominance of US and British culture in English teaching materials is to shift the focus to local cultures. Thus, the Ministry of Education in Chile has published an English textbook series called *Go for Chile!*, to promote Chilean culture. The series features a cast of foreign visitors who are guided on tours of the country by locals and is intended to help Chileans describe their culture to foreigners in English (McKay, 2004: 11). More provocatively, *The Japanese Mind*, a collection of student-written essays and discussion questions on Japanese culture, strives to help Japanese students 'explain and discuss their native culture in English in order to participate effectively in an increasingly globalised world' (Davies & Ikeno, 2002: 3). Similarly, *Small Group Discussion Topics for Korean Students*, an EFL conversation textbook from South Korea by Martire, allows Korean EFL speakers to discuss Korean issues and culture in English (Martire, 2003).

The local content approach is not without its potential demerits. In her survey of ELT texts from Morocco, Chile and Japan, McKay (2004) found that many publications that are intended to challenge Western cultural dominance ironically end up linking English to the cultures of native speakers. A different problem that can result from a narrow focus on local content is that students may be prevented from learning about cultures outside of their country. Nevertheless, if certain precautions are taken, a local approach occasionally can be helpful. Focusing on local issues can put students at ease, as learners will usually feel relaxed discussing familiar topics. Moreover, when students encounter people from foreign lands they will more easily be able to talk about their own cultures.

At present, no well-designed ELT course books exist that explicitly focus on crosscultural and multicultural themes from a global perspective. Some material writers have produced works that stress the international functions of English, but the end result is usually 'bland and characterless constructions of international conferences, airport lounges and hotel reception desks, which could be anywhere and nowhere, where people come from everywhere and nowhere . . . ' (Pulverness, 2004: para. 33). It would be more beneficial for students if material writers and publishers devoted more attention to issues such as cultural misunderstandings, crosscultural pragmatics, stereotypes, non-verbal communication and culture shock (Damen, 2003). As ELT textbooks tend to present crosscultural communication as being no more than conversations between Americans and non-native English speakers, it would be helpful as well if future works included situations with non-native speakers from different cultures communicating with one another in English (McKay, 2004: 15).

One method teachers can employ to cope with the absence of appropriate ready-made course materials is to have students design their own culture-oriented materials. Through key pal projects, for example, participants can describe their way of life for the benefit of their foreign partners (Sakar, 2001). Similarly, students can design questionnaires and interview foreign visitors in their countries. When students cannot actually interact with people from other countries, they might design web sites or make individual or group presentations on cultural issues. Whichever approach an instructor chooses to follow in promoting students as materials designers, self-generated materials can help students actively engage with the topic at hand and thereby gain valuable cultural insights (Post & Rathet, 1996).

In cases where teachers can select audiovisual materials dealing with culture, they should consider alternatives to standard choices. When choosing movie videos for classroom use, for example, instructors can conduct background research to locate films about world cultures and/or with crosscultural themes. This is not as complex as it might at first seem. The following English language movies, which range from dramas to comedies, are easy to find in most countries or purchase via the Internet: *Gandhi* (India/South Africa), *Monsoon Wedding* (India), *Buena Vista Social Club* (Cuba), *Farewell My Concubine* (China), *The Killing Fields* (Cambodia) and *The Gods Must be Crazy* (South Africa). Of course, many other movies are possible, but the point is teachers should reflect carefully when making selections and not assume they lack options.

A similar argument can be made for including non-native literatures in English in the EFL/ESL classroom. 'English language literature' need not come only from Britain or America. Citing various works in English by South Asian writers, Kachru (1999: 148) comments 'that such literary texts are a repertoire of resources for providing linguistic and crosscultural explanations' as they reveal how English can be redefined in non-Western contexts and how language and culture are interrelated. Mahoney (1991: 86–87) offers some specific suggestions for integrating Asian-English literature into the EFL curriculum. Through authors such as Richard E. Kim (Korea), Catherine Lim (Singapore) and Pira Sudham (Thailand), Mahoney suggests EFL students

can discuss 'colonialism, male attitudes toward marriage, rural poverty, the lure of city life' and other pertinent topics. In terms of style and content, argues Mahoney, Asian-English literature is accessible to, and highly relevant for, Asian students of English.

Advances in Internet technology provide further options for teachers in areas where authentic materials in English from non-mainstream cultures are otherwise difficult to locate. While it previously would not have been possible for English instructors to access many English language newspapers from Africa, the Caribbean or Asia, for instance, today such newspapers can be easily perused through web sites such as www.onlinenewspapers.com. Similarly, photos and images for classroom use can be located by going to Google.com, selecting 'images' from the list of options, and typing in search phrases such as 'Jamaican culture', 'Indian culture', and so on. Moreover, it is possible to download television programmes and radio broadcasts in English from a wide selection of countries at portals such as wwitv.com and www.live-radio.net. In brief, Internet technology, where available, is helping make the study of global cultures more feasible than ever.

Admittedly, choosing appropriate authentic materials is no simple matter, and teachers preparing lessons on world cultures will need even more time than usual to ensure students receive the highest quality of education possible. Not all English teaching professionals will be equal to this task. Moreover, the suggestions made here may not be appropriate for all levels and groups of students, and this paper has not addressed the issue of student reluctance to learn about non-mainstream cultures and non-standard Englishes (Hadley, 2004: 17). Nevertheless, for educators who are truly serious about culture teaching, it should be possible, through careful planning, to gather or design materials that intermediate to advanced EFL/ESL students will find relevant, useful and thought provoking.

Conclusion

Most EFL/ESL professionals will agree that 'language is culture and culture is language' (Wright, 1996: 37). However, the globalisation of English complicates the issue of how to teach culture, and indeed English itself, to FL/L2 learners. With English now spoken worldwide, it makes little sense to speak of a 'target culture' of the English language or to suggest that American or British culture alone are worthy of study. It also cannot be assumed that all individuals need English simply to communicate with Anglo-American native speakers. English learners, in fact, may only require English for local or regional purposes; or they may need it to converse with other non-native speakers from other cultures or countries. Moreover, certain learners may feel discomfited by attempts to inculcate native speaker linguistic or cultural norms.

As English today belongs to all who speak it, far-reaching changes are necessary in the area of culture teaching in ELT contexts. Above all, English educators should adopt and promote a more cosmopolitan outlook that recognises and accepts other ways of life, modes of thought, and styles of English usage beyond Great Britain and the United States. They should reflect more on

their personal roles as cultural transmitters in the language classroom, resisting the urge to 'Anglo-Americanise' their students. Further, they should view culture learning as an experiential and open-ended process essential for English language education, as opposed to a momentary diversion from regular EFL/ESL lessons or pointless exercise in fact gathering. And finally, they should integrate world cultures into their materials and lessons to promote true linguistic/cultural awareness and international understanding among themselves and their students.

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Note

1. Kachru (1985: 12–15) posits three concentric spheres for global English use: The term *Inner Circle* refers to nations where English traditionally is a native language; *Outer Circle* represents countries where English is a second language; and *Expanding Circle* encompasses countries where English is required for international communication.

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