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English Lingua Journal

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**THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN
INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the social role of Foreign Language Teaching, in particular its potential contribution to Intercultural Education. This is done by reference to the European context and to a new framework which will describe the competences needed for participation in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue. This framework is a consequence of the Council of Europe's *White Paper* on Intercultural Dialogue published in 2008, which argued that multiculturalism must be replaced by interculturalism and intercultural dialogue. The author presents this framework as work in progress and then argues that the kind of Foreign Language Teaching which includes the development of intercultural competence as one of its aims is already in a position to show how the framework for intercultural and democratic competence can be realized in practice. At the same time this approach within Foreign Language Teaching, when related to democratic competence, can make a specific contribution to the improvement of societies by encouraging learners to be intercultural but also to take the kind of action in their communities which is influenced by their interculturality.

Keywords: ELT, intercultural communication, foreign languages, Europe.

¹1. INTRODUCTION

Let me start with language teaching and some basic axioms or beliefs about language teaching in schools and universities – I am not talking here about private language schools but state or public schools.

Here is my first axiom: the purpose of language teaching is not only to develop competence in learners through appropriate teaching techniques, it also has an educational role. What do I mean by an educational role? I mean that language teaching develops learners not just as people who can speak, read and write in another language as if they were just speaking their own language in a different way, in a different code. Language teaching develops learners language capacity to speak about the world and themselves in new ways which are not available to them in the language or languages they already speak.

My second axiom is the following: all subjects in the curriculum have educational purposes and each has its own special purpose. The special purpose of language teaching is to enable learners to leave their own way of living and thinking and understand the ways of other people who speak other languages and who live and think in other ways.

So now I need to explain what I mean by ‘other people who speak other languages’. Most of the time, in the present and in the past, the other people and languages have been people and languages outside the country where learners live i.e. we call them ‘foreigners’ and teach ‘foreign languages’. In other words language teachers and learners look outwards beyond their own country frontiers.

In Europe, language teaching looks both inwards and outwards. We teach the languages of other Europeans and therefore are looking inwards. We also teach the languages of countries outside Europe – Chinese, Arabic, Japanese are the main ones – and therefore we look outside Europe. We also teach English as a language which allows us to look both inwards and outwards.

¹ This is a shortened text of a lecture given in Taiwan and China.



2. EUROPE(S)

In order to make myself clearer, I need to say something about Europe. For many people both inside and outside, Europe is equated with the European Union of 28 states. It is also seen as an economic body which trades with the rest of the world and which has a free market within its borders. This was certainly the origin of the European Union but today it also has many other features. It has a parliament, a government, its own laws, its own currency in most states, and its inhabitants are all citizens of Europe – they have dual citizenship, of a member state and of Europe. In other words it has many of the features of any single country – but it does not have an official language as most states do – it has over 20 working languages.

There is however another Europe, this time with 47 states – called the Council of Europe. This body focuses not on the economy but on culture. By culture I mean here the values by which people live and work. The Council of Europe promotes and protects the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Unlike the European Union it does not do this through a government and parliament and law-making. The Council of Europe acts through persuasion and recommendations. The Council of Europe is also concerned with its citizens. It does not give them a legal status but it uses persuasion to create good living conditions and is particularly concerned with minorities and ensuring their conditions of living and working – and there are dozens if not hundreds of minorities, both officially recognised and unofficial. Those are two European bodies, but what about life in Europe? Who are the Europeans?

2. THE EUROPEANS AND THEIR CURRENT STATE

Europeans are today – due the modern phenomenon of mobility and migration – a mixture of many kinds of peoples with many kinds of values and – of interest to us – many languages. Many of the languages have existed in Europe for a long time and can be described as natives but many of the languages are immigrant languages. Furthermore, as we linguists know, languages are carriers of ideas, values and ways of behaving. Europe like every other part of the world has a history of conflict among people with different values. Both my father and my grandfather were involved in such conflicts – the First and Second World Wars as we call them – above all they were European wars.

Today we still have conflicts, some of them among people who are old natives – I think of Ukraine – and some among people who are new natives,



and here I think of the conflicts which are called terrorism. Here I think of the most recent events – the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris or the massacre two years ago in Norway. Changing Shakespeare just a little we can say that ‘There is something rotten in the state of Europe’.

3. EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO EUROPEAN CONFLICT

So what is Europe doing to deal with the rottenness? There are many things but I want to concentrate on one. In 2008, the European Union had a year of intercultural dialogue but that was just one year. In the same year the Council of Europe produced a White Paper which tried to change underlying ideas and values. It tried to analyse how people live together and what are the conditions for living together without conflict. The White Paper distinguished between the ideas of multiculturalism and those of interculturalism. It said that in the 20th century the approach taken had been to encourage different groups with different values and ways of living to live in harmony side by side but separately. They should tolerate each other and leave each other to live in their own way.

In the 21st century, it said, this is inadequate and has created more conflict, the opposite of what was intended and hoped for. An alternative approach is needed. This alternative approach was called interculturalism and intercultural dialogue. It emphasised the importance of understanding other people – and now perhaps you begin to see the link with language teaching. Language teaching is the means of understanding others. However I have to say that *The White Paper* did not refer to language teaching and revealed a lack of understanding about the role of languages in intercultural dialogue. On the other hand, in the practical work of the Council of Europe, I am pleased to say that this gap is being filled and the role of language and language teaching is being recognised.

- *Let me now turn to the practical work.*

As a consequence of *The White Paper*, the Council of Europe began in December 2013, to develop work on intercultural competence or competence for intercultural dialogue. However because it is fundamental to European values to promote democratic values, the work on intercultural competence was linked with work on democratic competence. In other words, the task was to identify and describe the competences – the skills, knowledge and attitudes – people need to engage in dialogue and in democratic activities. In fact we soon established that there was much overlap. Intercultural competence and democratic competence are very similar and the intention was to create a



model of democratic and intercultural competence which could be used in schools to guide what teachers do in all subjects, including foreign language teaching. The aim is to create a framework for democratic and intercultural competence which is similar to the European Framework of Reference for Languages which has been extremely successful in influencing language teaching in Europe and around the world, including East Asia. Language teaching became the blueprint, the model for developing a new framework for schools and education systems.

Why schools? In Europe schools are considered to be places where two kinds of learning take place. There is first the learning of knowledge and this learning is said to be important for the future of a country's economic success. This knowledge is tested in international comparisons and European governments try to change schools so that learners get better at tests. They look at East Asia and see that pupils there/here are better at such tests, so they try to learn from East Asia - which may be a good idea or not but it is not what I want to talk about now.

The second kind of learning is what I would call moral education or education to develop in young people the values and practices of a society and in Europe that includes democratic values and practices, the values of human rights. So schools are expected to do this in practice by developing the competences of democracy and intercultural dialogue. One very clear example of this is the decision of the French government after the events at Charlie Hebdo in Paris to invest a large amount of money in education.

Another clear example is the decision of the Council of Europe to put the work on intercultural and democratic competence at the top of its priorities - which means the work now has to be done very quickly - a lot more quickly than we originally planned. This is the political reality - governments and governmental organisations like the Council of Europe always want results immediately - and preferably by yesterday!

So what is intercultural and democratic competence and where does language teaching play a role? How is the project to create a framework designed? [Here I am using some of the work and words of Professor Martyn Barrett who has been doing much of the practical work] The project is taking place in **four phases**, from 2014-17:

1. Phase one consists of **Developing a conceptual model** of the competences which citizens require to participate effectively in



- democratic culture and intercultural dialogue and this happened in 2014.
2. Phase two involves **Developing behavioural descriptors** for each competence that is specified in the model – these descriptors are being formulated using the language of learning outcomes in 2015
 3. Phase three involves **Scaling the descriptors** – assigning the descriptors to different levels of proficiency and this will happen in 2016-17.
 4. Phase four is **Writing supporting documentation** to explain how the competence model and the scaled descriptors can be used in curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment, and this too will happen in 2016-17.

What is the model? It is a model of competence. Like other approaches to teaching by competence, the intention is that teachers will be able to use the model to plan the results or outcomes they want from their learners. For the purposes of the framework, we have defined '**competence**' in general as:

The ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, difficulties and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations.

20 competences have been identified for inclusion in the model, and fall into four broad categories: **values**, **attitudes**, **skills**, and **knowledge and critical understanding** and the further development of descriptors for these competences is in progress.

Let me repeat that the purpose of creating a model is practical. It will allow professional people in Europe – everyone involved in schools and education in general – to have a common understanding of what democratic and intercultural competence is. This was the purpose of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of reference for Languages. With this common understanding professional educationists – including of course language teachers – will develop their own approaches but will have a common reference, a common language.

- *How will it work and how will it work for language teachers?*

For all teachers it will work like the *Common European Framework for Languages*. It will help them to clarify their aims and their objectives.



By aims I mean it will help for example the teacher of history or mathematics to clarify how their subject help to create intercultural and democratic competence. By objectives I mean it will help teachers of history and mathematics to plan their teaching so that it develops learners competences as learning outcomes. They will be able to plan so that they can say 'By the end of these lessons, learners will be able to ...'

For language teachers it will be easier because they already have models of intercultural competence which they can use to develop the skills and knowledge included in the model for democratic and intercultural competence. The reason I have been invited to talk to you is that in 1997 I produced such a model and since then have been persuading teacher to use it in their planning. I want therefore to explain how language teaching has aims which are important in today's society in Europe, in a Europe where there is something rotten, and to point out that what in language teaching is called intercultural competence has many things in common with democratic competence.

I said that in Europe language teaching looks both inwards and outwards. We teach in French, German and Spanish. In France, we teach English German, Spanish, Italian and so on. The same applies to other European countries. In England we also teach Chinese, Japanese and Arabic although not to the same extent. And the same thing applies to other European countries where they give much more emphasis to these language than we do in England.

In fact, when we look more carefully at Chinese, Arabic and other languages from outside Europe, we find that they are also inside Europe. They are recent natives but they are natives, and of course I am not just thinking about the languages but also about the cultures they carry and the people within Europe who speak them. So whatever languages we teach they are all relevant to intercultural dialogue within Europe as well as outside Europe. Furthermore, the people who speak for example Arabic inside Europe are multilingual. They also speak the old languages of Europe. In France, where the latest conflicts took place, those who attacked were not monolingual. This means that a teacher of French in England for example can and should help learners to understand the cultures of all the people of France including those who are bilingual and have other cultures and values. But even if they do not do this, teachers of French are creating the competence and the condition for intercultural dialogue in French or any other language. Let me be clear here, that when I say understand I do not mean condone. Understanding is not



condoning or approving but it does mean creating the conditions for dialogue, for talking together instead of fighting – to ‘jaw-jaw, not war-war’ as Winston Churchill once said.

4. CONCLUSION

The important question for our project on Intercultural and democratic Competence will be how to implement the model. How to help teachers use the model to include the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and understanding in the teaching of mathematics or history etc.

The interesting point is that language teachers already have similar models and there is so much overlap that we can say that teaching intercultural competence is the same as teaching democratic competence.

In that sense language teachers are among the pioneers and should be encouraged to develop these theories, models and practices further – and to share their experience with teachers of other subjects.

So in conclusion, I can add a third axiom to the two I had at the beginning:

- foreign language education is a social phenomenon which has societal improvement as one of its goals.

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ICT, CORPUS LINGUISTICS, AND AUTHENTICITY

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Abstract

Authentic materials are widely accepted as having great potential to motivate in foreign language learning classrooms and ‘authenticity’ is frequently used as selling point in the marketing strategies of mainstream ELT publishers. This paper considers how recent technological developments in computing are increasing global access to authentic materials and discusses some of the practical and theoretical challenges that this technology presents to teachers and learners.

Keywords: ICT, Corpus Linguistics, authenticity, language learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Both Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and corpus linguistics have close associations to issues and research surrounding authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning, but these are rarely discussed within an authenticity framework. This paper aims to provide a brief overview of these important connections, given the emphasis on authenticity in the literature today (e.g. Gilmore, 2007, 2011; Mishan, 2005).

2. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Only a few decades ago, Nunan (1989, p. 138) commented on the difficulty of accessing authentic input to use in the classroom, particularly for teachers working in a foreign language context. Today, anyone with an Internet connection has more spoken and written authentic data at their fingertips than they could possibly know what to do with and this has had the effect of

‘impelling the issue of authenticity of texts and interactions to the fore in language pedagogy’ (Mishan 2005, p. ix). Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which deals with the application of digital technology to all aspects of teaching and learning, has exploded and EFL, perhaps less constrained than mainstream language education, has often been at the cutting edge of innovations in our field (Crystal, 2001). The Web is commonly seen as having three possible roles in language learning (see, for example, the WELL project <<http://www.well.ac.uk>>). Firstly, it can act as a *DELIVERY MEDIUM*, providing easy access to authentic resources such as newspapers, literary texts, film scripts, song lyrics, video and audio samples from the target culture. Secondly, it can act as an *INTERACTIVE MEDIUM*, allowing learners to take a more active role in their own learning through search engines, on-line dictionaries and encyclopaedias, database search facilities, translation software, language analysis tools, or grammar/vocabulary tasks provided by language learning web sites. Lastly, it can act as a *COMMUNICATION MEDIUM*, giving learners the opportunity to locate and communicate with like-minded people in the target language through e-mail (for example, eTandem), Internet Relay Chat (IRC), discussion lists and telephone or video-conferencing. The potential advantages of Web-based resources are therefore enormous, including:

- a) unlimited access to authentic materials to suit all proficiency levels, learning styles and interests (Wilson, 1997; Kramsch, A’Ness and Lam, 2000; Hogan-Brun, 2001; Mishan, 2005);
 - b) greater learner autonomy (Warschauer 1996; Warschauer, Turbee and Roberts 1996; Mishan, 2005) in the ‘virtual self-access centre’ of the Web (Little, 1997, p. 235);
 - c) a real audience of native or non-native speakers to communicate with in other parts of the world (Janda, 1995; Warschauer, 1996);
 - d) up-to-dateness (Piper, Watson and Wright, 1999; Hogan-Brun, 2001; Mishan, 2005) and;
 - e) the development of transferable electronic literacy skills (Mishan, 2005).
- However, these potential benefits are often not realized in practice for a number of reasons. Without a peer review or editing process to pass through, materials on the Internet can be of poor quality and a number of writers have specifically criticized Web sites designed for language learning in this respect (e.g. Eastment, 1996; Lamy, 1997):

The learner is faced with a technologically advanced, consumer-friendly version of his textbook from the sixties, with Web pages created by designers who know more about Web design than about new methodological approaches in language learning.



Learners therefore need to acquire, arguably valuable, new skills in assessing and selecting Web-based material – skills unnecessary in the classroom where the teacher performs this role (Mishan, 2005). The interactive nature of the Web gives learners more autonomy and control, but the ease with which they can skip from one site to another often results in superficial learning (Piper, Watson & Wright, 1999; Trotman, 2000). Similarly, attempts to link students together around the world through e-mail have often led to disappointing results because teachers have lost sight of pedagogy in their enthusiasm to apply the technology:

Simply put, there is no more reason to (expect) a significant educational outcome from simply creating a pen pal connection than there is from simply bringing two students into a room and asking them to talk.

(Warschauer and Whittaker, 1997, p. 28)

Web-based resources therefore need to be carefully integrated into classroom activities and students need teacher support to focus their learning and get the most out of the new technology (Warschauer and Whittaker, 1997; Piper, Watson and Wright, 1999; Hogan-Brun, 2001).

3. CORPUS LINGUISTICS

The ability of computers to provide new insights into authentic language use was first demonstrated by Kucera and Francis (1967) in their classic book *Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English*. They based their analysis on what was also the first corpus ever to be created, the Brown Corpus, a one million-word compilation of American English texts held at Brown University, USA. Since then, the number and variety of corpora have increased dramatically and they are having profound effects on our understanding of language and, consequently, the language teaching profession (see Biber, Conrad and Reppen, 1994 and Kennedy, 1998 for a review of some of the most commonly used English corpora). Corpora can be seen as having two possible roles in language pedagogy: a) an *INDIRECT ROLE*, informing decisions on the content of textbooks, reference books and tests or, b) a *DIRECT ROLE*, being used by learners in the classroom as a reference tool or source of communicative tasks. Their impact, so far, has mainly been restricted to the former role, where they have often demonstrated linguists' and material writers' intuitions about language to be unreliable (Sinclair, 1991, 2004; Biber, Conrad and Reppen, 1994, 1998; Aston, 1995; McCarthy and Carter, 1997; Carter, 1998; Widdowson, 2000; Gavioli and



Aston, 2001; Stubbs, 2001). Collocation and colligation have been shown to be far more important than earlier suspected with words frequently co-occurring in regular patterns, known under a variety of terms: ‘prefabs’ (Bolinger, 1976), ‘lexicalized stems’ (Pawley and Syder 1983), ‘lexical phrases’ (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992), ‘lexicalised chunks’ (Cook, 1998), or ‘highly recurrent word combinations (HRWCs)’ (De Cock, 2000). Sinclair (1991) explains this tendency for regular patterning in texts with his ‘idiom and open choice principles’. These state that language is processed, both receptively and productively, in chunks wherever possible since this is much more efficient than handling it word by word. Only when this strategy is unsuccessful does the interpretive process switch to the open choice principle, and then only for short periods of time (see also Pawley and Syder, 1983; Aston, 1995). As a result of work such as this, lexical phrases have increasingly found their way into language textbooks, even to the extent of being the organizing principle behind whole syllabi, as in Lewis’s lexical approach (Lewis, 1993, 1997).

Corpora have also been valuable in providing specific information on the frequency of different words and word senses in the language, allowing lexicographers, material writers and test designers to refer to empirical data rather than just gut instinct when deciding what lexical items to include in their work. The first corpus-informed dictionary, the ‘American Heritage Dictionary’, appeared in 1969, only a few years after the completion of the Brown Corpus and today, all of the dictionaries produced by the major publishers are based on corpora (Kennedy, 1998). According to Willis (1990, p. vi), the most frequent 700 words in the English language account for about 70% of all spoken and written texts produced and the most frequent 2,500 words around 80% of texts. This information has been used to provide a more principled approach to the organization of lexical content in textbooks, notably, in the lexical syllabus of the Collins COBUILD English Course (Willis and Willis, 1988). In testing, frequency lists have been used to help design placement and diagnostic tests such as the ‘Vocabulary Levels Test’ (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2000), which give estimates of learners’ vocabulary size at different frequency levels. Frequency counts have also shown that the most commonly occurring word senses in English do not always match our intuitions, as can be seen, for example, with the word ‘back’. Sinclair (1991, p. 112) comments that most dictionaries list the body part as the first meaning of this word and that this also concurs with most native speakers’ understanding of core meaning. However, the COBUILD corpus shows the adverbial sense of the word, as in ‘go back’, to be far more common across the language as a whole. Biber, Conrad & Reppen (1994) go further than this, pointing out that the distribution of the senses of ‘back’ vary across registers



in the Longman/Lancaster Corpus, where the body part meaning is more common in fiction but the adverbial sense is more common in social science texts. This illustrates the dangers of applying descriptions from large corpora directly to language teaching without any kind of pedagogical mediation:

For language teachers the issue remains as to what the principles for selection, idealization, and simplification should be [...] an item may be frequent but limited in range, or infrequent but useful in a wide range of contexts. Or it may be infrequent but very useful, or appropriate for some pedagogical reason. These are factors beyond mere description.

(Cook, 1998, p. 62)

Grammatical descriptions of the language have also come under criticism as a result of the large body of corpora-based research that has been built up over the last thirty years (see Altenberg, 1991 for a comprehensive review). As Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1994) point out, the remarkable consistency in the grammatical descriptions traditionally offered to learners in textbooks and reference books gives the illusion that what is being presented is incontrovertible fact. In reality, however, decisions over what structures to include have been based on more subjective notions of teachability or difficulty, reinforced by years of consensus within the profession:

While beginning L2 students need to master certain core grammatical constructions, they are not necessarily the ones that have been traditionally emphasized in pedagogic grammars. That is, most textbooks focus exclusively on concerns of difficulty and teachability to decide which grammatical constructions to emphasize and how to sequence the presentation of topics. However, an equally important consideration is whether beginning students will ever need to produce or comprehend the construction in question outside the language classroom, and, if so, how frequently that need will arise.

(ibid, p. 174)

More recent grammar reference books, such as *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Sinclair, 1990), *Exploring Grammar in Context* (Carter, Hughes and McCarthy, 2000), *Natural Grammar* (Thornbury, 2004) and *Cambridge Grammar of English* (Carter and McCarthy, 2006), all attempt to reflect authentic language use more accurately by reference to corpus data, although this does not automatically guarantee their success from a pedagogical perspective (Owen, 1993; Westney, 1993; Shehadeh, 2005).



Although no one seems to vehemently disagree with the idea that corpora *do* have a role to play in language pedagogy, the extent of that role is hotly debated. Proponents of the hard position, such as Willis (1990), Lewis (1993), Stubbs (1996) and Sinclair (2004), tend more towards the COBUILD position that materials should be ‘corpus driven’ (Stubbs, 1997). This has been harshly criticized by a number of writers:

Trusting the corpus data to the exclusion of one’s intuition about what is possible in the language may have been a necessary antidote to hidebound convention in linguistics and language teaching. But it is possible to take even this too far. In its own way, it also leads to irrelevance, oversight and misrepresentation. The grammarian and the language teacher need the corpus as servant, not as master.’

(Owen, 1993, p.185)

Here is the belief that what is perceived as a linguistic revolution necessarily constitutes a pedagogic one. Very often writers are carried away by a single insight into *language*, taking it illogically to be sufficient to change *language teaching*.

(Cook, 1998, p.62)

Researchers taking a less radical stance, such as Owen (1996), Prodromou (1997); Biber et al. (1998), Carter (1998), Cook (1998), tend to favour the Longman policy of ‘corpus-based, not corpus-bound’ pedagogical materials (Summers and Rundell, 1995, cited in Stubbs, 1997, p. 242). The essential difference between the two positions relates to how far we are willing to ‘trust the text’ (Sinclair, 2004) over our own intuitions. Both strategies followed to the exclusion of the other can lead to flawed judgments, it seems. Corpora can be misleading because:

a) They represent only a small quantity of total language used around the world:

Corpora are only partial authorities. The cumulative language experience of an individual, though less amenable to systematic access, remains far larger and richer. Even a three hundred million-word corpus is equivalent to only around three thousand books, or perhaps the language experience of a teenager.

(Cook, 1998, p. 59)

b) They emphasize frequency above all else:



There is a hidden irony in the dogma that frequent native-like collocations are the best model to imitate. It is that even *within* the native-speaker community it is often the infrequent word or expression which is most powerful and most communicatively effective... Something is not a good model just because it occurs frequently.

(Cook, 1998, p.61)

c) They often collapse different contexts of use into single categories and therefore fail to reflect variations in language across different registers, dialects or time. When this is the case, native-speaker intuitions are important:

At Longman we value native-speaker intuition very highly, believing that the native-speaker's experience of very long-term, contextually diverse exposure to millions of lexical items in their natural environment underpins the entire process of linguistic analysis. It is native-speaker intuition [...] that enables the lexicographer to analyse and interpret the raw data of the corpus, and to distinguish what is typical from what is aberrant.

(Summers, 1993, p. 83)

d) They reflect the language that native-speakers use in their own specific discourse communities, which is not necessarily the language that best meets learners' needs:

[...] corpora are primarily records of native speakers' language behaviour. 'Real' language in effect means native-speaker English, and the only language excluded from this category (apart from the invented examples of linguists and textbook writers) is that used to and by language learners.

(Cook, 1998, p.59)

Of course, as the number and variety of corpora expand and they begin to include more information on context of use (for example CANCODE gives details about the relationships between speakers), differences between dialects (for example the International Corpus of English) or even non-native speaker discourse, many of these disadvantages will disappear. Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1994, p. 174) suggest that for intermediate and advanced students who have already mastered the rudiments of the language, an ESP approach is more appropriate, whereby learners focus on the linguistic features of language from the specific target registers they are likely to need to operate in. Future corpora that can distinguish between different registers could therefore be extremely useful in tailoring classroom input to meet learners' needs.



Relying on native-speaker intuitions can, however, be just as misleading as relying on corpus data. It has been well established that although people are very good at noticing *UNUSUAL* patterns when they occur in their mother tongue, such as incorrect or inappropriate language, they are highly unreliable when it comes to being aware of *TYPICAL* speech patterns (Labov, 1966; Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Wolfson, 1989; Sinclair 1991; Biber, Conrad and Reppen, 1998). This means that if we want to provide learners with input that reflects what people actually say, as opposed to what we think they *SHOULD* say, in any given context, reference to computer corpora is indispensable.

Widdowson (1991, 2000, 2003) probably goes furthest in his objections to the use of corpora in language teaching. His position is that, since the classroom creates its own reality, there is no reason for us to be obliged to refer to real discourse at all:

Language descriptions for the inducement of learning cannot be based on a database. They cannot be modeled on the description of externalized language, the frequency profiles of text analysis. Such analysis provides us with facts, hitherto unknown, or ignored, but they do not of themselves carry any guarantee of pedagogic relevance.

(Widdowson, 1991, pp. 20-21)

This view has also had its critics:

Learners should not be patronized by being told that they do not need to bother with all this real English. They should not be disempowered, and syllabuses should not be deliberately impoverished.

(Carter, 1998, p. 51)

Corpora have had a much more limited direct role in the classroom as resources for the learners themselves. When they are used in this way, it is generally to provide students with sample concordance lines to analyse so that they can generate their own rules about grammar patterns or vocabulary. This inductive approach, known as Data Driven Learning (DDL), is most commonly associated with Tim Johns (see, for example Johns, 1986, 1991a, 1991b or visit <<http://www.eisu.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/index.html>>). He believes that the close analysis of concordance data by learners creates the necessary psycholinguistic conditions for 'noticing' (Schmidt, 1990) or 'Consciousness Raising' (Rutherford, 1987) to occur and, by making these discoveries for themselves, learners are more likely to retain the insights in long-term



memory. Many textbooks also adopt an inductive approach to learning but, typically, students generate their rules from 'enriched input' contrived to give numerous examples of the target language, rather than from concordance lines so an important question is whether the perceived benefits noted by Johns originate in the materials or the methodology. Gavioli and Aston (2001, p. 242-243) are also convinced of the benefits of using corpora in the classroom:

Discussing corpus data enables learners to develop their own descriptive frameworks, and to question and critique those of teachers, textbooks, and reference materials [...] This may help them to view such descriptions in less prescriptive terms, and to interact with them more critically in establishing their own views of language reality.

Encouraging learners to examine material critically and develop their own language descriptions sounds like a very good idea but DDL is a time-consuming process so there is a trade-off to be made between the quantity of material covered in a course and the depth of understanding achieved as well as its retention in long-term memory.

There are a number of problems associated with using corpus data as classroom input. Firstly, as Mishan (2005, p. 257) points out, DDL is 'divergent learning' in that students may come to different conclusions about the target language under investigation, something which might not appeal to lower level learners with less confidence or learners from cultures with Confucian traditions who are used to a more prescriptive approach. Next, the fact that learners are faced with fragments of decontextualised authentic language in concordance lines means that the challenge of making sense of the discourse, difficult even under normal circumstances, is exacerbated or just impossible (Aston, 1995; Widdowson, 2000) and may prove overwhelming or demotivating (see, for example, Gregory Hadley's web site describing his attempts to use DDL in Japan: <<http://www.nuis.ac.jp/~hadley/publication/jlearner/jlearner.htm>>). Teachers could select the concordance lines to be analysed themselves to facilitate learning but this is a time-consuming process and runs the risk of generating a sample that is not representative of either the corpus as a whole or the particular genres of most relevance to the students. Gavioli and Aston (2001) believe that, in the future, the effective use of corpora in the classroom will rely on three key criteria: a) access to corpus data from different sources or genres in the class, b) more user-friendly software and c) more research into the design, selection and grading of corpus-based tasks. It should be



remembered, however, that this is not the first time that technology has been enthusiastically embraced by some members of the language teaching profession; language laboratories proved themselves to be both hugely expensive and hugely disappointing in the 1960s (Howatt, 1984, p. 283) illustrating how easy it is to get carried away. More empirical research is needed in this area before we can say for sure that corpus data is as useful to learners as it is to teachers, material writers and lexicographers:

The fact that concordancing has proved a useful tool in formulating descriptive generalizations by linguists is no guarantee that it can be usefully transferred to the classroom.

(Aston, 1995, pp. 260)

4. CONCLUSION

In our search for authenticity in language learning, it can be seen that both ICT and corpus analysis have the potential to provide useful insights. With technology advancing so rapidly, it can be difficult for second language researchers or teachers to keep up with developments, but it is hoped that this brief overview illustrates some of the avenues currently being explored.

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**FROM THE APPROPRIATE TO THE STRATEGIC:
PRAGMATICS IN ELF**

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Abstract

The use of English as the global lingua franca highlights the need for an understanding of the pragmatic principles governing communicative practices to successfully communicate across diverse cultures. ELF users are necessarily engaged in multilingual and multicultural practices. They thus have an ideal opportunity to use English in order to negotiate multiple 'hybrid' interactions, rather than interactions based on traditional, shared native speaker norms. This paper argues that although the overriding importance of pragmatics as norms of use has been recognized in second language communication, it needs re-consideration in the light of the more fluid communicative practices of English when used as a global currency in international encounters between people from different lingua-cultural backgrounds. Key pragmatic features that characterise ELF interactions are discussed and some of the pragmatic ELF users need to acquire in order to engage successfully in such interactions are described and exemplified.

Keywords: ELF, pragmatic awareness, discourse strategies, negotiation of meaning, NS norms.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an age where English functions as a means of facilitating intercultural interactions in an increasingly globalised world, there is a need to pay particular attention to the ways in which sociopragmatic practices are realised in such interactions. The new pedagogical contexts that surround the

act of using English as a lingua franca are gradually superseding the prevailing pedagogical orthodoxies of recent decades, with their focus on communicative language teaching that sets a high premium on the native speaker as a model to be aspired to. The growing need to use English effectively in non-native speaker interactions has begun to change the focus of English language learning. Increasingly, the aim is no longer to speak English native-like manner, but to be able to use English as a tool for communication with people from different language and cultural backgrounds. This has, in some cases, led to a shift of pedagogical focus toward providing ELF users with the resources to negotiate meaning successfully with whomsoever they find themselves communicating. This in turn has led to a greater emphasis on the functions that the propositional content of an utterance fulfills and less on the form through which it does so. This shift of interest also demands a reconsideration of the pragmatic strategies that can help achieve this pedagogical objective. Pragmatics, then, needs to be (re) conceived in terms of meaning negotiation as advocated by Thomas (1995) rather than as rules of appropriateness. I am by no means juxtaposing ‘appropriacy’ with ‘negotiation of meaning’ nor ignoring the former. In fact, appropriacy is relevant in ELF, just as it is in EFL communication and research is uncovering rules of sociopragmatic use in ELF communities of practice – albeit varied ones. Along with making meanings clear, we can expect ELF users to be concerned with impression management and relationships. However, dealing with pragmatics from a ‘negotiation of meaning’ perspective in this particular context is a better way, I will argue, to prepare learners for international communication. It also would provide them with a description, within the field of pragmatics, of what they need in order to achieve and sustain mutual comprehension.

2. NS PRAGMATIC NORMS IN AN ELF COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The fact that ELF users will often be from different lingua-cultural backgrounds means that they do not constitute a conventional speech community, as conceived in the sociolinguistics literature (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). They are seen, however, as a community of practice where English is used as effectively and efficiently as their proficiency allows, to achieve communication and to avoid misunderstanding (Mauranen, 2012). English in this context is viewed as “a special form of language use operating under different conditions than both native/native and native/non-native interactions” (House, 2009, p.141). ELF users have, outside their own operating communities of practice, no shared cultural values that could possibly help to establish common pragmatic ground for appropriate language use. Additionally, teaching a wide variety of English speaking



cultures and pragmatic rules would require an immense cultural background that no teacher can possibly acquire. All of this renders the notion of 'appropriate language use' problematic and thus pedagogically challenging. The argument may run, therefore, for not attempting to teach it in any traditional way. There is, in fact, nothing new in this. Widdowson (2003, p. 57) calls for the dissociation of English from its sociocultural contexts of use when restricted to institutional domains in international settings.

What seems to be primarily at issue are means of ensuring a successful convergence of meaning between the interactants. Conveying information, along with establishing and maintaining a relationship of varying degrees of intimacy through accommodation strategies, is the primary purpose of ELF interactions, as it is in any kind of communication. Given this, we need then, teachers and material writers included, to identify areas of pragmatics, which learners will see as relevant and worth acquiring. The first question to be asked is not what sociopragmatic rules of use to teach, but rather what pragmatic strategies to adopt in meaning negotiation? Hence, any conventional 'hierarchical' model based on native-speaker norms of use when it comes to the study of ELF pragmatic features could be questionable and obsolete. After all, why should ELF learners bother themselves with fashioning their linguistic behaviour to that of a native speaker? Indeed, they may find this uncomfortable (see Murray, p. 2012) and it is, for sure, unattainable. This does not mean that the learner does not aim to get there; we should normally give her/him the choice to decide on the extent to which s/he wants to approximate to that model, if so are her/his wishes. Research (Kuo, 2006, p. 218) has, indeed, shown that some learners tend to turn to the native speaker teacher as an appropriate model for learning purposes.

Hitherto, the teaching of pragmatics has tended to be narrowed down to and associated with the introduction of a list of the most frequently used speech acts and routine formulas in English. These have always been informed by the native speaker's linguistic behaviour and are not necessarily characteristic of ELF talk. Although this approach may have paid lip service to learners as ELF users, the frequently used speech acts and routine formulas are likely to be ineffective in ELF settings as they do not capture the reality of ELF as experienced by its users.

3. ELF PRAGMATICS: A METHODOLOGICAL SHIFT IN THE TEACHING OF DISCOURSE

If pragmatics is to be taught in ELF contexts, then the basis on which it is taught needs to be other than appropriateness of use according to the socio-



cultural norms of the variety spoken. In such circumstances only one perspective on pragmatics seems to me worth adopting: that of the negotiation of meaning where the focus of attention is on conversational strategies: knowledge of turn-taking mechanisms and exchange structures; how to readjust in case of failure of communication; the way in which one holds or passes the floor; when and how to overlap and get into and out of the conversation; and when to give backchannel cues to indicate that one is attending to the speaker's speech or to overlap with the speaker's turn. In other words, learners should be aware of all the features that are important in the interpretation of a communicative act. Given the heterogeneous nature of conversation in such contexts, they should, as Meierkord (2000) suggests, be provided with the wherewithal to negotiate the norms for each conversation, taking into account the specific cultural particularities of the participants. Our task as teachers then is "to develop the capacity of students to adopt ... creative and collaborative strategies for negotiating diversity and unpredictability in global interactions (Canagarajah, 2014, p.774). The potential for pedagogy would reside in knowing which of these features tend to be crucial for a full convergence of meaning and thus need to constitute a focus in the teaching for pedagogical pragmatics in expanding circle lingua franca contexts. The stakes can be high and we need to move from the teaching of this discipline as appropriate language use to its teaching as negotiation of meaning, and hence from discourse as an outcome of a communicative interaction to discourse as a process.

The teaching of pragmatics I am advocating here should enable ELF users to adopt and blend English innovatively and creatively so as to co-construct meaning and ensure understanding within and between linguistic communities. Discourse is thus understood as the dynamic process it really is, whereby meaning is built up through human agency, relying on context and drawing on the interactants' mother tongue(s) and culture(s), which then become a resource that helps negotiation rather than hindering it. Pedagogically, the focus is on the process of communication instead of its outcome, or product. To set the framework for any methodology based on discourse as a process we need, beforehand, to identify a range of different communicative strategies adopted in as many different ELF scenarios as possible to ensure the smooth development of conversations. For the purpose of the present paper, I refer in particular to utterance completions, latching and backchanneling (Cogo, 2012, p.100), and repetition and paraphrasing (Kaur, 2009). Another discourse practice in ELF talk has to do with the foregrounding of non-nativeness. Indeed, one of the strategies that my students use is their explicit request for help when ignoring an item's name in English: 'Sorry, I don't know how (what) you call this in English'. Thus, they



enhance implicitly their NNS status as a way of ‘excusing’ their use of code switching to their L1, another ‘crucial pragmatic resource’ that is widely used in ELF talk.

Exchanges in ELF are usually short, yet functionally very effective. Once an agreement is reached and meaning understood, interactions stop. The following extract from a recorded interaction between two of my students, just after leaving the exam room ,(one Algerian, S1 and the other from the Republic of Mali, S2) illustrates the point:

S1: how was the exam?

S2: ... ah not easy ... I ...

S1: you ... didn’t do well?

S2: no ... no... I was ... Hum ... this is not the question I wanted

S1: I see ... me too.

S2: so we are all ... *kif kif* ... as you say in Arabic.

S1: yeah ... we are all ... *nous avons tous le même problème* (everybody laughing)

What is evident from the extract above is that the priority is given to making pragmatic sense of the interlocutors’ utterances rather than the form of those utterances. This accounts for the fact that no interactant tries to elaborate unnecessarily or give to their interlocutor the possibility of doing so. As soon as one guesses the intended meaning, he takes the floor, even if this means interrupting the second party, thus downplaying the need for elaboration.

Another feature highlighted in the above extract is that interactions in ELF are very collaborative. The two participants show a great deal of solidarity involving adherence to what I will call the ‘assist principle’; that is displaying cooperative and supportive behaviour. The fact that both speakers used the language of the other party- ‘*kif, kif*’ in Arabic, meaning ‘the same’ by the Malian student, and ‘*nous avons tous le meme problème*’ in French by the Algerian speaker- demonstrates this solidarity (see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011).



A look at the above- mentioned features reveals that they are all accommodating and supportive strategies adopted to achieve interactional as well as transactional goals,

I said earlier that what the shift from a product to a process methodology harbours is our interest to focus on ways of enabling our learners to develop a self-directed strategic behaviour that would make them more competent users of English as a lingua franca. Once we know the particularities of ELF interactions, the question then naturally arises, as to which pedagogy is appropriate for the teaching of pragmatics so that breakdowns in ELF interactions are minimised. If language competence and acquisition are thus redefined—from grammar to practice, cognition to social context—we can expect that our pedagogical practices will also change.

4. A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR ELF PEDAGOGICAL PRAGMATICS

Competence in ELF requires of its users both the capacity to understand other varieties and the intelligibility in one's own speech. This flexibility cannot be achieved unless several pragmatic skills /strategies are developed and employed. The following list, though not exhaustive, might provide a starting point for any syllabus designed for the teaching of pragmatics in ELF environments. Some of these skills/strategies can be classified under the heading of what Murray (2012) refers to as “empirically based strategies” (p. 321):

- Inclusion of conversational activities that give students the opportunity to prevent/repair communication breakdowns, show lack of understanding, request clarification and ask for repetition. These repair strategies will compensate for lack in the learners' formal knowledge of the language and help them process language top-down, a less stressful process than bottom-up, as it does not require high levels of linguistic competence.
- Use of videos where instances of ELF interactions are recorded in order to develop observation tasks that allow learners to reflect and comment on them: noticing where and how communication breaks down and suggesting ways to remedy such misunderstanding. Students can then role-play the same conversation in light of observations and comments made.
- Raising of learners' interest in the use of conversational gambits. Typical examples are ‘The main point is’, ‘I have something to add to that’, or ‘What I really said is this’. These allow them to initiate and



topic-shift, develop awareness of how to take the floor and how to open and close conversations. This will help learners avoid instances of transitions in interactions marked by long and frequent pauses that tend to characterise L2 conversations (see Meierkord, 2000).

- Providing opportunities to learners for consideration and guided discussion of the most frequent speech acts in ELF interactions: greeting, apologising, asking for information, along with different routines and formulas in situations characterised by variations in social status, social distance and gender relations between participants. This may involve collecting, analysing and commenting on the data and at the same time enable students to deal with different situations and widen their repertoire of both speech acts and routines.

Most importantly, L2 learners should be taught how to deal with unexpected situations where interlocutors are from different cultural backgrounds with different beliefs and values, sharing no common social grammar. In other words, what is required is the development by ELF users of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that comprise pragmatic competence that allow them to understand and communicate in lingua franca settings with people from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. All this should be done while allowing them to adopt what House (2003, p. 148) refers to as an intersociety; a persona which does not lead to an acculturation process and preserves their individual identities (see Murray, 2012, p. 322).

5. CLASSROOM /MATERIAL APPLICATIONS

I can divide the type of activities that may enable us to achieve these objectives into three main categories:

1. *Activities that enable learners to interpret illocutionary force appropriately according to the context of utterance:* Here, students are taught both how to use paralinguistic features such as intonation and tone of voice to derive force from utterance meaning, and to rely on context. A broad range of classroom activities that can focus learners' attention on issues of intended meaning identification and force of the utterance can be provided. Questions such as the following can be used:

What is it that might influence the function of an utterance?
The question might generate several answers:



- The speaker's attitude and emotional state
- The tone of the speaker's voice
- The physical context in which the utterance is said
- The relationship that exists between the interactants
- What has been said before in conversation.

As such, linguistic and non-linguistic elements that are deemed to be important in assigning a particular force to an utterance are all made evident. The teacher may wish to build on this and provide the students with a chunk of discourse such as: 'The door, please!' said by an authority figure within an institution and who is positioned behind a desk in his office. S/He might then ask the students to identify the different forces that this utterance might have according to the following settings:

The man says this utterance:

- **To one of his acquaintances**
- **To his secretary/ employee**
- **To a stranger**

The next stage involves presenting and commenting upon the reasons, which led the students to assign different particular forces in each setting. The teacher may follow this step by asking his/her students to work in pairs and write brief conversational exchanges, identifying the different illocutionary forces that their utterance may have.

Finally, the students can be asked to reflect on the reasons for their decisions. This will raise their awareness of how their choices were affected by the context of utterance including the status, age, and gender of the participants. The teacher may also take the opportunity to bring to learners' attention the fact that there is not necessarily a one to one relationship between form and function. The three types of mood in English: declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives, though commonly associated with particular functions, are flexible and can be used to serve many discourse functions. Examples, accompanied by the following question, can be used to support this point:

Define the mood and function of the following utterances:

- Will you have a drink?
- Are you crazy?
- The table is still not set.
- I have heard enough.
- Have a safe journey.
- You want to be back by 10 o'clock.



2. *Activities that help learners know how speakers mean more than their words say:* Teachers have to make students aware that utterances can and do convey meaning beyond that contained in the surface form of the words spoken and that context is important to identifying meaning. Multiple Choice Discourse Tasks (MCDTs) where learners are given a series of short dialogues, followed by a range of possible answers to the question ‘What does speaker A/B mean?’ are appropriate in that they can be used with learners from different linguacultural backgrounds. However, it is crucial that the MCDTs should not be fashioned on the native speaker model, but rather reflect ELF interactions. The authenticity of the situations in the MCDTs lies in the very fact that they are drawn from various ELF situational encounters. The teacher may use the short dialogues of MCDTs to bring up other issues related to the features of ELF talks:

- What features can be noticed in the talk?
- What interesting features about language can be highlighted?
- What are the effects that these features might have on the talk?

Once learners consider these questions and discuss the possible features highlighted, they may be aware of the salient communicative strategies that distinguish ELF from other varieties of English. The teacher may focus, at this stage, on those features of greatest potential relevance to his/her students and discuss them in ways that make their significance evident by having them comment on each feature and provide exchanges that see these strategies at work.

3. *Activities that allow learners to select adequate politeness strategies:* Learners have to be made aware of the tactical nature of discourse. The teacher has to identify for his/her class what constitutes the language of politeness; for example, directness and giving options (see Lakoff, p.1973).

This can be achieved by providing them with utterances that have a pool of available options (strategies) ordered according to the degree of directness and along a vertical axis. The following examples might help here:

- Close the door!
- Could you close the door?
- Goodness me, it’s cold in here.

Learners are asked to identify the degree of directness of each utterance and explain the reasons that dictate the choice of one strategy at



the expense of the other. In this case, answers – some of which were suggested by Murray (2012, p. 297)- might be along the following lines:

- The degree (closeness?) of our relationship with the addressee
- The impression that we want to give about ourselves to the interlocutor
- How authoritative we want to be
- The speaker's attitude and emotional state at the time.

These types of responses provide an opportunity to elicit from learners further examples where they consider the tactical nature of discourse and realise by themselves that forthrightness is interpreted as peremptory, uncaring and rude in many contexts and that there are other, more subtle ways of getting to perform an action. Only through conscious awareness of directness and indirectness can learners avoid causing offense.

The second type of task in this category focuses on ways of giving options to the interlocutor. Though negative face is something that people understand intuitively, learners should be made aware that imposition is to be avoided in interactions. They should rather leave free room for manoeuvre to their interlocutors. They have to know how to yield to the power of the listener by leaving the power of decision to him/her. One way of doing this is to ask them to comment on several instances of language use where options are given and not given to the interlocutor, and to reflect on them. Questions like the following can be included under this heading:

- In which situation, do you think the interlocutor feels better?
- Do you think that the speaker sounds polite? Why?
- How would you reformulate the utterance to sound friendlier?

What is important is that learners will be aware that manifesting politeness is a strategic discursive choice imposed by the context of situation more than an act, which has to be adopted according to a particular cultural framework.

Activities of types 1 and 2 have to do with speech acts and aim at developing learners' pragmalinguistic competence. Those of type 3 deal with politeness principles and how we can help learners avoid any potential source of misunderstanding and inappropriate communicative behaviour.

6. CONCLUSION

The emergence of ELF, with its call for a paradigm shift, has provided a new and, in some ways, challenging perspective on the teaching of English. In part, this has been driven by a realisation of the practical relevance of a view of English that recognises the heterogeneous nature of ELF users and their interactions. Indeed, the sociocultural and linguistic multiplicity of these users urges us to consider novel ways of developing one of the most important aspects of language proficiency: pragmatic competence. This should be promoted outside the confines of the NS norms of use through activities that provide learners with the ability to develop pragmatic strategies of the kind I have advocated in this paper with a view to facilitating a convergence of meaning in interactions. What matters most is not the form through which meaning is conveyed, but the ability as a speaker to make the functional intentions of the utterance clear to your interlocutor and their recognition as such by the latter in the absence of a sense of obligation to conform to a native-speaker norm. Correctness and appropriateness are, in fact, of peripheral importance compared to performance – that is, achieving meaning and communicative purpose. As Seidlhofer (2011) states, students “do not need to learn words but, to borrow the title of Austin 1962, ‘how to do things with words’” (p.196).

The use of English in a wide range of institutional settings and domains within the global context necessarily transcends and undermines allegiance to any national culture. If English then is taught to fulfill this objective, we need to fashion a methodology and conform to principles that best serve this objective. This methodology has to start far away from the native speaker and Inner-Circle centered practices that stick to prescriptive forms of usage and norms of use that have always accompanied the instruction of English in second/foreign language contexts and which have demotivated, so many times, our students (see Ranta, 2013, p.42). Taught within this framework, what I will dub ‘strategic pragmatics’ has the potential to fix learners’ navigational problems when in the realm of meaning negotiation, and enable them to use English with more confidence and success.



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**HOLES IN SOLEs: RE-EXAMINING THE ROLE OF EdTECH
AND 'MINIMALLY INVASIVE EDUCATION'
IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

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Abstract

Over the past decades educational technology (EdTech) has made many inroads in foreign language education. Yet the potential its proponents enthusiastically tout is usually at variance with the actual nuanced, complex and compounded social and pedagogical realities. This was potently obvious in the reaction that followed the plenary talk given at last year's annual conference of the International Associations of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language by Professor Sugata Mitra, advocate of 'Schools in the Cloud': 'self-organised learning environments' (SOLEs) where children in small groups cluster around Internet-connected computers to find answers to cross-curricular questions, with the virtual support of volunteer grandmotherly mediators. This paper contributes to the current debate by addressing both the lessons that foreign language pedagogy take away from the lecture and the approach in general, and the crucial reasons why educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders should be cautious in its adoption. While the concept of school learning may have to undergo another overhaul, EdTech and SOLEs are not a silver bullet or panacea for second/foreign language teaching problems.

Keywords: educational technology, EdTech, self-organised learning environment, SOLE, minimally invasive education, hole-in-the-wall experiment, HiWEL, Schools in the Cloud, second/foreign language learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades educational technology (EdTech) has made many inroads in foreign language education. Yet the potential its proponents enthusiastically tout is usually at variance with the actual nuanced, complex and compounded realities (for a critique of the value-laden rhetoric surrounding educational uses of digital technology see Selwyn, 2015). This was potently obvious in the reaction that followed the plenary talk given in Harrogate by Professor Sugata Mitra at last year's annual conference of the International Associations of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). While some listeners gave him a standing ovation, a comparable number refused to budge from their seats (if they had not left halfway through the talk), and in the aftermath the blogosphere and social media exploded with impassioned and vehement commentary. The talk can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/Y3U15-MKHUQ> and the follow-up interview at https://youtu.be/9kxZa_N0e2M

Sugata Mitra is a professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University. He gained fame for what became known as the 'Hole-in-the-Wall' (HiWEL, 'minimally invasive education'¹) experiments. Finding that economically deprived areas suffered from a shortage of good teachers, in 1999 he fitted Internet-connected PC kiosks (much like DIY ATMs), all in English, in Delhi slums and primary school playgrounds in remote rural locations in India and Cambodia, and left them for computer-illiterate children with only a rudimentary understanding of English to play with unsupervised, to apparently remarkable results: soon after, the kids allegedly gained sufficient skills to be able to surf and play games, as well as—in a later experiment—to recite bits of an English text on molecular biology. A follow-up experiment purportedly showed that “groups of [nine year old] children given access to the Internet and left unsupervised will in the period of 9 months reach the same level of competence in computing literacy as the average office secretary in the west.”

1 On a side note, borrowing the term “minimally invasive” from surgery (Mitra & Rana, 2001; Mitra, 2003) is not very accurate, because in surgery a minimally invasive procedure means that the external symptoms are less visible—hence recovery to the previous state is shorter—and *do* involve intervention. While we are at this terminological conundrum, a related nomenclatural problem is Mitra's statement that SOLEs emerge “as order emerges from chaos”: “at the edge of chaos, order emerges out of disorder.” Coming from a physicist, this is a perplexing oversimplification of what chaos and non-equilibrium systems are. In complex systems, emergent phenomena occur at a critical point following a phase transition, preceded by increase in noise and fluctuations, leading to a *measurably qualitatively different*, new state. Current reports of SOLEs do not seem to warrant such an analogy.



In 2013 Sugata Mitra won a \$1 million TED prize to develop his idea of 'Schools in the Cloud': 'self-organised learning environments' (SOLEs) where children in small groups cluster around Internet-connected computers to find answers to cross-curricular questions. They are also virtually 'visited' by volunteer 'grannies' (friendly grandmotherly figures, mainly OAPs with experience in dealing with children and time on their hands) who encourage and video chat with them.

(Language) teachers and decision-makers (ministerial and non-ministerial² departments, education funding agencies, testing agencies, review boards, examinations regulators and boards, advisory bodies, etc.) can certainly find much inspiration in the talk. Here is a subjective list, with points 1, 2, 4–9 and 11 being Mitra's original arguments and 1–3, 5, 7 and 10 (including) my subjective reading thereof:

2. LESSONS TO TAKE AWAY (*cf.* Paradowski 2014, p. 8):

1. Give children credit and do not shy away from big questions; kids are often smarter than we make them out to be.³ A lot of—if not most—learning happens outside the classroom, without pedagogical intervention and in the absence of a teacher.
2. Promote enquiry-based learning: instead of spoon-feeding pupils ready-made answers, pose engaging, provocative (cross-curricular) questions that they will want to answer themselves, and let them try to figure them out on their own first (e.g. with the use of language corpora or treating the web as one). In other words, let them produce, not passively consume (Jake West in a comment on Clark, 2013a). Be a facilitator, not a lecturer; kindle children's natural inquisitiveness and drive for discovery.
3. Allow them to work on and develop knowledge and competence (e.g. linguistic competence) in areas of their interest.
4. A skilful encouraging facilitator may aid her/his students in learning new facts in areas on which s/he is not an expert (but see the notes of caution later on in this text!).
5. Children will read and often comprehend much of materials normally intended for 'more serious' audiences (at least as long as they do not know

² Similar to e.g. UK's Ofqual and Ofsted.

³ It was not once that I heard of children being told by their—e.g. maths—teacher that they could not possibly have solved the exercise on their own because it was too difficult. If it was too difficult, why had the teacher assigned it in the first place?

- the intended readership). Doing so can boost their reading comprehension (indeed, many teaching materials oversimplify content and language).
6. Reward effort and offer positive reinforcement. A little admiration, encouragement and praise can go a long way; it empowers learners, builds confidence and leads to sustained engagement.
 7. School is a place for not only competition, but also collaborative learning (*cf.* Rysavy & Sales, 1991). Children like to share their findings and newly learnt knowledge, which affords them ample opportunities for genuine and meaningful output practice.
 8. Teamwork can be implemented and classroom dynamics invigorated by giving one desktop to 4-5 children, assigning them a task, and asking to report the findings in front of the class.
 9. Make space for the Internet in the syllabus and pedagogy.
 10. Given the natural strategy of solving problems and answering questions using whatever resources are at our disposal rather than relying solely on what is in our heads, consider overhauling some exams to allow access to resources such as the Internet or dictionaries, if the aim of the assessment is to replicate real-life tasks. Taking into consideration the backwash/washback effect which examinations exert, this also means the focus of education should shift from test-taking ('test-teach-test') towards solving real-life (e.g. communicative) problems.⁴
 11. A nifty alternative to the language lab or software in self-assessment of pronunciation skills may be using speech-to-text software (at least if your goal is English⁵ as a *foreign* language rather than English as a *lingua franca*).

Of course, most of this is hardly new or revolutionary. Learning by doing is the normal way for kids to go, and they have been working answers out for themselves out of necessity since the beginnings of humankind, long before anyone envisaged computers. Also, every parent knows that children can figure out how to use new hardware without reading the manual. Inductive, data-driven, discovery, experiential, task- (TBL) or project-based⁶ and self-directed online learning, webquests, Dogme language teaching, and eTwinning have been around for some time, backed by the long tradition

4 Similar to the outcome-based education (OBTL) approach used in most education institutes in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

5 In this paper English is merely used as an example foreign/second language.

6 Where students search for answers and present their findings, with the teacher as a facilitator.



going back to Socrates, Rousseau, Jacotot⁷, Vygotsky and Feuerstein. Mitra merely goes further in minimising adult intervention, plugging in the Internet, and focussing on work in small groups.

Sugata Mitra is a masterful public speaker, unassuming, witty, able to establish rapport and recurrently evoke laughter and applause, spinning his well-scripted vivid narrative in a soft avuncular tone. All this gives power to his message, but some of the bold assertions seem utopian or superficial and may ring alarm bells (while to be fair at the same time some of the following arguments can at once be levelled at the way current organised school education is being conducted).

3. REASONS TO BE CAUTIOUS

3.1 Methodology

Many flaws were pointed out in the original HiWEL research setup, starting with a lack of a baseline and control groups (as Michael Butler observes in a comment on Chong, 2014, it is easy to measure against a failing norm) with material and time held constant and control for other influencing factors. The information on the benchmarks and measurement of the reported incremental increase—in particular of the incidental acquisition of English⁸ (Petrie, 2014)—or whether all the slum kids acquired the skills to the same extent, was scarce as well. Given the symbol grounding problem⁹ (Harnad

⁷ Jean Joseph Jacotot was the creator of the panecastic method of “intellectual emancipation”. He ascertained that he did not need to teach his Flemish students French, as provided with the right conditions they could learn on their own, as well as that teachers could teach things they themselves did not know (*cf.* Rancière 1987).

⁸ We know that computer literacy was measured with a Windows icon recognition test (Mitra *et al.*, 2005), but it is difficult to imagine an analogous measure of assessing linguistic progress.

⁹ The symbol grounding problem, formulated by Harnad (1990), refers to the way expressions get their meaning. If cognition were just a form of computation—symbolic manipulation—the question would immediately arise how these symbols (words) are connected to their referents. Harnad exemplified this conundrum (earlier taken on by Searle in his famous (1980) Chinese room thought experiment) by illustrating the unfeasibility of looking up the meanings of foreign words in a monolingual dictionary of a language one does not understand. (Solving this challenge becomes particularly crucial in embodied cognition, where symbols used by autonomous sensorimotor systems have to be grounded in order to allow interaction with the external objects they refer to; Paradowski 2012.)

1990), it is implausible that the children neither knew no word of the language beforehand nor were offered any external scaffolding or bootstrapping – and indeed, the kids in Delhi had actually found someone with a knowledge of English and IT to show them how to operate the computer (Mitra & Rana, 2001, p. 228), while those in the remaining locations had “a rudimentary understanding” of English (Mitra *et al.*, 2005).

3.2 Comparing the incomparable

Moreover, as Arora (2010b) points out, while the results achieved by the village children were indeed impressive, they had 75 days to engage with the (pre-downloaded) material on just one subject area with no time restrictions, while simultaneously continuing to be taught at school. Even a total amateur can learn a lot in a narrow period of time (as demonstrated in the reality show *Faking it*). It is unlikely that the comparison group at the private school, claimed to have failed to visibly outperform the village kids, spent anything close to that, but within the same timeframe they probably learnt a lot of other material which the village children did not. One also wonders how children’s motivation in one narrow topic can be sustained over such a long period of time.¹⁰ The score of the ‘minimally invasive education’ group was still lower than those of regular school and IT professional course student groups after both 2 and 4 months (Mitra *et al.*, 2005). Mitra also fails to account for the fact that the experimental groups achieved comparable end results with the frequent users group (43.07% vs. 43.73%; *op. cit.*, p. 78). Moreover, throughout all locations there were observed high standard deviations in the experimental groups (p. 79).

3.3 Lasting impact

More crucially, so far none of the experiments seem to have provided data on the *long-term* impact of the intervention. A danger and problem with interpreting much experimental classroom research (not just the HiWEL or SOLEs) is that the results are not necessarily a reflection of the effectiveness of the method or actual improvement in learning, but simply of the novelty effect – the fact that pupils are keen to engage with newness, e.g. due to increased interest in the new technology¹¹ (*cf.* Clark & Sugrue, 1991). Practitioners far and wide happily report the enthusiastic reaction of students –and sometimes positive results, too—as a result of introducing new

10 Also, the children were supposedly able to use a word processor and spreadsheets – it seems rather unlikely that they taught themselves to use a spreadsheet out of their own will and inclination.

11 For instance, the children in the HiWEL locations could and would spend much time on the computer provided, because they probably did not have too many toys, extra-curricular activities, or other distractions...

technology, a cookery class, or the teacher wearing an alligator costume, without realising that in fact they are reporting on the effect of a fad, a welcome but brief distraction whose effects may soon wear off, more than on the actual effect of the intervention were it a systematic one. Professionals who took the trouble to go down to the original HiWEL sites, such as Mark Warschauer (2004), Payal Arora (2005) or Donald Clark (2013a,b) summarised the effects of the project as mainly used for play (games and Paint, with English-only content ineffective), leading to low-level learning, short-lived and not sustainable in the long run (with literal holes glaring in the walls, some within two months from the installation of the hardware), in part due to lack of support from the community upon which it had been imposed without consultation, and where it was deemed irrelevant and distracting by the parents (Warschauer, 2004).

3.4 *Autonomy needs assistance*

Mitra emphasises learner autonomy. Of course, children can and do learn many things despite the teacher, but this does not mean that given the right resources they will educate themselves without schooling. Independent self-directed or ICT-based study rarely happens simply because knowledge is at hand. We want our learners to be autonomous, but children first need to learn *how* to learn on their own. Just as the transmission model is nowhere near the current orthodoxy in foreign language education, so there has been a “major shift *away* from ... unmediated, purely learner-centred models that flourished in the late 20th century and a recognition of the key role played by the teacher in the joint construction of learning opportunities” (Scott Thornbury in a comment on Chong, 2014; *emph. added*¹²). Torn Halves (2013) aptly draws attention to the “clear perception [in child-centred pedagogy] that autonomy [may] only be achieved after a period of heteronomy, with children needing the pedagogic care of their Socratic teachers in order to achieve their full potential”. Published research indicates that children may lack the cognitive skills necessary to render unaided peer-supported enquiry productive (*cf.* Kuhn *et al.*, 2000; Kuhn & Pease, 2006; Dean & Kuhn, 2007). We have not yet “managed to create a world where children can do most things by themselves,” as Mitra would have it. The reason why we do not teach children the same methods of solving problems as we see in corporations is the numerous cognitive, motivational and affective variables that distinguish children from adults (Paradowski, 2007, pp. 247–52).¹³

12 See also Biesta (2013) for a critique of the reductive ‘learnification’ of education.

13 And while it would be easy to propose that pupils exercise responsibility for their learning and wash our hands, at the end of the day it is the teacher who gets evaluated when they do not.

Evaluations of programs such as One Laptop Per Child gave rather paltry results, with some benefits in cognitive skills, but otherwise no evidence of increased maths or language (Cristia *et al.*, 2012). Even in the case of older and more mature learners autonomy does not work with everyone. Not everyone will be an autodidact; learning just of your own accord requires strong motivation, self-discipline, goal management, and numerous other qualities. If it were otherwise, surely many pupils who have regular access to the Internet would have by now educated themselves successfully without or alongside school. But just as libraries with books and encyclopaedias had not brought along autonomous learning and rendered schools redundant, as pointed out by Scott Thornbury (in a comment on Dellar, 2014), the high incompleteness rates on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs, ranging from 86 and 99% in various studies¹⁴; Koller *et al.*, 2013; Perna *et al.*, 2013; Ho *et al.*, 2014, 2015; Jordan, 2014; Reich, 2014) or language-learning software such as Rosetta Stone or Auralog TELL ME MORE (attrition rates by the end of the course at 97.8% and 99.4%, respectively, with nearly 80% of the learners dropping out before completing the first of a 20-week course; Nielson, 2011) are likewise far from promising for the notion of autonomy. Successive waves of technological innovation have so far failed to be a game-changer that would significantly transform education, with empirical research remaining “resolutely equivocal about the ‘learning’ that can actually be said to result from the use of digital technologies” (Selwyn, 2015, p. 3). There may be a chance for a Jamal Malik to once become a ‘Slumdog Millionaire’, but how isolated are such proverbial prodigal paragons of success? How many millions others never get anywhere close?

Moreover, studies of digital technology use in the academic context showed that many of the benefits are in fact more strategic and concerned with the logistics of university study (aiding work organisation and efficient completion of set learning tasks: locating and retrieving books and articles, submitting assignments, working out course requirements and scheduling, accessing lecture content) rather than truly empowering or enlightening learning *per se* (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2015).¹⁵ A quantitative-qualitative experimental study (Gałan, 2015) carried out among 64 students of L₃ French, comparing the effectiveness of education in a virtual space vis-à-vis the traditional approach on developing written competence in a foreign

14 See also Katy Jordan’s interactive visualisation at <http://www.katyjordan.com/MOOCproject.html>

15 The SOLE example video in the plenary showing a ‘granny’ asking the children to repeat a poem after her looks very much like ‘orthodox’ teaching – she is doing a traditional repetition drill; not exactly an innovative 21st-century pedagogy.

language, showed that distance learning via Moodle polarises and is successful only for a specific group of students: while it had a positive effect on students with high levels of autonomy, motivation and engagement in the learning process, those accustomed to a passive assimilation of content achieved worse results. This shows that success in distance learning requires a package of skills, competences and learning strategies sometimes defined as the 'habitus of the virtual classroom' (*ibid.*), i.e. high levels of self-discipline, autonomy, engagement, regularity and conscious time management. The student's efficiency, attitude and motivation were likely also affected by the lower intensity in the virtual environment of the teacher-student relationship, which remains an important element of the foreign language teaching/learning process.

3.5 First things first

Knowledge is incremental and requires competent graduated, contingent and dialogic scaffolding (Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994; Wells 1999). In order to learn new things, we need some core foundations to base them on, before we even *begin* to explore the limits. And then some facts will be established more effectively with direct instruction than with inquiry-, problem- or web-based learning (Hattie, 2008). Jeremy Harmer (2014) observes: "How on earth did Copernicus and Galileo come to their startling conclusions. Did they, perhaps, never go to school and so were spared the brain death?" Only after they already know *something* can you start asking students questions. But to create conditions for balanced, comprehensive,¹⁶ holistic, systematic learning and make it productive, efficient and less frustrating, you need to select good content, pose the right, well thought-out questions, pinpoint gaps requiring further work, and prioritise, structure and organise the process. Google will not do this. Random questions asked in a piecemeal fashion may in the best scenario only lead to fragmentary pieces of scattered knowledge.

3.6 Show me the options

If pupils are left to merely follow their and their peers' naturally narrow interests, they are unlikely to get far (especially if we want to slowly but surely equip them with knowledge and skills they will need if they want to pursue university study). We need to point them in the right direction, show them at least some of the possible paths and crack open the doors, so that they can look beyond their immediate interests.¹⁷

16 By 'comprehensive' I do not mean 'grammar school', and the current system of school education in many countries often still fails to meet these goals.

17 Michelle Sowe (2013) points to one more danger: "in the era of 'personalised search', ... the answers that children are likely to find online are

We can learn much more from people who are more experienced and better educated than from similarly ignorant peers. While teachers are not keepers of all knowledge, they should know enough to gain their students' trust and confidence in their capacity and competence – that is one of the reasons why an effective teacher should typically know much more than s/he teaches. Our own children trust us—parents—and ask us questions because they believe we have the answers; we are an authority for them. A teacher should also be one, and that requires knowledge, not just kindness and good intentions.

3.7 Striking home

The choice of questions matters, and they should be selected in a wise and *relevant* manner. “Seven minutes from a blank screen to the first downloaded game” is hardly a guarantee of tangible real-life progress for a (village) child. Mitra's quadratic equation question in turn might make sense if the kids remembered what it was after time or knew how to solve it. But, importantly, was that knowledge (or the molecular structure of the cell, or “why most men can grow a moustache while most women can't”) practically useful for the children, did it make them better off, help them get out of the slum, get into college, or land a job?¹⁸ The question should be asked, what can the pupils *do* with the knowledge that we want to impart?

Acknowledging that the ‘grannies’ may play a useful role begs the question of whether, rather than ‘beam them in’ from a totally different culture, it would not be more useful for the kids to learn things that are *tangibly usable* and *locally pertinent*. After all, one should consider how realistic the knowledge and life from alien cultures beamed through VR are for the remote children, how likely they are to become part of the lives portrayed. It might be more appropriate to depict more achievable models, and instead of outsourcing grannies recruit local ones (unless, of course, the latter are not available, in which case the proposed solution is much better than nothing). Globalisation does not obviate the need to navigate and function in local communities and realities; that is why the best textbooks are usually written (or at least co-written) by domestic teachers (who, in the case of language teaching, often have to cleverly defy the one-size-fits-all policies of international publishing monoliths).

3.8 The devil in the detail

heavily skewed towards those they've previously found. This tends to limit exploration and amplify confirmation bias, narrowing minds rather than broadening them.”

18 Admittedly, the same criticism could be levelled at much of current school education.



Provision of technology does not stop learning from frequently being mis-directed, incomplete or incorrect (Robin Walker, p.c., 4 June 2015). In Mitra's own words his SOLEs are "like cybercafés for children" with "a supervisor who can't teach anything because he doesn't know anything." In these 'cybercafés' it is enough if the children know how to figure out the solutions; the quality or veracity of the answers themselves do not seem to matter: "Don't evaluate. Admire." Mitra asserts that "the good news is that [the kids] never [end up in wrong places] ... and they invariably come up with right answers" and conclusions. Well, the truth is that they do not – Mitra's very *SOLE Toolkit* (2013) inadvertently exposes the danger, where samples of children's work divulge their gullibility, substantive errors and blatant failures of reasoning (pp. 12f.; cf. Sowe, 2013). Carrying out successful webquests requires extensive prior digital literacy training: the ability to search, to deal with the jungle of infinite content, to critically evaluate and sift through the sources assessing their credibility, reliability and relevance, to distinguish what is reliable from half-truths, the pseudoscientific and the downright erroneous¹⁹, to sort the information and evaluate the arguments encountered, to question assumptions and entertain alternative hypotheses, to make sound inferences and notice logical connections, to make reasoned judgments, to cite sources... (*ibid.*; admittedly, today's school usually does not teach this, either). These critical thinking skills should be developed, because children are going to depend on the Internet more and more, but that acumen requires training, cognitive skills, and prior subject knowledge. As Michelle Sowe (*op. cit.*) cautions, adult facilitators must not simply sit on their hands and admire these answers, as an ignorant volunteer will; they should be able to competently evaluate and question the arguments and hypotheses that the students come up with (as well as step in—or better yet, prevent—when they encounter adult, hate and other undesirable content). We cannot reasonably expect to plug kids to the Internet and turn them into Wolfram Alphas. Just as we do not expect children to learn everything from their own mistakes, but try to prevent some, in the same way we want to teach them other things. While there are several testimonies around the web from *teachers* who have been applying SOLE ideas in their classrooms, reporting children's engagement and improvement in reading and presentation skills²⁰, they are exactly that – carried out under the supervision of knowledgeable instructors. Collaborative learning works best when under the guidance of a teacher (and sometimes in self-study groups of older students, which form fairly rarely anyway). Those

19 Only the other day I was looking at statistics guides interpreting the *F*-test reading, and two of the first five results on Google provided wrong interpretations. It does not take much to fall into communal ignorance.

20 Besides, reading and presentation skills are not the only abilities that children need to master.



who try to draw analogies between Mitra's SOLEs and Plan Ceibal in state primary schools in Uruguay should remember that in the latter context the delivery of EFL classes takes place via videoconferencing with both actual qualified and experienced remote language teachers and local teachers on the spot, who are at once being trained and learning English alongside their pupils.

3.9 Education vs. downloading bits of information

Moreover, is a teacher just a repository of information and transmitter of knowledge? Learning is not simply about 'downloading' information into 'empty vessels' and education is about much more than mere finding and transmission of bits of information. It is the development of literacy (including digital literacy), understanding, reflectiveness, critical thinking and reasoning skills, and the ability to synthesise facts. It also includes fostering study skills and cultural transmission. This is so much more than merely knowing how to copy-and-paste information; children just reading out what they have found online is but an old method given a new medium/guise (Harrison, 2014). As Jeremy Harmer (2014) points out, the role of the teacher means adapting instruction, prompting and encouraging, ensuring students stay on task and helping maintain focus, being a caregiver and counsellor, the ability to predict problems and find solutions as they emerge, helping overcome obstacles (which can be really frustrating for students if they are only left with an 'ignorant' granny), offering personal feedback and guidance, fostering good learning habits, being an authority and a role model, instilling values... you name it – and so much more than a mere facilitator. An amateur supervisor will not manage most of these well, let alone a remote one.

3.10 Seeing the trees for the forest

Mitra concentrates on learning in groups, but education and the teacher should at least in equal measure focus on and benefit the learner. *Each individual learner*, because every learner is different, progresses at a different pace (hence should be offered skilled *individualised* feedback), and in the end it is the individual, not the group, who is usually assessed or applies to enter university or get a job. (By the same token, teachers should praise not only group achievement, but also—if not primarily—individual achievement.) The Internet will not replace quality one-on-one interaction with a live tutor present on the spot, the genuine student-teacher relationship, or the trust that ensues. It is teachers who make a difference and will be remembered, not technology. Also, while collaborative learning can bring benefits, children also need to learn how to learn on their own.

3.11 Cold comfort in collaboration



Groups often mean problems. The HiWEL project benefited mostly the strongest on the street²¹; girls and frailer children were relatively rarely seen on the computers (Arora, 2005; Clark, 2013a), and those who managed to persist—e.g. Amita in Kalikuppam village—had had to spend much time and effort to counter boys' initial prejudice (Mitra & Dangwal, 2010, p. 680). While observations of the HiWEL stations did bring up examples of peer tutoring (Inamdar, 2004), leaving children to themselves typically engenders problems of power and hierarchy: for many children 'peer groups' and playgrounds mean social exclusion, isolation and discrimination (Arora, 2005; Clark, 2013a). This is why supervisors are needed: it is one of their responsibilities to prevent ostracism, stop the more assertive students from monopolising resources, and provide universal access to knowledge.

The problems do not stop once the group has successfully formed. Group work in effect often means that it is easier to get out of working: members will participate to different degrees, typically one or two persons do most the work while others are leaning on their efforts and reaping the benefits (free-riding; cf. e.g. Jones, 1984; Albanese & Van Fleet, 1985; Sheppard, 1993; Stroebe, Diehl & Abakoumkin, 1996; Morris & Hayes, 1997; Moust & Schmidt, 1998), leading to the related 'sucker effect' (Kerr, 1983; Mulvey & Klein, 1998) and problem of social loafing (reduction in motivation and effort; Ringelmann 1913; Latané, Williams & Harkins 1979; Jackson & Harkins 1985; Williams & Karau, 1991; Karau & Williams 1993, 1995; Weldon, Blair, & Huebsch, 2000; Liden, Wayne, Jaworski, & Bennett, 2004; Aggarwal & O'Brien 2008). As a result, it is not always the most effective approach.

3.12 *Omnia mea mecum porto, or knowledge unplugged*

Much of current testing is indeed done in an outdated fashion. Mitra makes a case for examinations involving the Internet and collaboration, arguing that current tests "are preparing [students] for employers who are unfortunately dead". Collaboration and the Internet are undoubtedly useful in a number of jobs, but there are at least an equal number that have to be performed individually and without the distraction. Many of the skills and knowledge sets that Mitra writes off as obsolete are still necessary. More importantly, if our knowledge were contingent on access to the Internet and a 'lifeline', that would lead to a terrible sense of insecurity: What is there is no WiFi? What if my battery goes flat? What when you leave school and no longer have access to the Internet or 'granny cloud'?²²

21 The ratio in the HiWEL experiments was 200 children per computer (Mitra, 2005). Not all have worked on the machines – which is why it was possible to form control groups.



Apart from the feeling of security, knowing things by ourselves endows us with a great sense of satisfaction and gratification. Moreover, some form of knowledge assessment is needed for placement and selection purposes, e.g. to enter university, for the labour market, and other high-stakes scenarios. Silicon Valley companies may hire coders who have dropped out of secondary school as long as they can manage a programming task, but it is not a way to check suitability for every profession (*if* that is to be the sole purpose of education in the first place; there is probably a reason why not all schools are vocational schools). Some degree of standardisation and door-opening language certification (while it should not be in the sole hands of a select few companies) is justifiable as long as the standards are well thought-out, and assessment should not be ditched altogether.

3.13 The language advantage

For both the above reasons we should not dispense with learning foreign languages simply because “maybe machines will translate” (let alone the emotional connection established with another person when we can communicate without a go-between, and the cost, accessibility, and still limited functionality of the available software²³). For all immediately practical benefits there are also the numerous verbal and non-verbal advantages of bilingualism (Paradowski, 2011) that no machine translation will provide.

3.14 Instruction or distraction?

It is only a *myth* “that learning happens not when kids are moved by life offline, but when they go online” (Torn Halves in a comment on Stanley, 2014). The sandbox, playground, street and village green have always been places of unassisted and collaborative discovery learning. Provision of Internet access does not add up to education; to the contrary, in ‘minimally invasive education’ the computer seems to invade and attract central attention (while everything is still planned and monitored by adults), with little genuine interaction going on in the videos, where children seem to focus on the machine more than on one another (Harrison, 2014).

22 On another note, how long will the grannies’ commitment hold out? Teachers are employed long-term; what if the volunteers’ enthusiasm peters out and they vanish, deserting the children?

23 By the same token, arithmetic (without the computer or calculator, which deprived communities do not have ubiquitous access to) comes in handy when you do the shopping, exchange money, or calculate your tax or bank interest rates. Relying on technology alone can lead to such consequential screw-ups as the Excel coding error in the now-infamous Reinhart-Rogoff paper (2010; *cf.* Herndon, Ash & Pollin, 2014), whose incorrect findings were used to bolster now-criticised austerity economics.

3.15 Return on time invested

Given the limited amount of contact time with the pupils at school, our instructional approach ought to be efficient, to facilitate as much learning (both in and after class) as possible. Mitra suggests 25 to 45 minutes per one 'big' question. If so, then—especially as the content of the sessions are to be “a chat about anything at all”—SOLEs seem viable if they *complement* other pedagogical practices and are only part of schooling, in a judiciously blended learning approach, or as extra-curricular activities, for instance a potential daycare or after-hours alternative, but not as the sole (pardon the pun) valid alternative to regular schooling. Children get plenty of time without adult supervision anyway (including, in more and more cases, Internet time).

3.16 Slowly but surely

SOLEs also seem better suited for learning subject content than language. Picking up a few key words in English (for instance to navigate the Internet) does not constitute having developed competence in the language (Chong, 2014). David Deubelbeiss (in a comment to Dellar, 2014) aptly comments that “language is a skill, not a knowledge set.” Hugh Dellar (2014) rightly reminds us that linguistic development takes time, requires vast exposure, graded input, scaffolded communication, reformulation, recycling, and *ample repeated opportunities for practice* (cf. Paradowski, Chen, Cierpich & Jonak, 2012) – all these are best facilitated by an experienced classroom practitioner with linguistic and methodological knowledge, not a search engine or a 'granny' for a couple hours a week (however well-intentioned, that will never replicate proper immersion for naturalistic acquisition).²⁴ Children will not reach high levels of linguistic competence as a by-product of engaging in webquests. The role of the language teacher is further well-articulated by Dellar, who lists instructing, being able to explain and clarify language points, grading input (Google and the Wikipedia will not know what the children already know and what not), encouraging noticing, correcting, flexibly offering personalised feedback on output and progress, being aware of her/his students' modalities and learning styles, etc.

24 The best kind of foreign-language communicative competence that can develop from occasional interactions with random 'grannies' will be pidgin-like, much like for instance the Ahmad 'tea ladies' working in British households and companies in Hong Kong in the 19th c. They could communicate quite fluently with their bosses using Chinese Pidgin English (in many cases picking it up from people of similar background—much like the Indian children in the HiWEL experiments), but that knowledge was fragmentary and limited to certain specific contexts, e.g. day-to-day routine communication about the items in the pantry.

3.17 Everything in moderation

Finally, praise empowers when truly deserved,²⁵ but it should be administered with care. Constant unwarranted and overdone praise (which, true enough, does not happen too often in school education, where the now thankfully only proverbial stick is still used more readily than the carrot) soon deflates and only results in insecurity. Children know well when they did something good, and will treat undeserved praise as insincere. Likewise, “tell[ing pupils] that there are no rules” may not be the best pedagogical approach: children need something they can hold on to to have a sense of security and stability. Also, while we should not underestimate our learners, neither should we overestimate their abilities (by e.g. giving them assignments they may not be able to cope with).

3.18 Digital divide

Educational solutions must be sustainable. Mitra's claims that “computers work the same wherever they are” and “whatever [a computer] can do to children will do it to the same extent wherever it is” fail to recognise that these hinge on logistics and prior digital literacy, and that sometimes computers do not work because they are not. How omnipresent are good computers in rural and remote places? Internet coverage is not available or easily accessible everywhere, either – Jeremy Harmer (2014) cites Sir Tim Berners Lee from March 2014 saying that over 60% of the world's population do *not* have access to the Internet, while the ITU estimates the percentage of individuals using the Internet in 2015 at 43.4% (of which 35.3% in developing countries)²⁶. The set-up requires hardware, infrastructure (fibreoptic cables, broadband Internet, stable and reliable power supply) and regular maintenance (it is not enough to dump a computer and leave it there, as the fate of HiWELs glaringly demonstrated). SOLEs are still limited in their outreach to those who have access to the Internet. The digital age has brought with it new, compounded inequalities, and the provision of EdTech is unlikely to bridge the yawning gaps of class, race, gender or other social disparities, and to be a door-opener in remote deprived rural communities that exist on Rs 80 a day (Clark, 2013b), where digital technology is hard to come by and where more immediate priorities may be water, sanitation, food, medication and other down-to-earth basics. SOLEs can perhaps bring the

25 A fellow professor once recalled how, after the first day of moving to a new (private) school, his son came to him elated to report “You know, the teacher praised me.”

26 ITU (2015) *ICT Facts & Figures – The world in 2015*,
<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2015.pdf>



chance of some learning to wider circles where no other option exists, but often the real problem holding many children back educationally is poverty and deprivation. Parachuting expensive shiny hardware with an Internet connection will in such contexts likely be more a temporary distraction from the real problem than a systemic and sustainable solution (Clark, 2013a).

3.19 Other things not equal

It is hard to believe Mitra's claim that all good teachers in India seem to want to live in Delhi or other big urban centres – after all, there are familial, social and numerous other considerations. It is not difficult to identify teachers who have been doing a fantastic job in deprived areas (or teachers who have been doing less so in metropolitan centres). Mitra fails to consider the myriad other, out-of-school extra-curricular factors that affect school achievement and influence children's scores (Berliner, 2013; Navaratnam, 2014): family support, economic realities, availability of extra-curricular activities, more talented children being sent to 'better' schools (Dellar, 2014), which is why in every classroom different students end up with different grades. If all that students needed was a good teacher – oh, if only it were that simple! The graphs where Mitra plots school results (tests in English, maths and science in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, and GCSEs in NE England) against (geographical or socioeconomic) remoteness (the latter measured in income deprivation, or density of council housing) show an apparent correlation, but firstly, correlation need not imply causation, and secondly, the graphs only show a few *trends* with quite a few visible outliers (e.g. the second highest total score actually coming from a school located 170 km away from Delhi; Mitra, Dangwal & Thadani, 2008), no correlation in Math or English (performance in English was poor in all schools except the first highest-scoring), while in Hindi a school 215 miles away from Delhi scored lower than two 250 miles away. There was also no correlation between pupils' scores and teachers' preference to move to an urban centre, only a general correlation between preference to move and living in a rural (vs. semi-rural) area, and between teacher's preference to move and pupils' results in Hindi and Math, so the claim of Mitra *et al.* that "the students in schools where teachers did not wish to migrate to an urban centre had achieved higher scores in all the subject tests" (2008, p. 177) is simply belied by the authors' own data. The schools in that study also differed in terms of the number of teachers (p. 173), the extent of the execution of the government scheme of freely providing the students with basic facilities such as food, water, books and uniforms, and class attendance (p. 171).

3.20 Teachers ousted by technology?



Some of the negative commentary that followed the plenary (e.g. Stanley, 2014) was fuelled by fears that Mitra might be proposing to do away with well-trained professionals and replace them with Internet-enabled hardware coupled with outsourced retired volunteers, untrained and ignorant but kindly Geordie amateurs. This concern about job security was voiced for instance by Lindsay Clanfield (in a comment to Stanley, 2014): “We as a profession have been struggling against the native-speaker backpackers for more than forty years. Now we need to deal with grannies too.” Now, I will not defend *bad* teachers (let us not be afraid to call a spade a spade; there do exist instructors who should never have been allowed to set foot in the classroom); where they are bad, they had better either go or improve. And SOLE as Mitra envisions it is probably better than nothing to bridge the ‘digital divide’ or wherever teachers are in short supply or reluctant to go, in settings where children would otherwise be denied opportunities for education. But I understand Graham Stanley (2014) when he warns of the danger of the SOLE movement going to places where there is no shortage of good teachers and replacing current pedagogical practices, and—more importantly—how it can become pernicious if evangelist EdTech advocacy is taken up by policymakers, national agencies or other planners and stakeholders to justify reducing public expenditure on education, cutting the number of teachers in schools, and diverting funding (especially when the worth of the global EdTech marketplace has been assessed to exceed \$5 trillion; Selwyn, 2015, p. 5). It is therefore the task and duty of experts to educate not only students, but also governing and advisory bodies, ministries, and other involved influencers.

CONCLUSION

As I see it, while Mitra’s vocal appeal to reform general school education should not go unanswered, technology will not make the teaching profession disappear any time soon, just as House, MD will not be replaced by ‘Doctor Google’. In his 2012 MIT Media Lab talk, Mitra said: “With broadband access to Google, you can pretend to be educated... pretend to be a doctor... might be able to figure out a diagnosis.” The crucial words here—emphasis mine—are ‘pretend’ and ‘might’. Yes, you could *pretend* to be a doctor. And you *might* even Google up your symptoms and with a bit of luck and background knowledge come up with an accurate diagnosis and advice regarding the cure. But that does not *make* you a doctor, and it could be really dangerous to rely on the opinion of an Internet-connected layperson in cases that require professional advice and treatment. So, yes, the concept and realities of school learning should undergo another overhaul—and Sugata Mitra is certainly helping spark off critical debate around current educational practices—but maybe not entirely along the path and to the extent that he suggests. While EdTech can empower learners and redefine the role of the teacher, for



instance by making it less frontal, more interactive and better tailored to individual learners' needs, it is not a silver bullet or a panacea for language teaching problems.²⁷ Technology merely offers yet another set of tools and affordances for enhancing teaching and learning; what makes all the difference is how—and by whom—these tools are employed (Sonia Rocca, p.c., 24 June 2015).

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27 Let alone the fact that computers cannot do a lot of the things that a good teacher can, e.g. rephrasing what a student has said into more appropriate English (Dellar, 2014).



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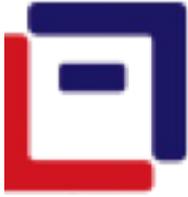
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**FADIA FAQIR'S FICTION: BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND
THREAT**

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Abstract

In this paper particular attention is paid upon the achievements of those Arab women writers in general and Arab British ones in particular, who succeed to resist the boundaries of culture, tradition, and religion and contribute to promote a global spirit among non-Western societies. It is presupposed, then, that the hybrid dimension of these women's texts, whether identity, cultural or language oriented, which is the outcome of binary interactions between former colonizer and colonized, has led necessarily to a new emerging form of colonization. Two questions addressing Fadia Faqir's fiction in particular will be at the core of the debate then: First, how are the literary narratives of Arab British women writers changing the dynamics of the English literary canon? And second, to which extent might this change become threatening?

Keywords: Arab women writers, Fadia Faqir, deterritorialization, Western literary canon

1. INTRODUCTION

The present discussion is an attempt to vindicate Arab women writers' contributions of literature in English and consider their potential inclusion in the English literary canon.

The latter appears drastically reductive, for it is predominantly conducive of purely Eurocentric views and strives to perpetuate old fashioned formulas of the past. (1) In this connexion, introducing classics of English literature to non natives of English language, where installing an acquaintance with the world

of the 'Other' is mostly shaped by falsified stereotypes and misleading images of the West, deserves urgent revision.

Besides, with the advent of post colonial societies, the legitimacy of English literature is constantly questioned, Does literature in English include but texts produced by English people? Or does it refer to all the productions of literature in English language? The ambiguity as raised by the post colonial theorists seems to advise the emergence of a 'third space' (2) where burgeoning writers of literature in English would not suffer problems of categorisation because of their origins.

My discussion will then progress as follows: first, I will introduce the particularity of Arab women writers' productions of literature in English, while highlighting a preference for Arab British ones, namely Fadia Faqir, because of their emerging strength. Second, I will endeavour to prove that these writers' strength lies in their ability to deterritorialize English language, inhabit it with their views, and therefore succeed to invade the literary English canon. Finally, I will attempt to demonstrate how the Arab British writer Fadia Faqir is restoring the image of the Orient in her narratives, notably in *Pillars of Salt* (1996), *My Name is Selma* (2007) and *Willow Trees Don't Weep* (2014).

2. ON ARAB'S WOMEN WRITERS' LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

With the assumption that postcolonial (3) discourse is impregnated with varied cultural flavours, which undeniably contribute to voice one similar malaise: the malaise of the oppressed social groups, multiple identities do melt together against the West. These peoples, who were obliged to refer to greater nations and more knowledgeable societies, became aware of their richness and strove to empower themselves through various means, notably fiction writing. Seen from this perspective, Arab women writers in English could be considered as potential postcolonial discourse agents of change. Be they Americans or British, the impact of their literary productions is seriously altering the preconceived literary agendas of the West.

The arguments I can advance for my particular choice of Arab women writers do engage but my own experience of an Algerian female teacher of literature in English in a university setting where more practical aspects of the language are prioritised at the expense of a genuine literary experience. First, I consider the cultural, religious, and identity affinities of these Arab women writers' texts of paramount importance in the delineation of a politics of postcolonial discourse worthy to be examined acutely in an English foreign



language context. Most of them come from the Middle East and carry a heavy historical burden which incontestably fashions their narratives specifically. Their works are echoing an Arab truth in the midst of the Diaspora (Awad, 2011). Not only are these texts responsible for the deconstruction of Arab stereotypes and all that the West associate with, but they are also at the origin of the emergence of a new space where disparity is strength and not weakness.

Second and most importantly, gender affinities do considerably guide my study of Arab women writings at the detriment of male ones. Not only do Arab women writers outnumber male ones (Awad, 2011) but they do also embody a sensibility towards the female condition which I believe helps them step forward unveiling the authenticity of Arab women experiences to the West. Their allegiance to all that is female oriented and interested in demystifying issues of Arab patriarchy, oppression, and disempowerment makes them the most appropriate marketers of Arab truth(s).

Their heterogeneity, however, is a minus for them. Arab women writers are mainly associated with the U.S., for it is there where the first Arab immigrants settled seeking liberation and self realization. They were far from imagining that despite their deep rooted instalment in the U.S. for more than three generations, they would be still unable to cope appropriately with their hyphenated identities and mixed cultures. The objective, however, is not to undermine the quality of Arab American women writings, rather, the fact to straddle both the East and the West make them stand in the middle ground observing both entities and claiming their belonging to both of them thus dispersing their energy and diverging from the core of the issue which is to build an identity of their own, "Arab American women writers....while aware of the importance of a cross-ethnic alliance, tend to focus on the contradictions within the Arab American community and prioritize this investigation over other themes" (Awad, 2011, p.32). Longing for a "third space" does actually characterise Arab Americans first and for most, since they embarked upon the risk to voice their agonies as Arabs, especially after the 9/11 claiming for independent, homogenous, and more importantly political identity. According to Awad,

...Arab American fiction constantly engages with issues of anti-Arab racism and foregrounds social problems facing Arab American communities such as the concern of parents over the future of their (Americanized) children as the works of Laila Halaby, Diana Abu Djaber, Susan Muaddi Darraj and Randa Jarrar Show.

(2011, p.34)



Hence, I see Arab American women productions endowed with practical aspirations and rather narrow projections responsible for categorising them separately from their counterparts Arab British ones.

Awad, I believe, is to be credited for having highlighted Arab American and Arab British women writers as two distinct groups of writers with different perceptions, yet I find his contention while attributing the major differences to the impact of the geographical distributions, namely the U.S. and U.K., quite conspicuous. Conditions of local settlement, for instance, do actually contribute to instil a spirit of resistance which would guide women writers to use their narratives as vehicles of expression and revolt but not the extent to favour extremist discourses at the expense of cross cultural dialogues. I would argue rather that it is the American politics of assimilation which is first responsible for the unconscious literary entrapment of the Arab American women writings (4), allowing the other major bulk of Arab women writers in the U.K. flourish in a less aggressive context of fiction writing.

In an interview with Moore (2011), Faqir pertinently points out the implications behind being labelled 'ex-patriarch',

I left Jordan because of my father—he wanted me to be someone I was not: a pious Muslim. My father [also] wanted to realise his dreams through us. He sent us to the West to be educated and wanted us to go back and take on his battles. But the process changed us. We chose other ways for ourselves.

(ibid, p.3)

Faqir's works are then filled with a consciousness that the two worlds of the East and the West are hers and need to co-exist:

Because I'm a secular Muslim, I [imaginatively] belong to Granada. How tragic it was for that civilization to disappear [in the fifteenth century], with its open-mindedness, beauty and liberalism [...] Granada, a community of polyglots who represented different ethnicities and religions but developed in peace, is a vision I hold on to in these difficult times. It was a moment in history when colonizers and colonized, travellers and settlers, co-existed and interacted, even within asymmetrical relations of power. Granada is a ripe pomegranate I carry in my suitcase wherever I go.

(ibid, p.4)

Moreover, my choice of Faqir's fiction is stimulated by the rather latent, non-political orientation of her writings. Though exile and immigration are political issues *par excellence*, the characters of Faqir are not



carrying the burden of the whole Arabs on their shoulders. They are ordinary women who strive to give a sense to their lives. They are of no particular education, nor of a great beauty, they are simply leading their sordid life, “The spot light on the white, upper-class and affluent had to be shifted to the black, migrant, underdog to resist the tides of recorded history and give voice ‘to the fringe- dwellers’ of societies and civilizations, to the individual who resist hegemonies” (In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p.74).

As an Arab British writer, Faqir seems to call for the urge to revisit one’s cultural identity which is neither completely Arab nor completely Western. She is among a category of writers who portray characters conscious of their cultural polarity and ones who long to carve a territory for themselves. In addition, most of Faqir’s characters are brought up in their home country and then leave to the West in order to build a new identity where differences reconcile in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding. Thus, by taking hold of English language and distorting its structures, Faqir appears to enable her Arab characters survive and voice their pain far from their native countries.

3. DETERRITORIALIZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In an age of global encounter, Faqir assumes the fragility of English literature to its *monocultural, monolithic, monological, and monotheistic*, (In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p. 77) characteristics which appear to stand forcibly against the massive emerging groups of writers in English language, notably Arab women ones. Conversely, she deliberately puts the emphasis on the dangers for an Arab to be ill represented by the other, whoever this other is, Arab or Westener (European), “a person can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p. 77). The urge to inhabit the language with her Arab sensibility and create fabricated English to subvert a lot of misunderstandings around the Arabs and their genuine cultures seems to be *her* reply to these ill depictions. She reports: “One of the things I wanted to do with Pillars was to push the narrative and the English as far as possible, to Arabize it... to create something similar to what Indian authors have achieved—a hybrid English...as an injection of Arab sensibility” (Moore, 2011, p.7).

With the assumption that at a certain moment any language may achieve a degree of sterility which needs to be overcome so that reality is revealed, Harold Pinter explains that English language is suffering from ‘a disease at its very centre, so that language becomes a permanent masquerade,



a tapestry of lies' (In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p. 76). Similarly, Faqir proceeds to a manipulation of English language in a way which would enable her reveal her reality of Arab woman through it and make both Arabs and non Arabs perceive it. She brilliantly advances:

I am neither an Arab author writing in Arabic, nor a British author writing about little England, nor a British author of Arab origins. I represent a new Arab/British breed if this is possible. I am a cross-cultural, transnational writer par excellence.

(In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p. 77)

Faqir claims herself a 'mongrel' who needs to establish her own rules of writing in English, the ones she would carve for her own views. Bibizadeh (2013) advances that Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'minor literature', whose main argument revolves around its revolutionary potential to 'deterritorialize' the language of the majority, cannot be applied on Faqir's writings. For, Faqir's immigrant status is not that clear, "Faqir occupies the position of both a native and foreign informant, which provides her with insider knowledge of both the Arab world and her adoptive country" (Bibizadeh, 2013, p. 6). Her violation of the language is, on the contrary and to my sense, evidence of the construction of a strong counter hegemonic discourse emerging out of a 'minor literature' which aims at unravelling Arab women mystery,

For the minor writer by contrast [to the major writer], "expression must break forms, mark new ruptures and branchings. A form being broken, reconstruct the content that will necessarily be in rupture with the order of things.

(In Bogue, 2003, p.110).

My contention, however, takes into account Faqir's status of oppressed rather, which I think is responsible for making her deterritorialize English language so that her female protagonists would exult from their empowerment. Besides, the sensitivity of all that's female issue in the Arab world renders Arab women writers bullied by the need to look for a language other than theirs, which would liberate them rather than confirm their oppression (5).

Because of its original Arab setting, less noticeable distortions of language are perceived in *Pillars of Salt* (6). Yet, Faqir cannot prevent herself from showing her Arab sensibility whenever she can. Maha calls Harb her husband: 'twin of my soul', /taw3am rou7i/; an expression much revealing of the amount of love an Arab woman could have for her man. Whereas in *My*

Name is Selma, Faqir's immigrant experience is more mature and more present and much more of Salma's long struggles are vehicled through an *Arabized* English which breaths pain and suffering. Salma exemplifies geographical and cultural displacements which urge her negotiate two different identities and opt for an identity of her own, "...I became neither Salma, nor Sal nor Sally, neither Arab nor English. Puff- like magic I would turn into a white cloud" (p.191), and by large an English of her own, " 'You must go with Miss Asher to England.' 'Hinglaand? Fayn hinglaand?'.... ' *La ma widi hinglaand,*' I said' (p.97). In other instances, she introduces Arabic songs, '*Min il-bab lil shibak rayeh jay warayy*: from the door to the window he follows me. He is always right behind me. Nowhere to hide. If I have a sip, if I spell my tea, if I drop the cake on the plate. *Min il-bab lil shibak*. Stop fucking watching!' Faqir goes further and makes her protagonist insist on obtaining a university qualification under her Arab name, " no, but I want an Arab name" (p.231). For Faqir, both language and name are intricately related and contribute to "assert one's position in English language and literature" (Bibizadeh, 2013, p.7).

In *Willow Trees don't Weep* (2014), Faqir seems to have transcended the worries of any Arab immigrant who seeks integration in the West. Nadjwa, the Arab protagonist from Amman, is ready to undertake a long painful journey through three continents despite the very childish English she has come to recall from her early classes (p.171). Not only does she jot down all the new English words she comes to hear to check them later in the dictionary but she also dares using the very few ones she knows to defend her native tongue and bears no humiliation to the language of her ancestors, "Amani looked me in the eye. *Asfih*: I am sorry.' 'Don't speak Arabic. You're slaughtering my language'" (p.151).

Hence, it is under the premise that Faqir deterritorializes English language that I have built my argument around the acceptance of her works in the West. The examples above are but few instances of distortion that reflect Faqir's willingness to violate the norms of writing and all they entail. According to some critics, however, the reception of the works of Arab women writers into the English canon is the result of their conformity to the Western market's requirements. (Al-Ayoubi, 2006; Mashael, 2013) For Mashael, for instance, texts of literature in English of an Arab origin could be welcomed in the West and not be objects of manipulation only if they succeed to be 'domesticated' to fit Western criteria of acceptance(7) (p.5). Hence, Mashael contributes to undermine Faqir's literary narratives to writings easily marketed and sold because overloaded with spicy issues around Arabs (Mashael, 2013, p.5). In an attempt to support his view, Mashael refers to

Maha's resort to the British fertilizers to cure her orange trees and thus for him Faqir confirms the white man as savior. But, Mashael seems to dismiss that soon after Maha's excitement with the British radio advice, she realizes her unfaithfulness to her Arab origin and corrects herself, " I put the dirty nappies in a container and was about to put in some washing powder. No, I thought, and used gentle Nabulsi soap"(p.151). By making her character make a halt and step back to praise her Arab roots, I think that Faqir is not fitting the concept of domestication as raised by Lefevere. Furthermore, in no way has Faqir claimed her loyalty to her new home Britain, as advanced by Mashael (p.6), on the contrary she keeps on deconstructing the dichotomy West vs. East delineating a space of her own and avoiding subordination to either culture. Salma is proud to reply "I am British of Arab origin." (p.150) to Max, her tailor boss, evidence that despite all the ordeals she has experienced, she is consciously embracing both cultures. Thus, because Faqir strove to appropriate English language and adapt it to her own vision of the truth that her fiction is contributing substantially to alter preconceived images around Arabs in general and Arab women in particular.

4. DEBUNKING THE ORIENT/AL

During the era of Western imperialism, Europeans built false images of non Western people and tried to entice them deeply in the old mentalities. Asians, Africans, and Middle Eastern people were viewed in a variety of ways: dark, erotic, exotic, savage, and uncivilised. The people of these supposedly untamed lands were observed, explored, and exploited by Western imperialists in ways that were most of the time harmful and degrading. Rarely were these people given a voice of their own and rarely were they viewed as autonomous human beings by the pseudo civilised Westerner. More dangerously was women's doubled oppression, who were not only considered second-class citizens in the patriarchal societies in which they lived but they were also fetishized and Orientalized by Western white men travelling in these lands, notably the colonizer,

Arab women are treated as a minority in most Arab countries. They feel invisible, misrepresented and reduced. Perceived as second rate native, they are subjected to a particular kind of internal Orientalism. Native males assume a superior position to women, misrepresent them and in most cases fail to see them. This parallels the Orientalist attitudes with which westerners have treated the Arab World for so long. Arab women are therefore hidden behind a double-layered veil.

(In Nash, 2007, p. 118)



The sexy belly dancer and the mysteriously veiled woman are very loaded stereotypes which seem to accompany Arab women timelessly. There seems to be no urgent need to alter these preconceived images whose main objective appears to demean the Oriental women at the expense of Western ones.

Hence, the role of Arab women writers comes in this sense. They view the implications behind the perpetuation of these stereotypes as threatening the Arab female identity's survival. Fadia Faqir, for instance, seems to feel the urge to revise these Western standards and vent their fallacy. While portraying her female protagonists, she not only does depict them proud of their Arab origin but also entice them claim overtly their uniqueness. Two aspects of Faqir's works are then at the core of the argument: first, rewriting madness and second, subverting sexual oppression.

4. 1. Rewriting madness

It is not to be dismissed that the traumatic experience of any colonial era is deeply embedded in its people's souls. The psychological disorders inflicted on colonized people are most of the time responsible for stigmatising them as lacking mental stability or witnessing emotional weaknesses, "It turns out that the darkness at the heart of the colonial experience maybe a certain history of madness" (Clingman, 1991, p. 23).

In one of her articles, Faqir explains the recurrence of madness as a theme in almost all her writings (8) and attributes it to the influence of a Scottish psychiatrist named R. D. Laing who, "...saw madness as a miscommunication and the feelings of patients as valid descriptions of lived experience rather than mental illness' (In Esherif and Smith, 2013, p. 73). Faqir, thus, perceives insanity differently and considers it as not necessarily women's fault nor lot. Rather she overtly questions the patriarchal system where both the colonizer and the Arab men have acted cunningly towards each other and towards women particularly in an attempt to legitimize their respective weaknesses (9). Faqir seems to join Foucault's theorization on madness when he advances that, "... Defining the insane is undertaken by individuals, who in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbours, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non madness" (Foucault, 1988, p. ix). Faqir rewrites madness and refuses her female characters to abide by the clinging image associated with Arab women. She simply refuses to see madness as a means to depict the difference of Arabs in an exotic way and thus highlights their inferiority. She rather re-appropriates a conception of it that can be read symbolically challenging the limitations of rationality, hierarchy, authority and the socially acceptable. She seems to corroborate Foucault's desire to understand madness not as an



alternative to logic or reason, but as a methodology to review the definition of both. In *Pillars of Salt*, for instance, Maha's tragic end may not satisfy the expectations set for a protagonist who fought to empower herself and challenged a lot of societal obstacles. Maha is taken by force to Fuhais mental hospital after having renounced the orchard and her son Mubarek. Her insanity (10), according to Daffash, is the sole responsible for her disobedience and disparity (Faqir, 1996, p. 232).

Conversely, Maha sees insanity in Daffash, Samir Pacha, the English and even Cheikh Talib. She rather sacrifices her property, and dear son for her dignity and honour. In a self- confident state of mind she refuses to escape when obliged to marry Cheikh Talib, "But I don't want to run away" (p. 219), and instead addresses Daffash in front all the men and the women of the tribe and declares: "First, I don't talk to rapists. Second, I don't talk to disobedient sons. Third, I don't talk to servants of the English" (p. 233). She has thus proved her power by resisting to the disempowerment of Daffash, who supported by the religious words of Imam Rajab towards sinful women, replies accusingly, "This spider is not praying for the soul of Muhamad" (ibid). By sending Maha to the mental hospital, Faqir vows to restore Arab female dignity and shatter the false Westernised conception of madness.

In *My Name is Selma*, insanity is not related to the colonizer, it is rather man made. Noura, one of the female characters whom Selma meets at prison, recounts her painful experience with her husband, to whom she bore five sons. After he finds her 'disgusting', he prefers a younger slimmer and more attractive woman to her. Noura realizes her indignation and resorts to unsociable acts; she walks naked around the storehouse, but instead of being charged for insanity, she is accused of prostitution (Faqir, 2007, pp.180-2). Once more, Faqir seems to resort to a manipulation of insanity so that the insane people are the ones outside asylums; men and not the ones thought of; women.

4. 2. Subverting the image of the sexually oppressed

In Arab culture in general and Bedouin culture in particular, family values are glorified and placed on the top of a long list of exigencies especially towards the Arab woman. Women are seen then as the first responsible for preserving the family heritage and maintaining its integrity by keeping safe from any sexual abuse which would stigmatize them as not deserving the right to life (11) and being persecuted for the rest of their cursed lives (12):

[t]he more women are able to deny their sexuality, the more honourable they are [...] The modest woman admits no interest in men, and makes no attempt



to attract them through behaviour or dress, and covers up any indicator of a sexual or romantic attachment (even in her marriage). The woman who does not is called a 'slut' (qhaba) or a 'whore' (sharmuta).

(Abu-Lughod, 1989, pp.145-6)

While chastity for Arab women is one of the dictates of their patriarchal societies, my contention is not to debate its legitimacy; rather I aim at dismantling its one-sided misinterpretation by men.

Faqir invades the taboo world of sexuality in the Arab societies (13) and chooses to portray the way her female characters have been ill conditioned and ill socialised to believe that they need not celebrate their love the way they feel it. In *Pillar of Salt*, Maha is torn between what her mother instructed her about men and her desire to surrender to the love of her husband; Harb, "...I swam closer to my husband, stood up, then kissed his forehead. I would not listen to old advice. My body burst with heat and life. No, I would not follow my mother's advice. Forgive me mother" (p.58). Likewise, Salma, the protagonist of *My Name is Selma*, recounts the pleasures of her illicit meetings with Hamdan, "IN DARKNESS OR AT DAWN KEEP YOUR PETALS TIGHT SHUT and legs closed! But like a reckless flower opening up to the sun I received Hamdan....'Yes, yes, yes,' I used to say....From then on I lay under the fig tree waiting for him most nights" (p.36). In her last novel, *Willow Trees Don't Weep* (2014), Nadjwa too is constantly haunted by her mother's and grandmother's warnings about predatory men. Yet, once far from Amman, Nadjwa shows little effort to resist Andy, the British stranger she met in the plane. When he proposes accommodation, Nadjwa succumbs easily to his love invitation, "As he turned to face me, his eyes appeared sunken, his cheeks hollow and his jaw darkened by the unshaven stubble. I wanted to say, 'I'd better not.' I knew I should turn away, pack and leave, but I stayed put" (p.207). Hence, though Faqir's female protagonists are conscious of transgressing the laws of morals and society, they take on the risk to enjoy their love on the spur of the moment living an experience of their own and showing active involvement in their sexuality, thought for a long time man's resource. Through their daring attitudes, Maha, Salma, and Nadjwa are provoking deep ingrained beliefs about the sexually docile Arab women (Bibizadeh, 2013, p.8). These Arab women are actively engaged in their sexual choices therefore they are no more passive/slave creatures manipulated by their masters/ husbands/lovers; rather they seem to conjure an Arab sexual identity unknown in the West.

5. CONCLUSION

In the light of the analysis undertaken on the three novels by Fadia Faqir, namely *Pillars of Salt*, *My Name is Selma* and *Willow Trees Don't Weep*, I see in Faqir's distortion of English language promising attempts of change of Western literary conception. Literature in English is then becoming a shared space where cultural differences are contributing to raise a global spirit and deconstruct the one-sided Western profile the English literary canon used to have. Not only has Faqir made her Arab characters take total hold of a language that is not theirs, but she has also enabled them defy a different world they have come to know because obliged to. All of Maha, Selma, and Nadjwa are ready to impose their view of the world: an Arab view, to the world around them without aiming at shocking or shaking the deep ingrained mentalities. They are embracing a new world where differences melt to become stronger and as such they are renouncing neither their identity nor that of their host countries. Making compromise, negotiating space and feeling proud of their Arab identity appear to be the guiding principles Faqir's characters adopt in their lives.

NOTES

1. Samuel Weber (1987) argues that the English literary canon is fashioned by the 'logic of that culture,' in other words he seems to refer to the set of arbitrary temporal dimensions which dictate the canonization process as the spirit, the ideology and the poetics of a defined period of time (p.25).
2. Bhabha advances: "The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation [...] challenges our sense of historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People [...] It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37).
3. I am deliberately using two different spellings, namely *postcolonialism* and *post-colonialism* to refer to two distinct theoretical concepts which relate the bulk of emerging literatures out of former colonized countries.



4. Although the three waves of Arab immigrants shared different perceptions of their settlement in the U.S., they on the other hand joined together to voice their Arab unique identity, “imbued with anti-colonial sentiment and Arab nationalist ideas, this new group [the third wave generation] was highly politicized. For the first time, Arab American organizations were formed to defend the Arab point view and to combat negative stereotypes of Arab in the popular press. Newly sensitized to their ethnic identity by worldwide political events, the descendants of first- and second-wave immigrants joined their newly arrived countrymen in support of Arab concerns” (In Ferriera de Sena, 2011, pp. 3-4).
5. A similar phenomenon has characterised the Maghrebi countries, namely Algeria. When it came to unveil the women issue, writers like Assia Djebbar, Malika Mokkedem, Nina Bouraoui and others have deterritorialized French language, the ‘enemy’s language’ so that they could voice their version of the truth.
6. Faqir reports: “All my work pre-2005 was set in Arab countries, albeit fictitious, and reflected an Arab sensibility” (In Elsherif & Smith, 2013, p.74).
7. The criteria for accepting a foreign text are three according to Lefevere: “1- the need, or rather needs, of the audience, or rather audiences...2- the patron or initiator of the translation, and 3- the relative prestige of the source and target cultures and their foreign languages⁷” (Lefevere, 1988, p.44).
8. Actually, the most noticeable depictions of madness in Faqir’s writings appear mainly in her novel *Pillars of Salt* (1996) and her short story *The Cypress Tree*, where the setting is sharply shaped by the presence of the British colonizer and the traumatic experience of the latter on the local people, notably women.
9. In *Pillars of Salt* (1996), Maha feels she is born to fight. She is thirsty for empowerment. Her determination to oppose the ill treatment of her brother Daffash appears in a striving attempt to resist the inflicted sense of disempowerment he aims at exercising on her endlessly. Not only has she to stand against Daffash but also against the colonizer, whom she believes is responsible for her brother’s sense of being. Sinclair (2012) explains the oppression of Daffash as a way of *preventing his own victimisation* (p.12) and also as a means to *cure his feeling of insignificance*. (p.13) Actually, Maha *self-significance*, to use Sinclair’s terminology, is only given sense when she decides to defy both oppressors namely Daffash and the colonizer.
10. See Luangphinit (2004) for more information on insanity and colonialism.

11. Actually, crime honour, where women are killed because having transgressed the laws of family dignity, is at the core of *My Name is Salma* by Faqir. But since my focus in this section falls on how the Arab woman holds an active role in the control of her sexuality I will not analyse it extensively.
12. After having been raped by Daffash, Nasra, the shepherdess in *Pillars of Salt* is a 'nothing'. The narrator reports: "My friend has lost her virginity, her honour, her life. She was nothing now. No longer a virgin, absolutely nothing. A piece of flesh. A cheap whore. Nasra mumbled away to herself and sobbed. Daggers in my heart." (Faqir, 1996, p.12)
13. Faqir extends her female protagonists' disobedience to old advice from Hamia in Transjordan to Hima in the Levant to Amman in Jordan to include Arab society in general.

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**IN THE WORLD OF ELF: STRUGGLING FOR A NEW
UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH IN POST-COMMUNIST
POLAND**

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Abstract

The role of the English language in post-1989 Poland has been inseparably intertwined with the issues of politics, ideology and identity. Although the initial infatuation with the Anglo-world of freedom and consumer paradise is clearly understandable, the stubborn and emotional refusal to problematise the changing nature of a global language seems to be doing more harm than good to the learners, largely condemned to failure in their struggle for native speaker ideal. The growing role of English in Poland should be seen against largely uninformed language policy, identity problems and national complexes, The practical value of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) will be contrasted with the domination of the British model.

Keywords: English, Poland, ELF, lingua franca, linguistic imperialism, teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

The newly-gained freedom of the Polish people after the final victory of the Solidarity movement¹ and collapse of the communist government in 1989 opened the door widely to the long-awaited Western influences. The Iron Curtain, that divided Europe after the Second World War into communist and capitalist spheres, was finally lifted. The symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall, which actually followed the successful overthrow of communism in Poland, allowed the citizens of eastern Europe, tired with the drab and fearful existence under the despised regime, to welcome and embrace numerous symbols of western freedom and imagined affluence. The English language quickly became one of the most desirable commodities in the post 1989 democracy.

As a symbolic attribute of the oppressor, the Russian language was soon ousted from the education system and left the country together with the Russian army. For Poles, in over forty years after the 1945 Yalta agreements (which put Poland into the sphere of Russian domination) both Russian and English language had accumulated the emotional baggage of hopes and frustrations. The symbolic power of English led to the development of attitudes which did not have much to do with linguistic characteristics, but it is those linguistic aspects that were soon commodified (accents, certification). Language policy, though seemingly uninformed, created a very specific context for the constant spread of English and changes in the national education system. And although in the twenty-five years of post-1989 democracy in Poland the society has gone through many radical changes, the position of the English language seems resistant to new developments and, most importantly, to the changing role of English in our globalizing world. The reasons are numerous, rooted in history, politics, education policies or social issues.

1 „Solidarity” was the name of Polish independent trade unions, headed by Lech Wałęsa (later Nobel Peace Prize Winner), called to life after the national wave of strikes in 1980. Much more than the trade union formation, it became the movement for freedom and democracy in post-war Poland. With roots in the workers’ unrest, Solidarity became a nationwide opposition drawing from all segments of society, reaching 10 million (almost half of Poland’s adult population) members. The communist government trying to stem out the ideas of the movement imposed martial law in the country in 1981, but was not successful in defeating the spirit of freedom. The ‘round table’ talks between the government and Solidarity led to the first semi-free elections. The new coalition government was formed and Lech Wałęsa was elected the President.



2. THE POWER OF ENGLISH

The end of the Soviet domination in eastern and central Europe and, a couple of years later, the European Union enlargement were accompanied by the growing popularity of English. For Robert McCrum, this was a natural consequence of a democratic tilt:

And within the borders defined by the watchtowers of the now defunct “Iron Curtain”, in the territory once occupied by the Soviet Union, there were newly invigorated societies like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in which English was becoming the natural expression of the would-be European. The later enlargement of the European Union in 2005 was a triumph for the European ideal, but it would also turn out to presage a decisive victory for the language that remained contagious, adaptable, populist and subversive.

(McCrum, 2011, P.213)

The dominant attitudes to English in Poland were shaped by the country’s historical experience. The post-war Poland, thrown from the horrors of World War II into the terror and fear of communist regime, in its long battle for freedom largely idealized life behind the Iron Curtain. Without much chance for real life confrontation due to the communist authorities tough restrictions on any exposure to the ‘corrupted western influence’,

Poles tended to mythologize the prosperity and affluence of the Western world, despite the communist propaganda of the day, and envied their citizens accessibility to a wide variety of products—both everyday and luxurious ones.

(Przygoński, 2012, P. 80)

The obligatory learning of Russian in schools was usually treated as an element of oppressive propaganda and resisted accordingly. In 1985, Dr Dennis Muchisky in his report on language learning in Poland still observed:

For many Poles learning English was a manifestation of disloyalty and resistance to the Soviet Union as well as an expression of goodwill towards and identification with the West and the Western culture.

(Muchisky, 1985, pp. 3- 4)

Komorowska’s insider’s experience provoked her comment in the study of the Teacher Training Colleges project in Poland that before 1989 Russian was “taught as a political message of dependence, rather than an instrument of communication” (Komorowska 2012: 147).



With the newly-won freedom, Poles enthusiastically turned to everything that for so long had been kept away from them, everything that had the aura of freedom and abundance so harshly contrasted with the rigidity of their strictly controlled life. In his analysis of the sociolinguistics of English in Poland, Przygoński (2012) emphasises the “post-communist fixation on everything that is Western (and especially of English or American origin)” (80). This ‘fixation’ included a specific perception of the language which became an emblem of anti-communist ideology, was an expression of ‘western spirit’. English held the magical power of liberating ‘the captive mind’² Not surprisingly then the dream of achieving the native-like competence in the language was a chance for imagined inclusion in the western world. And although in the early post 1989 years the practical value of competence in English was rather marginal (except for the new insatiable demand for English teaching), the dream of native-like mastery of the language was many learners’ ambition. The instrumental motivation was still lying dormant but the prospect of hiding one’s identity behind the facade of modernity and affluence was very enticing; the integrative motivation, however unconscious, hold a powerful appeal.

The largely desirable influence of the west touched many aspects of life; Polish linguists discussing Polish vocabulary in the period of post 1989 changes during the 1999 conference in Kazimierz Dolny emphasised the cultural effects. In her study of the changing vocabulary of Polish youth, Rzeszutek states:

[t]he collapse of the centralised economy, political pluralism, changes in the legal system together with the opening of Poland to the influence of western Europe and America profoundly reshaped the nature of Polish culture and redefined the traditional values of Poles.

(Rzeszutek, 2000, p. 171; quoted and transl. by Przygoński, 2012, p.239)

The growing numbers of learners of English in the reborn Poland, at first in all sorts of private language schools, courses or individual private classes, were making a kind of political statement. The possible practical return on the investment was expected in the near future.

² „The Captive Mind” is the title of a 1953 internationally acclaimed book by Czesław Miłosz (Polish Nobel Laureate) banned in Poland by the official propaganda but successfully circulated underground; the book exposes the terrifying machinery of communist oppression.

„...many Poles saw learning English as a means of **expressing allegiance to the West and resistance to Soviet influence**, and that learning English also meant access to high-prestige or well-paying jobs.

(Reichelt, 2005, emphasis mine)

The somehow naive belief in the missionary drive of western democracies seem to have made Polish educators largely blind to political or economic interests at play (in spite of the fact that Poland had already had, in its troublesome history, a significant experience of ‘lost expectations’ in contacts with its ‘western allies’). When Phillipson exposed the mechanisms of ‘linguistic imperialism’ in his 1992 publication, he did not attract much attention among Polish language professionals, who would sooner classify the ideas as conspiracy theory than give them much thought.

After the political changes of 1989, Western states, as ‘guardians of human rights’, were ready to assert their influences. Among other elements, English was promoted as a panacea for the ills of Eastern Europe. Its constantly increasing presence in Poland was on a number of occasions wrapped up in a mantle of humanism. Various groups of ‘linguistic missionaries’ appeared, ready to share their knowledge of English (unfortunately, often without much linguistic knowledge, pedagogical qualifications, experience or talents). They were, among others, Peace Corps, Voluntary Service Overseas volunteers or individuals ready to avail themselves of their ‘native speaker’ potential, so much in demand across new European democracies (Gonerko-Frej, 2011, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). The British Council, founded in 1934 to secure the position of English abroad and the link between English language and culture, played a crucial role in the development of ELT business in Poland. With their generous funding of language courses, Teacher Training Colleges, libraries or in-service teacher training, they enabled the unprecedented spread of English. This was often done in the name of democratic values; e.g. the British Studies college courses supported by the British Council (staff, materials, training) were at some stage re-named as ‘Education for Democracy’. With the British Council support, new educational institutions, Teacher Training Colleges, were established to change the foreign language scene in Poland.

With 18,000 Russian teachers and only 2,400 teachers of English and German, Poland quickly had to train around 20,000 teachers of Western languages, mostly English—an impossible task for the very few language departments offering five-year theoretical courses at universities.

(Komorowska, 2012, p.147)



The names of the colleges included the phrase ‘foreign languages’ but practically, in most cases, ‘foreign’ meant English.

Although the original plan was to open 30 colleges, pressure from local communities and their guarantee of premises and staff led to the opening of 50 colleges with 1,500 places for students of English (41 language programmes in total in the colleges), 400 for students of French (19 language programmes), and 450 for students of German (13 language programmes)

(Komorowska, 2012, p.148)

Describing the history of Teacher Training Colleges in Poland, Komorowska refers to their apparent democratic mission:

A new national project, (part of the 1990 reform) aimed to establish a dense network of three-year colleges which would, in a relatively short time, offer teaching qualifications to secondary school students with intermediate language skills. The training programme focused on language proficiency, teaching skills, and skills that would enable students to function as **agents of change in the process of democratising Polish education.**”

(Komorowska, 2012, p.147; emphasis mine).

Apart from their involvement in teacher training colleges, the British Council came up with other programmes, through which Polish teachers were assisted in learning about British models;

A special programme, PRINCE (Projects in Controlled Environments), was also setup by the British Council to help link Polish colleges with British universities so that they could benefit from British curriculum construction expertise.

(Komorowska, 2012, p. 149)

Another link secured by the British Council was the certification of English; through some agreements with the Polish Ministry of Education the University of Cambridge language exams organized by the British Council became the recognized qualifications in the country, replacing the earlier national English language exams. It is enough to check the British Council webpage to learn about their financial interests:

- We support the UK’s English language teaching sector, worth £2 billion annually by promoting the UK as a leading destination for English language learners.
- Our examinations work generates £70 million in earnings each year for UK examination boards.

- In 2012-2013, the British Council's turnover was £781 million, with only £171.5 million Foreign Office grant funding. For every £1 of Foreign Office grant we generated over £3.56 of income from other sources.

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/facts/programmes-and-initiatives/english-and-examinations>

Not surprisingly, for the British Council the 'global profile' of the language mentioned in their 'English and examinations' set of facts, has clear connotations:

- We deliver English lessons in 82 teaching centres and partner premises in nearly 50 countries, reinforcing **the UK's position as the home of the English language**.
- The UK's internationally recognised qualifications open doors to opportunities in education, work and mobility for millions of people each year, **promoting the use of UK qualifications as a global benchmark**.
- Through our English classes and examinations we share the **culture of the UK** – our literature, drama and film and television.
- Research shows that people who take English classes or sit examinations with us develop significantly greater **trust in the UK** and its people. (emphasis mine)

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/facts/programmes-and-initiatives/english-and-examinations>

The "British Council Corporate Plan 2014-2016 informs:

- we promote the UK as a leading destination for English language learners (a market worth **£2 billion annually**) (p.19, emphasis mine)
- Our research shows that people around the world who learn English, earn British qualifications, and experience UK culture have more trust in the UK. That trust attracts talented people to the UK and increases study, tourism and trade, bringing **tangible economic and social value** to the UK.(p.3, emphasis mine)

Understandably, in spite of the changing role of English in a globalizing world, the British Council declares to persist in promoting "the **UK as the best English language learning destination** to support UK-based English language providers to enrol hundreds of thousands of English language students each year."(p.9, emphasis original). It confirms its role "to help the UK rise to the global demand and need for UK-backed English teaching, arts, culture, qualifications, learning opportunities, knowledge and ideas." (p.6)



The strategy clearly is to “Enhance the **UK’s reputation as a world leader** in cultural relations, cultural diplomacy and soft power” (p.8, emphasis original).

I have tried to obtain some information from the British Council about their involvement in ELT in Poland after 1989; in May 2013 I made an official enquiry, asking for some figures or comparison with the other countries. A couple of weeks later, I received a reply about “handling my request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000” (Case Reference: IKM/FOI/2013/48). Unfortunately, I was informed that “following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is not held by the British Council”. I only managed to receive “some details from conversations with British Council staff”; containing the following information from the Freedom of Information Officer:

Since 1989 our English Language Resource Centre, later called English Studies Resource Centre, achieved the following;

- English teachers, from all over Poland, came to Warsaw to borrow ELT materials.
- British Council cooperated with English Departments by offering free subscription to English press and periodicals.
- Some of the Higher Education institutions in Poland had English Language Centres (ELC), which received ELT materials from British Council free of charge. Each centre was managed by a BC nominated person / UK expert.
- British Council and Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli w Warszawie ran free summer residential ELT courses in Sulejówek.
- In the early 1990s private English schools began operating in Poland. Soon after representatives of UK ELT publishers came to Poland and UK ELT materials were available on the Polish market. British Council cooperated with the UK ELT publishers and bought UK ELT materials locally.
- British Libraries received more ELT materials.
- Teachers could borrow original feature films from the British Council video collection.
- British Council helped to create Kolegia Nauczycielskie, which is a teacher training college founded in 1990.
- Cooperation with IATEFL Poland.
- In 1996 English Studies Resource Centre was closed, the stock became part of the main library and ELT teachers received special privileges in the main library (they could borrow more materials and for longer.

- British Council sent out thousands of copies of the monthly magazine LONDON CALLING, which included information on BBC radio programmes.

(Keogh, 2013)

With the above-mentioned facts, the famous Spolsky's question "Was or did English spread?" (Spolsky, 2004) acquires a rigorous meaning. The awareness of the British interests is important in contemporary problematising of the English language. English as a lingua franca (ELF) of the modern world does not need to proselytize the British way of life; its global role requires global anchoring.

3. COMMODIFYING ENGLISH: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE *RIGHT*

In post-1989 Poland, English became a largely desirable commodity. However, it soon became clear that only some specific accents, exams, teaching materials, teacher/staff training courses were commodified, as a result of the involvement of institutions like the British Council, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, or foreign publishers (OUP, Longman, Macmillan). It is not 'just' English that was so much in demand;

The commodification of Received Pronunciation and General American accent models of English: universal reliance on native speaker norms and frequent dependence on (or preference for) their original teaching materials (which promote almost invariably RP and GA) ensure that these models enjoy the greatest prestige, are ascribed the highest Q-value and, accordingly, become commodified.

(Przygoński, 2012, pp. 273-4)

Consequently, the preferences of the students of English were clear. The globalization of English, its communicative potential in the international business have found no reflection in the attitudes to accents, which had sunk deep in the hearts of professionals. Practicalities seem to have been of little concern here. Janicka and Przygoński (2005) researching accent preferences of the students of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (the biggest English department in Poland; presently—the Faculty of English) found that „emotional and aesthetic criteria were listed as absolute priorities” (Janicka, 2005, p. 254). “Achieving a native-like accent is extremely high on the respondents' priority list (nearly all the subjects claimed to aspire to a near-native accent)” (Janicka et al., 2005:258). The attitudes must have been largely stimulated by the teachers: “Students opting for RP felt, in fact, some



social pressure to learn this accent”. (Przygonski, 2012, p.217). That pressure, still largely present in the ELT business in Poland, causes a lot of stress among learners, burdened with unrealistic task, unachievable goals. The struggle towards native accent is often accompanied by frustration and feeling of failure. With English as a supranational lingua franca, are such disempowering emotions justified?

The reform of 1990 in Poland authorised a free choice of teaching materials. For over two decades now, the great majority of Polish teachers have selected coursebooks published by major British publishers (I discuss the problem elsewhere: Gonerko-Frej, 2011, 2014b). In 1994, Leszek Szkutnik (one of the most prolific authors of language coursebooks in Poland for several decades, well-known for his innovative materials) commented on the inappropriateness of those products, their lack of validity in the Polish context:

All course books of the renown publishers (western!) at the elementary level start with introductions. Trying to catch up with the West, we do the same - bravely, forgetting a certain minor fact: our classes slightly differ from multinational groups in London or Oxford. Why does Janek Kowalski announce to his colleague, Zbyszek Wiśniewski, that his name is Janek Kowalski, and Zbyszek answers back with his name (unless an English teacher asked him to pretend he is John Brown!) And then what- hotel, airport, restaurant, shopping, discussing family.. Why does Janek ask Zbyszek if Mr Smith has two sons? Does he care? Not at all! He wants to get a good grade in English.

(Szkutnik, 1994, p. 393)

For Szkutnik, the texts included in the materials for Polish students may be “realistic but they are not real”. Additionally, Szkutnik criticizes the fact that they inspire no reflection, are no food for thought and provoke no emotion. This local criticism of foreign materials is still important today, though the contents have changed (see Gonerko-Frej, 2013, 2014b).

4. PEACEKEEPING ENGLISH?

The English language and its teaching became an important element of post-1989 developments in Poland, not only in the sphere of education. After a couple of years, ‘cultural diplomacy’ was extended to cover ‘defence diplomacy’, The Peacekeeping English in Poland (PEP) project, started in 1996, was “funded by the British Government originally in order to meet the perceived English language needs of the militaries of the NATO accession



states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)” (Crossey, 2012, p. 93). As Poland was preparing to join the most important European military pact, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in 1997, the time had come to take care of the future communication problems. The British Council came to the scene again as the managing body of the PEP Poland project, with their expertise in English language teaching. But although the declared aim of the project was linguistic competence, other goals were also clearly verbalized; “ensuring that the militaries of those states (...) move away from the Soviet-style counter insurgency model to a lighter defence structure.” (Crossey, 2012, p. 92).

Initially planned for three to four years, the project took much longer to be completed—it came to a close after ten years, in 2006. Mark Crossey, the project manager, reflecting on the experience, commented how “ELT had become a potent political tool in shaping the future of the Polish forces.”(Crossey, 2012, p. 96) His list of conclusive remarks refers to the political character of the project rather than its linguistic aims:

- ▶ First and foremost, a project scoped without significant buy-in from local stakeholders on the development of its goals and input (or with buy-in from the ‘wrong’ local stakeholders) will be seen as **having a political provenance** which will, in turn, impact on project outcomes, however effective the project may be in terms of content.
- ▶ Secondly, overall central programme management needs to be sufficiently resourced in order for individual country projects to remain on track and **avoid becoming to a larger degree the creation of the local context.**
- ▶ With regard to programme funding channels, projects dependent entirely on politically low-priority funding pots which are decided on an annual basis cannot develop an effective or credible project plan and will experience a **highly political character** to their activities and presence.
- ▶ Conversely, **the significant political weight of a foreign intervention such as the PEP** (offering a high-demand end product), when managed with sensitivity, can ease implementation of project objectives in difficult and traumatic change contexts, as well as bring significant multiplication effects throughout large national training structures.

(Crossey, 2012, p.97)

The PEP Project is just another example how the apparent assistance in language learning gains some political undertones, how the international appeal of English is lost in the process of rooting it in one particular culture.



5. WESTERNISING POLAND

In 1993, CBOS, Polish Public Opinion Research Centre (one of the most renowned public opinion research institutes in Poland, founded in 1982) published a report “Opinions about Poland becoming like the West”. The title evidently suggests the growing concern for ‘westernization’ of the country in the new political situation. The report opens with a statement that Poland can no longer be referred to as an isolated country since every second citizen admitted having been abroad. It is interesting that the majority of Poles expressed the opinion that Poland was “trying too hard to become like a western country” (CBOS, 1993). Quite surprisingly, the distribution of answers is almost identical amongst those have been abroad and those who have never left the country. The subjective opinions of the respondents suggest criticism of desperate efforts to follow other models at the cost of losing national identity. It is quite surprising that only 4 years after opening the borders and allowing for free travel, Poles became sceptical about the new cultural models.

Is Poland doing too much/too little to become like other western countries?

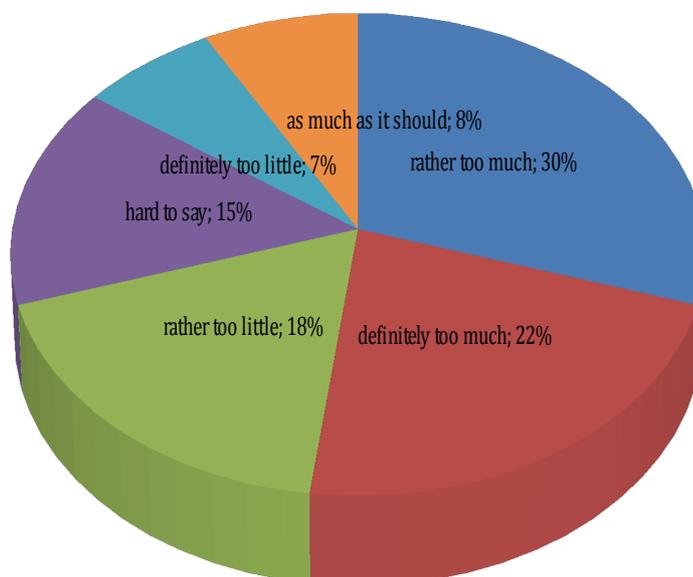


Fig. 1. CBOS 1993 Report “Opinions about Poland becoming like the West”.
http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/1993/K_055_93.PDF

Another part of the report focuses on the directions of Poles' travels. In 1993, the most popular destinations were still countries of the 'Eastern-bloc' (Germany, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Hungary).

The 1997 report, "Do Poles know the world?" (CBOS, 1997) shows Poles still largely visited neighbouring countries. However, for the first time after 1989, eastern and western directions became equally popular:

- One in three Poles has visited Germany during the last 20 years, also almost one in three has visited the Czech Republic or Slovakia. In the same period 17% of respondents have visited Eastern neighbours of Poland and one in seven of respondents has visited Hungary.
- The following Western European countries have been most frequently visited by Poles: Austria, Italy and France (each of them has been visited by 7% of respondents).
- There has been an important change in the directions in which Poles travel abroad. Up to 1993 - first of all to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in 1997 - the numbers of persons travelling to the countries of the former Eastern bloc and those travelling to Western European countries became equal.

http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/public_opinion/1997/12_1997.pdf

The report on "Foreign travel" published by CBOS in August 2009 compared the most popular destinations in the years 1993-2009;

- Germany remains the most commonly visited country: in the years 1989-2009 years one-third of respondents have been there.
- Next: Czech Republic, visited by one-fifth, and Slovakia, visited by one in six respondents.
- The eastern neighbours such as Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania and Belarus were less commonly visited.
- The most popular of the more distant destinations is Italy.
- Poles increasingly keen on travelling to West European countries such as Italy, Austria, France, UK, Spain, Netherlands, and Belgium.

http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/public_opinion/2009/08_2009.pdf

Detailed comparison (Fig. 2) suggests German should be a practical choice for foreign language learning in Poland at the turn of century. Yet, the Eurobarometer data from 2012 (Fig.3) shows very different learners' preferences.

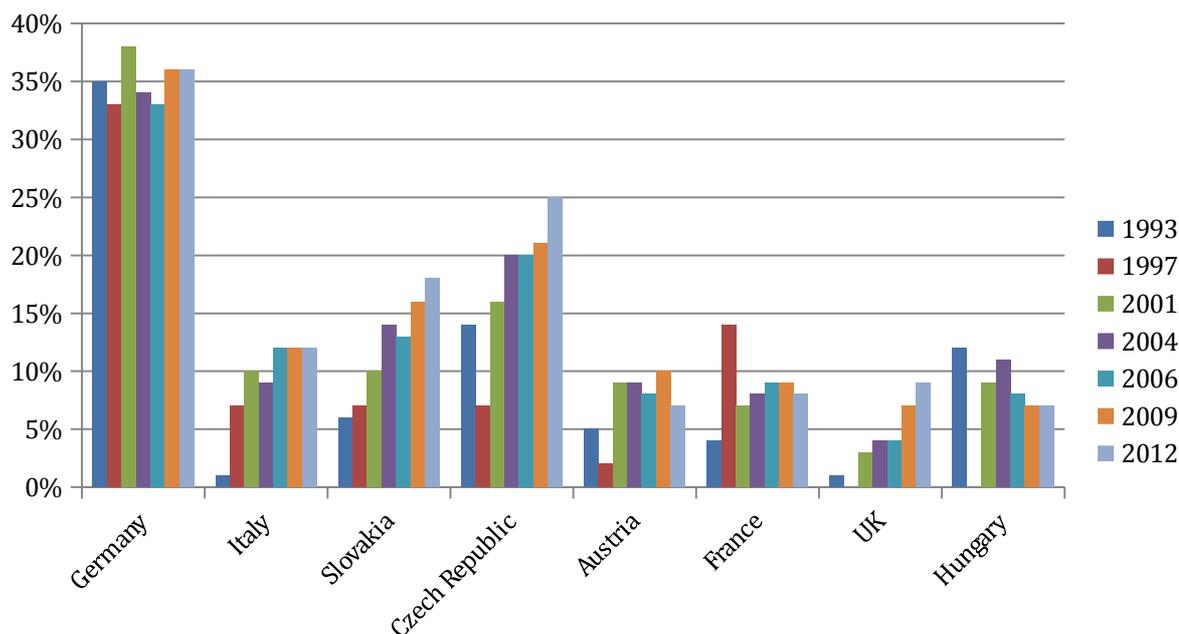


Fig. 2. CBOS 2012 Report “Frequency of Foreign Travel”
http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K_148_12.PDF

QE1a. Thinking about languages other than your mother tongue, which two languages do you think are the most useful for your personal development?

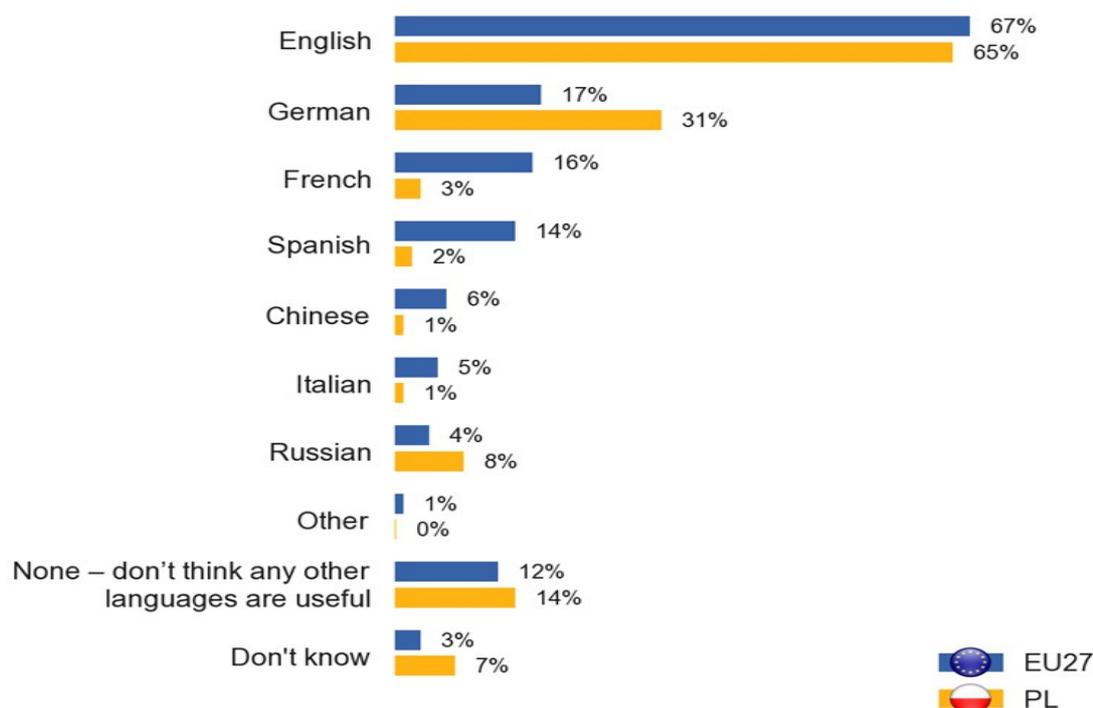


Fig. 3. Special Eurobarometer 386; 2012:71 “Europeans and their languages”.
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf

In 2012, about two-thirds of the Europeans (67%) and Poles (65%) considered English one of the most useful languages for the future of the children. The huge popularity of English can hardly be linked to the UK, considering the pattern of travels, it can only be the reflection of its lingua franca role.

There is no doubt that the global role of English and the perceived prestige of the language generated the demand. Polish education authorities have been trying to meet this demand, steadily increasing the presence of English at schools (extending the number of hours of English classes, lowering the age of starting English education, reducing the number of pupils in class, etc.). Fig. 4 shows the growing domination of English in schools.

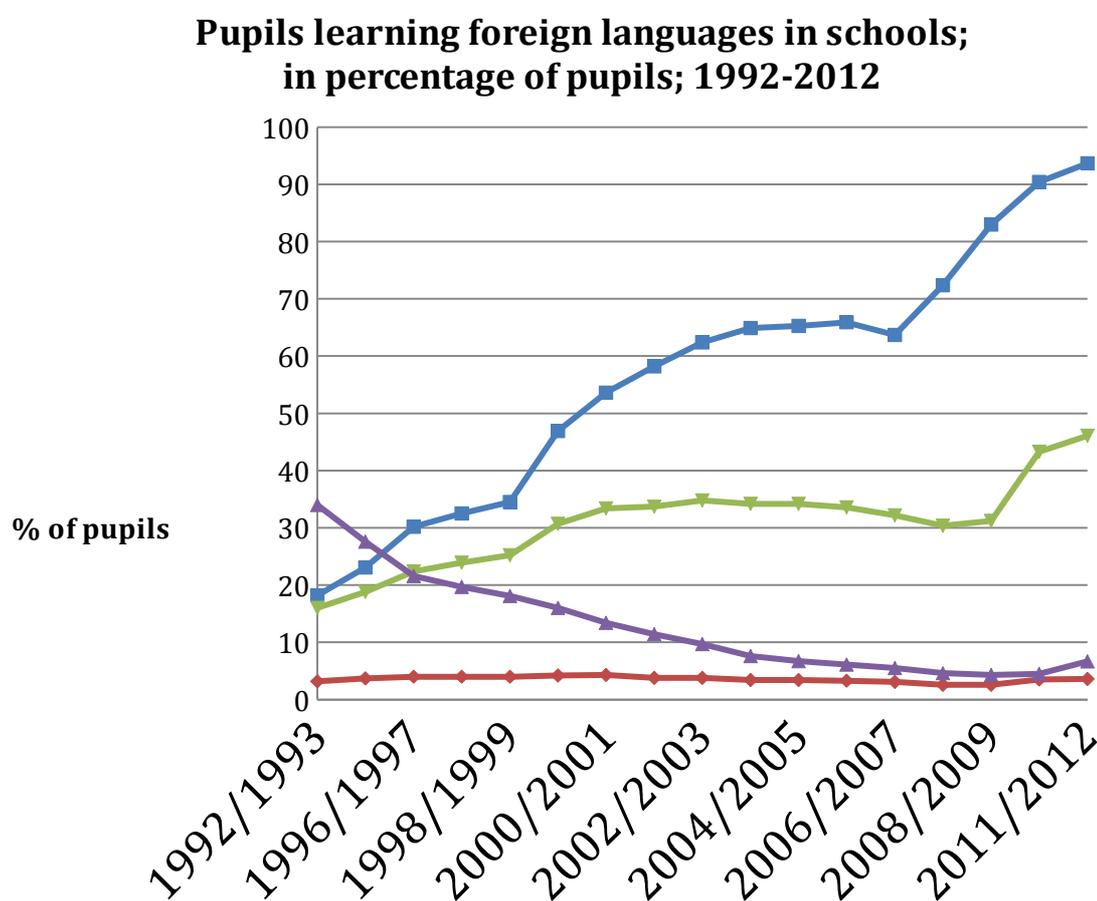


Fig. 4. Polish pupils learning foreign languages in schools 1992-2012
http://www.bc.ore.edu.pl/Content/426/Powszechnosc_nauczania_jezykow_2011_2012_17.04_fi nal.pdf

The changing role of English in a globalizing world calls for a new approach to the teaching of the language. The natural consequence of the change should be the re-thinking of teaching goals, exposure to a variety of accents, international (and local!) context, a variety of international characters and topics on the pages of textbooks. However, in Poland the monocultural perception of English is still dominant, British English 'rules'—in coursebooks, schools, exams or language learners aspirations. British English, loaded with British culture and promoted through British materials, have monopolized the ELT market in Poland, winning the minds and hearts of teachers and learners, but also stigmatizing them with a sense of failure. However, the growing research on ELF and its popularity, the popularization of the ELF research and ELF-informed teaching are signs of changes. Changes that could only liberate the learners from the native speaker burden.

Importantly, it should be noted that Poles' perception of English may actually be evolving (possibly in the direction of viewing it in an ever more utilitarian manner) as a result of its importance in the job market, increased business contacts (especially after the accession to the EU), and a huge recent emigration for economic reasons to the English-speaking countries.

(Przygoński, 2012, p. 212)

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**A STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' BELIEFS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH IN THE ARAB WORLD**

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Abstract

This paper will discuss recent issues in the area of foreign language teachers' beliefs. It will mainly look at why research is being undertaken in the field. It will argue that an understanding of teachers' practices can be achieved by an understanding of the beliefs underpinning those practices. This is particularly important because any educational innovation would not succeed if the objectives of these innovations are incompatible with the beliefs of teachers. The paper will then give a bird's eye view of the few studies on foreign language teachers' beliefs that were conducted in the Arab world. It will note that while the findings in these studies were generally congruent with current theory in the field, the Arab context remains nevertheless drastically unexplored. Hence, the paper will argue that further research is needed in order to have a fair representation in the field. It will point out that any data would be peculiar and unique because they would reflect the socio-political and cultural aspects of teachers in the Arab countries. Finally the paper will argue for the need to encourage debate within the Arab academia as a platform for promoting research on language teachers' beliefs.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, foreign languages, curriculum innovation, teacher training, Arab World.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent theories suggest that a better understanding of language teachers' practices can be achieved by an understanding of the beliefs underpinning those practices. The underlying assumption is that teachers' classroom

decisions do not happen at random, but are underpinned by systems of beliefs which, to a large extent, influence teachers' classroom decisions. Hence, it has become necessary to explore and to eventually try to understand language teachers' beliefs in order to improve classroom practice and methodology. In this respect, recent years have witnessed a growing body of research on language teachers' beliefs, mainly in the field of foreign language teacher education and development. Nevertheless, not much can be said on research on this particular field of inquiry in the Arab world. In fact, the Arab context seems to be underrepresented by such research. This paper will hence attempt to put forward some arguments which could represent a platform for further academic debate. It is hoped that this would consequently generate further debate and research in the Arab world.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The first section will first review the relevant literature related to teachers' beliefs from a generic standpoint. It will also discuss the nature of teachers' beliefs which involves a discussion of the definitions, the sources and the categories of teachers' beliefs. Then, the second section will highlight the reasons underlying the study of language teachers' beliefs, particularly in relation to curriculum innovation and teacher training. The third section will outline some of the few studies that were conducted in the Arab world and will argue that the context is generally underrepresented. Finally, a summary of the main points discussed will be provided and some conclusions on the main issues raised will be drawn.

2. THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS

2.1. Definitions

The issue of teachers' beliefs seems to be a subject of inconclusive debate. It is argued that still little is known about teachers' beliefs and that no consensus has been reached as to the exact nature of this construct (Schmidt and Kennedy, 1990; Rueda and Garcia, 1994). The reason for this, as it is argued, is the fact that beliefs are complex and abstract in nature which makes them difficult to research (Pajares, 1992). Another reason is that beliefs can be attributed to other concepts, such as 'perceptions' (Li, 1998; Sengupta and Falvey, 1998; Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005; Da Silva, 2005), 'conceptions' (Freeman and Richards, 1993; Farrell and Lim, 2005; MacDonald et al., 2001), 'orientations' (Standen, 2002; Freeman and Richards, 1993), 'attitudes' (Young, 1998; Karabenick and Clemens Noda, 2004; Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Gahin and Myhill, 2001), 'dispositions' (Raths, 2001), 'mental and social representations' (Gabillon, 2005), and 'knowledge'



(Gabillon, 2005; Murphy, 2000; Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005). Pajares (1992) calls beliefs a 'messy construct'.

Furthermore, much of the debate generally centres around the relationship of teachers' beliefs with the concept of teachers' knowledge. It is still not clear whether teachers' beliefs can be classified as knowledge or whether they are two separate and distinct constructs. For example, Kagan (1992) argues that beliefs are one form of knowledge. In this respect, she maintains that teachers' personal knowledge can be viewed as beliefs. This knowledge, according to Kagan, increases with the increase of teachers' experience to become part of a system of professional knowledge that affects teachers' classroom decisions and practices. Nespor (1987), however, provides many characteristics which differentiate beliefs from knowledge. Amongst these characteristics is the fact that knowledge changes whereas beliefs are 'static', and that knowledge can be assessed whereas "belief systems often include affective feelings and evaluations, vivid memories of personal experiences, and assumptions about the existence of entities and alternative worlds, all of which are simply not open to outside evaluation or critical examination" (ibid, p. 321). It is important to note that the relationship of beliefs with knowledge is still surrounded with ambiguity and inconclusiveness (Pajares, 1992).

To clarify the construct further, Pajares (1992) provides a synthesis of the nature of beliefs, which are summarised by Ballone and Czerniak (2001) as follows:

1. Beliefs are formed early and tend to be self-perpetuated. They tend to be preserved throughout time, experience, reason and schooling.
2. People develop a belief system that houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission.
3. Beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs.
4. The earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to change.
5. Belief alteration is relatively rare during adulthood.
6. Beliefs strongly influence perception.



7. The beliefs individuals possess strongly affect their behaviour.
8. Beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student attends college.
9. Beliefs play a key role in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks. (p. 8)

To sum up this section, teachers' beliefs can generally be defined as firm opinions that are shaped by teachers' experience (personal and professional) and general knowledge, and that in turn becomes internalised to the extent of becoming subconscious knowledge, but that is actively influencing individuals' choices and practices.

2.2 Sources of teachers' beliefs

The issue of sources of teachers' beliefs is also another area of debate surrounded with ambiguity and inconclusiveness. That is, it is still inconclusive what exactly the sources of beliefs can be (Raths, 2001). It is argued that teachers' beliefs derive partly from the teachers' personal and professional experience (Anderson, 1998; Farrell and Lim, 2005) and from school experience as learners (Farrell and Lim, 2005). Raths (2001) for instance notes that personal experience as a learner gives the teacher images of what a perfect teacher, learner, or lesson are, the process of which is known in the literature on teacher education as 'the apprenticeship of observation' (Freeman and Richards, 1993). Schmidt and Kennedy (1990) note that teachers' "...beliefs are not the product of armchair reasoning, but instead develop through a vast array of personal experiences" (p. 9).

With special reference to second/foreign language teaching, Richards and Lockhart (1994) argue that the sources of teachers' beliefs are:

1. *Their own experience as language learners.* All teachers were once students, and their beliefs about teaching are often a reflection of how they themselves were taught...
2. *Experience of what works best.* For many teachers experience is the primary source of beliefs about teaching. A teacher may have found that some teaching strategies work well and some do not...



3. *Established practice.* Within a school, an institution, or a school district, certain teaching styles and practices may be preferred...
4. *Personality factors.* Some teachers have a personal preference for a particular teaching pattern, arrangement, or activity because it matches their personality...
5. *Educationally based or research-based principles.* Teachers may draw on their understanding of a learning principle in psychology, second language acquisition, or education and try to apply it in the classroom...
6. *Principles derived from an approach or method.* Teachers may believe in the effectiveness of a particular approach or method of teaching and consistently try to implement it in the classroom... (pp. 30-31 – italics as in original text)

Hence, second language teachers' beliefs according to Richards and Lockhart stem from their experience as second language learners, from their professional experience as teachers, but also from the influence of their personality.

2.2. Main categories of teachers' beliefs

Teachers' beliefs can be classified into different categories, which are inextricably interrelated, and very often it is difficult to study one category of beliefs without referring to the other categories. These categories can be wide and diverse even within the same category of teachers in the same school (Schmidt and Kennedy, 1990; Fives and Buehl, 2005). However, the literature indicates that teachers' beliefs generally fall under three main categories:

1. *Personal beliefs:* These are teachers' beliefs about themselves and how they should be. These beliefs derive from personal experience as a learner (Raths, 2001, Richards and Lockhart, 1994). This personal experience gives the teacher 'self-defining images' (Raths, 2001) of what a perfect teacher, learner, or lesson are. These images are an important element in understanding teachers' practices. Personal beliefs are closely interlinked to beliefs about teaching, learning, and epistemological beliefs.

2. *Beliefs about teaching, learning and curriculum:* These stem from different sources, mainly the teachers' personal experience as learners and professional experience as teachers (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Calderhead, 1996).



3. *Epistemological beliefs*: These are closely interrelated with beliefs about learning and teaching (Chan 2003; Tutty and White, 2005; Fives and Buehl, 2005; Flores, 2001). These are beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is acquired (Flores, 2001). It is argued that the study of teachers' epistemological beliefs can give researchers some insights about teachers' practices, but also about teachers' lives and the system in which they work (Flores, 2001; Filisetti and Fives, 2003; Woods et al., 2003).



3. WHY STUDY TEACHERS' BELIEFS?

3.1. Shift in epistemological paradigm

Research in teacher education was in the past marked by the study of teachers' behaviour in an attempt to understand what happens in their classroom. What was assumed is that an understanding of classroom practices would help identify constraints for effective teaching, which teacher-educators would address in pre-service and in-service trainings. However, it was noticed that this approach was ineffective and very often no improvement in practice was seen (Pajares, 1992; Murphy, 2000). With the evolution of psychological theory from behaviourism to constructivism, it has become clear that a better understanding of teachers' practices can be achieved by an understanding of the beliefs guiding those practices (Pajares, 1992; Ballone and Czerniak, 2001; Schmidt and Kennedy, 1990; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). It was therefore argued that teachers' decisions in their classrooms were guided by a system of beliefs, which serves as a filter before these decisions are put into practice (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Pajares, 1992).

Taking this new paradigm as a framework, Cuban (1993: 256, cf. Fulton and Torney-Purta, 1999, p.1) suggests that "the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes that teachers have... shape what they choose to do in their classrooms and explain the core of instructional practices that have endured over time". Schmidt and Kennedy (1990), for instance, note that teachers' beliefs about the subject they teach are closely linked to classroom practice because these beliefs can influence day to day curricular decisions about what and how to teach. This position is also taken by Pajares (1992) who notes that a possible way of understanding classroom practice is through a study of teachers' beliefs. Richards et al. (2001) point out that "changes in teachers' practices are the result of changes in teachers' beliefs" (p. 11). Fulton and Torney-Purta (1999) maintain that no real change will occur in schools without substantial change in the beliefs of teachers. It is further argued that the study of beliefs is particularly important when curriculum innovations are being implemented because innovations generally challenge teachers' existing beliefs (Schmidt and Kennedy, 1990; Ballone and Czerniak, 2001).

3.2. Curriculum innovations

The literature on teachers' beliefs generally argues that educational innovations would not succeed if the objectives of these innovations are



incompatible with the beliefs of its users (Rueda and Garcia, 1994; Fives, 2003; Anderson et al., 1991). Matese et al. (2002) posit that teachers see “innovation through the lens of their existing knowledge and beliefs” (p. 3). Ballone and Czerniak (2001) point out that “the teacher is the critical change agent in paving the way to educational reform and that teacher beliefs are precursors to change” (p. 7). Schmidt and Kennedy (1990) posit that introducing any curricular innovations “is not likely to significantly alter teaching practices if teachers either do not understand or do not agree with the goals and strategies implicit in these new devices” (p. 2). Schmidt and Kennedy (1990) argue, for instance, that attention must be

... paid to teachers beliefs because of an accumulating body of evidence suggesting that teachers entering beliefs about the nature of the subject matter and how it is learned influence the extent to which teachers value and use new curricula and instructional models.

(ibid, p.2)

Hence, Richards et al. (2001) posit that any change in curriculum should be paralleled with an attempt to change teachers' beliefs. They warn that curriculum innovations usually fail when there is a mismatch between the ideologies underlying the innovation and the teachers' beliefs. Fives (2003) explains that the level of teachers' 'self-efficacy', defined as teachers' beliefs about the extent to which they can execute and perform actions to attain certain objectives (Fives, 2003; Bandura, 1986), can be seen as determiners of the success or failure of educational innovations. In her study of teachers self-efficacy beliefs and innovations, Fives (2003) found that teachers who showed high levels of efficacy beliefs towards their teaching relatively had high levels of acceptance and valuing of innovations. Furthermore, Ballone and Czerniak (2001) point out that usually experienced teachers who have been through unsuccessful reforms may develop a culture of distrust in policy-makers and this would lead, according to Ballone and Czerniak, to a disparity between the objectives underlying reforms and the teachers' beliefs, which generally results in a failure of the innovation. In this respect, it is argued that professional preparation and development programmes can play an important role in challenging and re-shaping teachers' beliefs according to the objectives of the innovation (Pajares, 1992).

3.3. Teacher training and development

Research indicates that teachers' beliefs are generally static and persevering (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992), and are therefore hard to challenge. However, it



is claimed that training programmes can play a role in “re-shaping” these beliefs, although, at the same time, it is also argued that generally teachers tend to leave their training programs with the same beliefs they brought with them (Raths, 2001; Pajares, 1993). Raths (2001) argues that candidate-teachers bring with them a system of beliefs about teaching practice to their training; and a priority to teacher educators, according to Raths, is hence to bring these beliefs to light and to attempt to challenge them early in the training so as to maximise the learning of new practices. Ballone and Czerniak (2001) note that “teacher belief constructs should be considered carefully when planning teacher development programs in order to successfully implement reform recommendations” (p. 22). However, on the other hand, Nespor (1987) argues that training programmes should not expect teachers to abandon their beliefs, but should try to replace these beliefs gradually with more relevant beliefs acquired through experience in a different context. In this respect, Nespor (1987), points out that in order for teachers to change their beliefs, they usually go through three stages: a) they must come to the conclusion that their beliefs are inappropriate, b) they must find opportunities to discover new knowledge, and c) they must find ways to link their new beliefs with their old ones.

For teacher training programmes to be successful, it is suggested that they should promote reflective practice (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). In this respect, it is claimed that reflective practice could possibly get teachers to reflect about their beliefs, and therefore, to compare these beliefs against new forms of knowledge towards challenging these beliefs and replacing them with more appropriate knowledge (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Newstead (1999) explains that “researchers agree that significant change...[in teachers’ practices] cannot be achieved without the opportunity for teachers’ reflection” (p. 1). Rueda and Garcia (1994) point out that there are “many studies supporting the idea that if teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices, they not only get better at reflection but they also change as well” (p. 16). Similarly, Flores (2001) posits that teachers’ critical reflection leads to a change of teaching practice. She further maintains that critical reflection can empower teachers and this may even lead them to challenge the status quo. Fives (2003) notes that teachers who undergo reflective practice in their training tend to report high levels of self-efficacy beliefs.

Reflective practice is particularly important in second/foreign language teaching (Richards and Lockhart, 1994) mainly that it has also been noticed that teachers tended to leave their training programmes with the same beliefs



about language learning and teaching that they had when they entered their courses (Farrell and Lim, 2005; Richards et al., 2001; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Newstead, 1999). Furthermore, it has been suggested that reflective practice in training programmes need to be conducted within a socio-constructivist approach (Spanneberg, 2001; Richards at al., 2001; Flores, 2001), where “ the emphasis is on the teacher as learner, a person who will experience teaching and learning situations and give personal meaning to those experiences through reflection” (Spanneberg, 2001, p. 1).

Amongst the strategies suggested in teacher training and development within a socio-constructivist approach, Richards at al. (2001), for instance, suggest that “reflection is possible through many means including narratives, discussion, review of student feedback, viewing videotapes of their teaching as well as other modes of reflection” (p. 12). They also point out that teachers can check the extent to which their beliefs are changing through journal writing and case studies. Richards et al. suggest that “[o]pportunities to share experiences of positive change can provide a valuable source of input for in-service courses and teacher education activities” (p. 12). Ballone and Czerniak (2001) provide some tangible guidelines on incorporating reflective practice in teacher education programs. They explain that:

...teacher training experiences should include enough opportunities to 1) collaborate with colleagues who are implementing the same strategies, 2) visit classrooms that use multiple instructional strategies and focus on student learning styles, 3) observe student and teacher success, 4) develop and/or pilot instructional materials, 5) practice using these strategies with colleagues in order to receive feedback, 6) participate in and present activities that foster learning styles at workshops and in-service programs.

(Ibid, p. 22)

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that for these activities to be possible, an appropriate provision of resources and support from stakeholders and policy-makers are essential (Rueda and Garcia, 1994; Ballone and Czerniak, 2001; Newstead, 1999).

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH IN THE ARAB WORLD

The general climate of socio-political, economic and cultural developments currently taking place in the Arab world has led to an ongoing interest in foreign language education, particularly in the teaching of English language.



English has in fact become a necessary tool for intercultural communication between Arab populations and other populations from other cultures worldwide. English is also used by Arab states as the main language of international relations and security, of economic exchange and investment, and of scientific and technological progress. As a result, and in order to cope with the challenges of the 21st century, most Arab countries have initiated curriculum reforms in their systems of English language teaching at one point of time since the start of the 21st century. In this respect, different innovations have been introduced at different levels of the countries' educational systems. Nevertheless, while these reform initiatives are very important to catch up with international progress, they do however need to be underpinned by a solid body of empirical research; an initiative that seems to be scarce at the moment. In fact, a closer analysis of educational research in the Arab world would reveal that not many studies have documented these reforms. In particular, research on language teachers' beliefs, as an important factor in English language curriculum reforms, is to a certain extent under-represented.

Amongst the few studies on language teachers' beliefs that were conducted in the Arab world there is, for instance, Al-Mekhlafi (2004) who conducted a study in the United Arab Emirates that investigated language teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using the Internet in EFL classrooms. He found that although teachers were familiar with using technology and showed a willingness to integrate it in their teaching, the majority did not in fact use the Internet technology in their classrooms. In Egypt, Gahin and Myhill (2001) conducted a study on EFL teachers' beliefs about the communicative approach as a curriculum innovation. They point out that their findings indicate that there was mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and the innovation. They concluded that in

the Egyptian ELT context, the change in teaching materials in the form of new syllabus course books and the change in teaching approaches advocated by the [Egyptian]...Ministry of Education...have not been paralleled by any attempt to achieve a change in the pedagogical values of the teachers involved in implementing the curriculum innovation. (ibid, p. 3)

In another study in Algeria, Bellalem (2008) explored the beliefs of French and English school teachers about curriculum innovation. He found that the teachers held negative beliefs about the new curriculum because of an incompatibility of these beliefs with the innovation. He concluded that the participants' beliefs had not been so challenged prior to the implementation



of the innovation. Rather both teachers and the Algerian Ministry of Education were busy blaming one another, and this resulted in tensions and conflict within the Algerian educational system. In Lybia, Orafi and Borg (2009) examined the beliefs of EFL teachers towards a newly introduced communicative curriculum. They found that there was “considerable differences between the intentions of the curriculum and the [teachers’] instruction...[because] the uptake of an educational innovation can be limited when it is not congruent with and does not take into consideration the cognitive and contextual realities of teachers’ work” (p. 243). In Syria, Albirini (2006) explored the beliefs of EFL teachers towards the use of ICT. He found that the participants held conservative beliefs although, in general, they showed positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in their classroom. A further analysis revealed that teachers were “mainly concerned about the morally damaging effect of ICT (particularly the Internet), its inattentiveness to their cultural and language needs, and its growing primacy at the expense of other societal needs” (p. 49). Finally, in Saudi Arabia, Al-Mohanna (2010) explored how English secondary teachers’ beliefs impacted on their teaching. The study revealed that although the curriculum in Saudi schools was intended as communicative, the teachers actually taught within the Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual Methods. He concluded that the “EFL teachers’ theoretical background is suggested as a contributing factor against the implementation” (p. 69) of a communicative curriculum.

The findings in the above studies are generally congruent with current theory in the field (see 3.2 above), i.e., the findings of these studies indicate that often there exists a disparity between the educational innovations and the teachers’ beliefs. In fact, these studies, do essentially confirm the need for further research on teachers’ beliefs because of the latter’s importance in the make or break of any curriculum innovation. Hence, the first argument this paper wishes to put forward is the fact that there is a strong need in favour of further research in the field of language teachers’ beliefs in the Arab world considering the high level of reforms the region is going through.

Furthermore, it seems to be that there is an element of regional and contextual peculiarity of the Arab countries is not covered by the current literature on teachers’ beliefs from across the other world regions. In fact, any data from the Arab world could in a sense be unique because they would reflect the socio-political and cultural aspects of the Arab community of teachers. In other words, it is important to point out that the above studies generally indicate that the context is an important source of data, and therefore it is fair to argue that the area of Arab teachers’ beliefs is fairly under-represented by research. Hence, the second point this paper wishes to



put forward is that further studies will undoubtedly be more than valuable to further explore the issue of teachers' beliefs from a different perspective, which may ultimately add to our knowledge in the field, and may even challenge current theories.

However, the most important point this paper wishes to highlight is that we need to strongly encourage debate as a first step towards building a platform for research on teachers' beliefs in the Arab world. It is therefore argued that we need to build an active research group within the spheres of the Arab academia whose task would be to encourage further research on language teachers' beliefs and to coordinate the organisation of conferences, where research findings would be shared and debated with other communities of researchers. This paper hopes to be the starting point of such an endeavour.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To sum up this paper, it was first discussed that teachers' beliefs are difficult to research because they tend to be complex and abstract in nature. In this respect, it was seen that theory on teachers' beliefs is inconclusive and still no consensus has been reached as to the exact nature of this construct. It was argued that language teachers' beliefs derive partly from the teachers' personal and professional experience and from school experience as language learners; and that they can generally be classified into three main interrelated categories: personal beliefs, beliefs about teaching, learning and curriculum, and epistemological beliefs. It was then discussed that research indicated that a better understanding of teachers' practices can be achieved by an understanding of the beliefs underpinning those practices because it was generally argued that any educational innovation would not succeed if the objectives of these innovations are incompatible with the beliefs of teachers. It was therefore claimed that training programmes can play a crucial role in challenging beliefs in order to facilitate the learning of new practices. It was suggested that training programmes should promote reflective practice, which could possibly get teachers to reflect about their beliefs, and therefore, to compare these beliefs against new forms of knowledge towards challenging these beliefs and replacing them with more appropriate knowledge.

Furthermore, the paper gave a bird's eye view of a few studies that were conducted in the Arab world. Nevertheless, it was noted that while the findings in these studies were generally in line with current theory in the field, it was argued however that the context remains drastically unexplored considering the rich data that exists. Hence, it was argued that further



research would be needed in order to have a fair representation of research in the field. In addition to this, it was also pointed out that the context is important because any data from the Arab world would be peculiar and unique in the sense that they would reflect the socio-political and cultural aspects of each community of teachers in each Arab country. It was finally argued that debate within the Arab academia needs to be encouraged for the purposes of promoting research on language teachers' beliefs and also for sharing the findings of other research communities.

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CAN A NON- NATIVE SPEAKER TEACH ENGLISH IN JAPAN?

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Abstract

English is vigorously learned in Japan, but the average level of English proficiency of Japanese students is still low compared to that of other developed countries. This article will consider the purpose and significance of learning English for Japanese at the college level, based on the author's experience, both as a student and a teacher, at Kyoto University, Japan.

The English taught in Japanese universities, at present just as 40 years ago, has a tendency to be a humanities subject and thus make light of oral-aural elements. This trait, rooted in the teachers' general lack of fluency and a false notion that spoken English is void of content, and therefore inferior to written English, needs improvement. It is the responsibility of those involved in higher education to help each student to harbour rich content by cultivating robust thinking and motivate expression. English classes are mostly taught using Japanese, which also needs serious reconsideration.

Considering Japan's place both from the global and East-Asian points of view, English as a *lingua franca* and Asian languages as a *lingua vicinas* (languages of neighbours) should be in the college curriculum. The notion of English as *lingua franca* that emphasizes communication rather than grammatical correctness suits the situation where Japanese non-native English teachers teach students. There is no such thing as a perfect speaker of any language. Those who have content—here, what they want to convey to younger users of English as a *lingua franca*—are all qualified to teach English.

Keywords: Content, English as *lingua franca*, non-native teacher, university, spoken English

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do Japanese learn English? You see sign for 'English Conversation Schools' at every town corner here. Open a newspaper and you will see a full-page ad for a magical method of learning English without tears, or even without effort. Several English programmes are aired on TV and on the Internet. It is the most 'normal' of the compulsory foreign languages at all levels of education, from elementary to tertiary. A high score on the TOEIC is considered a must in job-hunting. An increasing number of universities have adopted the use of TOEFL scores to screen graduate level students, thereby requiring students to pay fees up to US\$230 to take this test. Yet the average level of English proficiency of Japanese students is still low compared to that of other developed countries. Are we really learning English in the first place? In this article, I will consider the purpose and significance of learning English at the college level, based on my 40-year experience, both as a student and a teacher, at Kyoto University, Japan.

2. ENGLISH AS A HUMANITIES SUBJECT

Though a professor of English literature, I am not a professionally trained teacher of English as a foreign language. I do remember taking several courses at college to obtain a license to teach English at high schools, but I must confess I mastered none of those 'methods'. Many of the English teachers at universities in my generation majored in English literature, and after becoming English teachers at the college level, they still think it their duty to write articles and books on English literature in Japanese. We, in turn, were taught by English teachers in the same vein.

Thus, all the English courses I took at college were administered by these teachers, who named one student after another, had them read a passage aloud, and made them translate the text, which was, of course, that of English literature. This practice was to check whether students had looked up difficult words in an English-Japanese dictionary the previous night—to examine whether the learning had been done at home, and not to make them learn the language in class. For those who had prepared beforehand, and thereby finished the learning, attending the class was just a waste of time. For those who had not prepared, attendance was as meaningless, because class was the place for checking the learning, rather than for the learning itself. Many students attended the class just because teachers took attendance as part of the grade assessment.

I liked to prepare for the class, however, and looked forward to hearing the professors solemnly declaring their interpretation. The English classes



were not foreign language courses, but, in effect, literature courses. Looking back, I think myself fortunate, as a fledgling literature major, to have attended beginners' courses focused on close reading of masterpieces of English and American literature. But even among students majoring in science were some who enjoyed this type of English class. Unfortunately, however, Kyoto University does not offer any liberal arts course on Western literature at the moment. A proper liberal arts course on Western literature, not an English language course taught in Japanese using literary texts, should satisfy those literature-oriented students. Only then will English language courses be able to focus on communicative skills, independently from the old literature-based framework.

3. SPOKEN ENGLISH

A user of a particular language who has used it since early childhood is called a native *speaker*. I am a native *speaker* of Japanese. Of course, this does not only mean that I can *speak* Japanese, but it also means that I can write, read, and aurally comprehend the language. It turns out, therefore, that the ability to *speak* a language implies by synecdoche the ability to perform all four of these skills. This metaphor may exist because speaking, being the first step in the language acquisition, is the basis of all the other skills.

However, I notice hatred for teaching spoken English in many college-level English teachers in Japan. This antipathy towards spoken English, apart from being based on teachers' own inabilities to speak English fluently, appears to be based on the misconception that there is empty 'chitter-chatter' in English. Japanese teachers of English often say that it is useless to make students speak fluently without making them think. True. What is the use of talking glibly without acquiring knowledge and robust logical thinking skills? 'Conversation in English' is often a derogatory term among college teachers, who are of the opinion that you should go to an English conversation school in town if you want to be a fluent speaker.

Yet I wonder if it is ever possible for those who lack logic and knowledge to speak fluently, especially in a foreign language. Language is a tool, and a receptacle for *contents*, but there is no language that is like a jug without water. As content necessitates expression, there is no such thing as English without content. We often forget that one of the conditions for improvement in language proficiency is to have content—something to say. Before you can help students to advance in a language, you must help them to have content and motivation to communicate. When I ask the students in my class, 'What do you think, Mr./Ms....?' I often get for an answer, 'I have no idea.' This is not, as one might suppose, a figure of speech. They do not mean



that they cannot find the correct answers (which I never ask for), but they literally have no ideas—nothing to communicate! To help them possess ‘ideas’—this should, I believe, be the very purpose of humanities education.

It is often said that Japanese people are bad negotiators in international situations. Many erroneously attribute it to their poor English skills¹. No. Instead, it is because Japanese politicians and businessmen are poor thinkers and lack the enthusiasm necessary to express what little they have in mind. It is the responsibility of those involved in higher education to cultivate thinking and motivate expression in students, rather than to endow them with knowledge and understanding. Without this basis, no method of language teaching will make students speak English. Neither will it make them write, nor will it make them read, nor will it make them aurally comprehend.

4. ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

There are two categories of foreign languages that I propose should be taught at universities in the age of globalization. One is *lingua franca*, and the other, *lingua vicina*. *Lingua franca* can be roughly defined as a language for communication between Non-native speakers or between non-native and native speakers. English as a *lingua franca* has already been a subject of numerous studies². Firth is considered to be the originator of this concept

¹ A typical example can be seen in the foreword in the newsletter (2000) of JACET, the largest association of English teachers in Japan. ‘It has been pointed out that Japanese stand at disadvantage at international competitive scenes on account of their low ability in foreign languages, especially in English. The phenomenon has been seen for some decades, but the feature of the current criticism is that politicians, businesspersons, commentators and executive officers at civil services unite their tone to call for the rearing of human resources that can cope with the globalized 21st century. The government has founded a deliberation council in response to this trend.’ (My translation) Thirteen years from this foreword, and Kyoto University still harps on the same theme in one of its symposiums, titled ‘English Education to Foster Global Human Resources’ (2013).

² A corpus named VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) offers data for the study of English as a *lingua franca*. Researchers have extracted from VOICE linguistic idiosyncrasies peculiar to *lingua franca*, such as simplification (omission of articles and 3rd - person-present ‘-s’ from verbs), and influence of speakers’ linguistic background. On the other hand, there are arguments against admitting the status of a language to English as a *lingua franca*, fearing its linguistic imperialism and a crisis of multilingualism. Sometimes the guilty feelings towards the ex-colonies prevent from positive treatment of English as a Lingua Franca.



when, in the 1990's, he called communications in English between non-native speakers "*lingua franca* interactions" (1996, p. 237). House of Germany points to the shocking fact that there are more instances of communication in English between non-native speakers than between native speakers (2009, p. 141) English as a *lingua franca* does not evaluate learners by their closeness to native speakers' norms. It does not regard its speakers as incomplete learners.

English is comparatively new as a *lingua franca*, which has changed its form throughout history. When Alexander the Great expanded the territory of his empire, the *lingua franca* was *Koine* Greek. From classical Rome to the Middle Ages, Latin was the *lingua franca*. In this time, Romans were the only native speakers of the Latin tongue, whereas all others needed to learn Latin to participate in political and educational activities. After the split of the Roman Empire, and the ensuing fall of the Western Roman Empire, Latin continued to be the *lingua franca*. Then on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, a common language for trade developed out of a mixture of Frankish, Spanish, French, and Arabic. Actually the term *lingua franca* was a translation of the Arabic '*lisan-al-farang*' which was "an intermediary language used by speakers of Arabic with travellers from Western Europe" (House, 2003, p. 557). In the late fifteenth century, the linguistic nationalism of the Renaissance convinced people of the validity of vernaculars as means for expressing intelligent content. These vernaculars, supported by the newly invented printing technology, rapidly refined themselves. Nevertheless, in cultural, artistic, and diplomatic activities in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Europe, the *lingua franca* was French.

Finally, English soared triumphantly into the status of *lingua franca* after the nineteenth century, when the British Empire expanded its colonial reach over the surface of the earth, and in the twentieth century, when the United States gained political and economic hegemony throughout the world. Japanese kids, seeing anyone who appears to be a foreigner, address him/her with 'Hello!' thinking that the person speaks English. Japanese adults believe that the first foreign language to be learned should be English. Actually, English is currently most widely used in academic, commercial, and diplomatic contexts.

English is a compulsory subject at many Japanese universities. It is not because English is essentially superior to other languages or easier for Japanese students to learn, but because it is the *lingua franca* at present. However, we must remember, as we have seen above, that the *lingua franca* can change with global political and economic developments from century to century, or even decade to decade. It may be Arabic in the next decade. It may be Chinese; no one would deny those possibilities, at least in Eastern Asia.



Then the compulsory foreign language at Kyoto University would be Arabic or Chinese. We should keep in mind that the purpose of teaching English is not to make students capable of speaking *English*, but to make them capable of speaking the *lingua franca* for their empowerment in this global age.

The other type of foreign language, which I call *lingua vicina*, is a neighbouring language. *Lingua vicinas* for Japanese are Chinese, Korean, and Russian. Although problems abound concerning territory, human rights, post-war processes, and economic conflict, Japanese students know too little of what is happening in neighbouring countries, and show too little enthusiasm to learn their neighbours' languages. How exciting it would be to be able to read Chinese and Korean newspapers sold at newsstands, to use *Weibo* and *Baidu* on the Internet!³ Surely the actions and issues of neighbouring countries are conveyed by TV news and the Internet to some extent, but these are indirect sources, and the views of media reporters or Internet users probably contain their own biases. If Japanese cannot know their neighbours' thoughts without the mediation of media or interpreters, how can they be secure in their own views and exchange them with their neighbours? Their status in the world may be very shaky.

It is often simply and mistakenly thought, particularly in our globalized society, that fluency in English leads to competitive power in international negotiations. With only English available to them however, how can Japan argue with its neighbours? I propose that the language curriculum at the university level should be composed of three categories: Japanese as the *native* language, English as *lingua franca*, and Asian languages or Russian as *lingua vicinas*.

5. ENGLISH TAUGHT BY NON-NATIVE TEACHERS

It may surprise readers to know that English is usually taught in Japan using Japanese. Advocates of this approach say that in a classroom where both the teacher and students are Japanese, it does not make sense to speak to students with accents peculiar to Japanese. Students can listen to 'authentic English' by playing the complimentary CD from the textbook publisher. Do

³ *Weibo* is a Chinese microblogging website. Akin to a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, it is one of the most popular sites in China, in use by well over 30% of Internet users, with a market penetration similar to the United States' Twitter. (*Wikipedia*) *Baidu* is a company that offers various web services from Chinese-language search engine to online collaboratively-built encyclopedia. (*Wikipedia*)



not inure them to your strange *Engrish*⁴, grammar-wise and pronunciation-wise. Why not use the language native to both of you to explain profound ideas and logic conveyable only in Japanese? Et cetera. Others argue contrarily that native speakers are the only appropriate teachers of a language.

My opposition to both opinions above is thus: it is all right to teach profound ideas and logic, but that is not what we should do in a foreign language class. I will teach English using English with my Japanese accent and idiosyncrasies, because even 'authentic' native speakers are not free from accents and idiosyncrasies. Whatever the language may be, its grammar and usage taught at school are inductions from innumerable instances, and not prearranged programs. Let us suppose an 'ideal language' with perfectly incarnated grammar and usage. (I know that this supposition itself is far-fetched because grammar and usage are actually dynamic and changing.) Then do native speakers speak the 'ideal language'? Do I speak 'ideal Japanese' in addressing the students in my class? Have I ever used such ideal Japanese in my sixty-year life? Only a machine, installed with some super language program, could approach (but never reach) this ideal state, and the result would be a crashing bore. Native speakers exchange messages with each other with idiosyncrasies and even defects. Thus, non-native speakers conveying their ideas in acquired languages seem far better than those keeping silent for fear of violating grammar and usage.

That is why I suppose that my teaching English using *my* English cannot have very ill effects on students. Often groping for words and expressions, and even correcting myself before the students, I show them what level of English a learner can achieve by way of example. I also urge them, even in a reading class, to speak up and write their ideas down in English.

My approach may not sound very innovative, or it may sound just a matter of course for most of the readers of this article, but it requires some courage in Japan. I must confess I owe my decision to Dr. Neddar's (An Algerian academic) attitude towards English teaching. Algeria's long colonization by France (1830-1962) left its language of education as French even after its independence. The Arabian Algerians who account for 80 per cent of the whole population are French-Arabic bilinguals. Although the

4 Corrupted English spoken by speakers of East Asian languages, especially Japanese speakers who tend to confuse [r] sound with [l] sound. The corruption extends from pronunciation to word order to grammar.



language in compulsory education has gradually shifted to Arabic, higher education in Algeria is still conducted mainly in French. Dr. Neddar, a specialist in English linguistics and TEFL, conducts his college classes at University of Mostaganem entirely in English. He visited our university in 2009, when I asked him to speak in my English class. There he addressed my students in fluent, yet apparently non-native-sounding, English sprinkled with errors. And yet his speech successfully elicited responses from the students. After the class he asked me, who was then teaching English using Japanese, this humiliating question: 'Why don't you speak English in your English class?' Looking back, the chagrin I then felt still torments me. It was this incident that pushed me towards 'teaching English in English'. Needless to say, the basic idea behind his and my practice is 'English as a *lingua franca*'.

On a recent job-offering/job-seeking site designed exclusively for academics (JREC-IN) you can see that an increasing number of Japanese universities require that English teacher candidates have TEFL degrees. Though this could reduce job opportunities for those majoring in literature, it will certainly work for the improvement of English teaching in higher education. Then, will literature majors like me be disqualified from teaching English as a foreign language? To the contrary. As senior speakers of English as a *lingua franca*, researchers of English literature have a lot to teach to their juniors—how to read and write articles and essays, how to give oral presentations, how to choose and enjoy paperback novels, and how to go about studying abroad. Those who have content—here, what they want to convey to younger users of English as a *lingua franca*—are all qualified to teach English.

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**A NEW PROPOSAL IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING:
LANGUAGE COMPLEXITY, MICRO-PHYLOGENY AND
METAPRAGMATIC MECANISMS**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study the *Metapragmatic mechanisms* that are used in the ongoing discourse of Mexican students enrolled in a B.A in English Language Teaching within a functional framework in an objective, straightforward and non-intuitional way. These resources represent complex mechanisms situated within syntactic complexity and could help learners of English as a foreign language not to transfer speech acts from their mother tongue (Spanish) to their second language (English).

The corpus of this study consists of 10 recordings of 20 Mexican students born and bred in Mexico who learnt English as a Foreign language. Each recording lasts 50 minutes. The qualitative conversation analysis and a micro-analysis of the recordings show that the participants' speech in English is characterised by the use of the following *Metapragmatic* : Disclaimers, Polite Markers, Commentary Markers and Mitigation markers.

Keywords: Pragmatic transference, Pragmatic cross-linguistic influence, Metapragmatic mechanisms, Intercultural softeners, Intercultural shields.

1. INTRODUCTION

Complexity is a term that has a myriad of applicable uses, that is, complexity has been present in every single event in our lives, from solving a math problem to structuring a sentence. However, the universe, which is full of an infinite variety of complex events and systems, represents the *terminus a quo* of what we know actually as complexity given that its beginning approximately 13.8 billion years ago was a complex event composed of gradual changes. Subatomic particles gave rise to simple atoms, and progressively these elements allowed the formation of stars and galaxies.

Givón (2009a, p.19) highlighted that language, is by all accounts, one of the defining characteristics of *Homo sapiens* and it is deployed in a wide range of adaptive contexts: social interaction, cultural transmission, education, literature, theater, music, humor and play, love and war, having two main core adaptive functions: the mental representation and communication of information. It could be analyzed that we as complex individuals first structure an idea in the mind, which does not necessarily mean communicating this notion *via* articulating words. According to Givón (*ibid*, p. 20) we as social species communicate messages through a wide spectrum of means, such as mating, foraging, territorial control, social rank, aggression, shelter, and rearing of the young.

Givón (*ibid*, p.1) remarked that complexity is a property of entities and organisms characterized by the relationship or connectivity of simplest elements within an organized system. Heine and Kuteva (2007) cited in Givón (*Op.cit*, p.7) highlighted that the genesis of human language complexity can be searched for in three developmental domains: (1) diachrony (historical linguistics), (2) ontogeny (language acquisition by children), and (3) phylogeny (language evolution). This author pointed out that from these three domains there exists extensive data on the first. The third one is more problematic because of the near-absence of data on the communication of *hominids* during the protracted period of the separation from our nearest great-apes relatives; nonetheless, these authors did not take into account second language learning/acquisition as a domain where can be found a large number of linguistic events that can provide strong evidence regarding human language complexity. Thus, we propose that micro-phylogeny (short-term language evolution) in second language learning/acquisition could represent a pathway to understand not only language complexity in bilingual



individuals, but also which complex sentences represent a more neuro-cognitive demanding process and if the learning/acquisition of complex sentences follows the same hierarchical sequence as it occurs in first language acquisition. Micro-phylogeny in second language learning/acquisition could help us to establish crosslinguistically a pathway to understand the processing of syntactic complexity in bilingual students and how typological differences of complexity between or among languages affect the bilingual brain. Finally, we propose that micro-phylogeny could give us hints of new complex devices emerging in second language learning.

Givón (2009a:10) stated that there is strong cumulative evidence that the developmental trend in the genesis of syntactic complexity, in diachronic, ontogeny and no doubt in evolution, is primarily compositional (synthesis), following the general trend:

- (1) General trend in the genesis of syntactic complexity:
 - a. Single words → simple clause
 - b. Simple clause → clause chains (parataxis)
 - c. Clause chains → complex/embedded clauses (syntaxis)

On the other hand, Givón (ibid, p.24) mentioned that there exist mechanisms that can transform simple clauses into multiple complex 'surface structures'. Thus consider:

- (3)
 - a. Simple: Marla saw John
 - b. REL-clause (subj): The woman [who saw John]
 - c. REL-clause (obj): The man [Marla saw]
 - d. V-complement (modality): Marla wanted [to see John]
 - e. V-complement (manipulation): Betty told Marla [to see John]
 - f. V-complement (cognition): Betty knew that [Marla saw John]
 - g. ADV-clause (temporal): When Marla saw John.....
 - h. Imperative: Go see John, Marla!
 - i. Interrogative (y/n): Did Marla see John?
 - j. Interrogative (WH-sub): Who saw John?
 - k. Interrogative (WH-obj): Who did Marla see?
 - l. Negative: Marla didn't see John
 - m. Passive: John was seen (by Marla)
 - n. Antipassive: Marla doesn't see
 - o. Inverse (Y-movement): John Marla saw (later)
 - p. L-dislocation (sub): As for Marla, she saw John (later)
 - q. L-dislocation (obj): As for John, Marla saw him (later)
 - r. Cleft-focus (sub): It was Marla who saw John



s. Cleft-focus (obj): It was John that Marla saw

All of these constructions in (1) refer us back to two main conclusions. The first one is that there exist multifaceted grammatical devices boosting the complexity of discourse, which represent together a *complex cognitive matrix* shaping the linguistic worldview of an individual. The second one embraces a *non-uniformity* in discourse, in this sense communication does not present a rigid order since the context is what dictates the sequence of complex devices that will be employed.

Evolution epitomizes undoubtedly what has made us capable to overcome a series of biological life-threatening changes over successive generations. From developing immunity to certain pathogenic microorganisms to developing more sophisticated communication systems. Responsible for this *sui generis* language complexity seems to be the evolution of the human brain with its trillions of inter-connecting electrical circuits. The evolution of the brain represents a historical gradual and ongoing process regarding the clustering and hierarchy of complex constructions. More intriguing is the fact that time without any doubt has given us the innate capacity to learn not only a second language, but also more languages. As a result, this represents a complex neuro-biological and neuro-cognitive process that signifies that we as individuals must use a *linguistic ladder* which enable us to start learning or acquiring a second language or more languages. However, when using this *linguistic ladder*, there will appear certain patterns that were first analyzed as linguistics interferences.

These linguistic interferences within the second language learning field given their negative background, and speaking analogously, given their micro-phylogenetic development are actually addressed not only within a negative linguistic framework, but also from a positive frame of reference. *A prima vista*, when referring to this term, it must be understood that is hard-wired ontogenetically to some extent to “cross-linguistic influence”, where a transfer phenomenon occurs. Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) mentioned that both terms, that is, cross-linguistic influence and linguistic transfer are interchangeable and theoretically neutral given their positive and negative connotations. When speaking about language contact in the second language learning field, pragmatic transfers have not been documented in a wide-ranging way, and therefore, there is a shortage of such studies and empirical basis, given the fact that this is a field that has not been explored deeply.

Janney and Arndt (1992) stated that when an individual grows up as a member of a culture develops various underlying aspects that helps him/her



to perceive, think and behave like the other members of the community. It is noteworthy that each culture establishes the principles by which it is governed, and consequently this will result in a particular style of interaction by the members of that culture and a repertoire of elements necessary during the verbal or written communication. When learning a foreign language these pragmatic aspects of the mother tongue may be transferred to second language learning, which can lead to pragmatic cross-linguistic influence from the first language to the second one.

Based on this notion, it is necessary to comprehend the socio-cultural notion of what is socially acceptable, which governs the *pragmatic-core* of *standardized speech acts* of a particular community, and the *linguistic genotype* of the *soi-disant deep-rooted pragmatic constraints*, which represent together a *complex cognitive matrix* that shapes the linguistic worldview of an individual. As a result, when learning a second language, it is a demanding cognitive process for second language learners trying to set aside their socio-pragmatic practices that are an innate linguistic network composed of diverse language in use layers, merged with the linguistic inherited capacity of encoding and decoding this *socio-cultural praxis* that is acquired within their community. In theory, the socio-pragmatic periphery of the individual's first language and the second language represents the *terminus a quo* which dictates whether this student will transfer or not these socio-pragmatic practices, given that some languages share some *linguistic intragenetic features* which make these *standardized speech acts* of the individual's first language empower him/her to assimilate easier the socio-pragmatic practices of the second language.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that two languages share some similar socio-pragmatic genetic patterns, and this represents a less-demanding neuro-cognitive effort for second language learners, to what extent language contact has contributed to change the genetic linguistic chains of the *standardized speech acts* of certain communities? Does this represent a pathway for the *grammaticalization* of certain speech acts? Consequently, it could be hypothesized that language contact and the *grammaticalization* of certain socio-pragmatic practices are indeed occurring in different linguistic communities. Therefore, how this would affect pragmatic pedagogical issues related to foreign language learning and teaching? For instance, second language learning and teaching theories, textbooks, teaching material, etc.

Indirectness is a widely used 'socio-pragmatic practice' that can be found in a large number of languages all around the world. Consequently,



individuals tend to use 'indirect speech acts' mainly in connection with politeness (Leech, 1983). People also use indirect strategies when they want to make their speech more interesting, when they want to reach goals different from their partners' or when they want to increase the force of the message communicated (Thomas, 1995). English is one of these languages where speakers are highly indirect during speech acts given its roots in the Anglo-Saxon culture; nevertheless, in interpersonal communication 'directness' is also found mainly in contexts where there exists a close and familiar relationship (Wierzbicka, 1991). On the other hand, Wierzbicka (1991) highlighted that whereas American English relies on indirectness, Polish and Russian are more direct since these languages offer other possibilities of softening the illocutionary force of speech acts, such as a high-developed system of diminutives, involving not only nouns, but also adjectives and adverbs. On the other hand, in general, Mexican Spanish is a variety that can be most of the times direct and less frequently indirect in formal contexts, and in familiar and close environments is more direct, in this sense, it resembles Argentinean Spanish, since in this variety there exists a tendency to employ more direct strategies in formal contexts (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989).

Traditionally *Metapragmatics* has been addressed from the perspective of how metalanguage is used as a means of theorizing or just to talk about the language in use or as a system (Bublitz and Hübler, 2007). On the other hand, in the foreign language teaching field has been explored the same case; however, little attention has been given to *Metapragmatics* in regards to how non-native speakers or foreign language learners employ certain *meta-utterances* in their ongoing discourse. At this point we got to the scenario where we must wonder, what is the relationship between *Metapragmatics*, syntactic complexity and pragmatic transfer from a first language to a second one? The answer has to do with the fact that these 'meta-utterances' or *Metapragmatic mechanisms* are simple and complex constructions which may operate as resources functioning as intercultural shields or intercultural softeners. That is to say, these mechanisms have the main function of protecting, softening or toning down the message delivered by the speaker "X" in relation to any kind of pragmatic transfer that this individual makes from their mother tongue to their second language, and therefore, the addressee "Y" could be aware that the intention of the message delivered by "X" is not to transcend their socio-cultural and socio-pragmatic boundaries, but only to establish an intercultural understanding. This notion is similar to the one that was proposed by Sarangi (1998), where it refers to *Metapragmatics* as a necessary intercultural understanding resource, with which speakers understand what they are doing or saying in a specific scenario by monitoring



the structures being employed; however, Sarangi (1998) does not suggest the mechanisms that can facilitate such intercultural understanding.

When learning a foreign language, getting familiarized with complex syntactic structures is not an indicator that when establishing a conversation with a native speaker, this speech act will be successful since there exist some other aspects or elements that play an important role that make the conversation flow. Hymes (1971) pointed out that there are some standards at very different levels that have to do with the fact to formulate not only grammatically correct sentences, but also socially appropriate. Here is where 'Metapragmatic Awareness' acquires its status of importance in intercultural understanding during the communicative act, that is, the non-grammatical strategies that a non-native speaker uses to demonstrate courtesy, kindness, respect, among others. Therefore, we can situate *Metapragmatic mechanisms* 'Metapragmatic Awareness'.

Holmes and Brown (1987) gave us a scenario where a non-native speaker is learning a foreign language. In this sort of learning context, it is shown that these learners may not develop this type of 'Metapragmatic Awareness', which can lead them to the pragmatic transfer of socio-cultural aspects from their native language to their second one. In this example provided by these authors, it is mentioned how a foreign student tells his teacher as a compliment '*That dress you are wearing is so adorable*'. This sentence from a grammatical perspective is acceptable; however, there is an influence of the pragmatics of the student's first language, that is, in the American culture compliments about clothes are common (Manes and Wolfson, 1981), while the teacher found this compliment inappropriate, because in her culture compliments are offensive and inappropriate.

On the other hand, it is essential to mention that several studies have shown that students who learn a foreign language and who have a high grammatical competence, not necessarily have a pragmatic competence similar to the grammatical. That is, students who have advanced syntactic skills can use the language inappropriately in terms of certain socio-pragmatic aspects (Boxer and Pickering, 1995; Kasper, 1997b). Kasper (2001) adduced that opportunities for learning pragmatics in a foreign language learning context in comparison to a second language learning environment are much more restricted. That is, in a foreign language learning context, students may not find situations where at least certain scenarios from the language in use could be inferred, in order to achieve certain conclusions about what is the most appropriate in terms of pragmatic use.



According to some previous studies, linguistic ability of students who are learning a language in a foreign context, with respect to mainly pragmatic aspects, not necessarily present an improvement compared to some other linguistic domains, such as grammar, listening and reading skills (Tanaka and Kawade, 1982). Moreover, Bardovi-Härilig and Hartford (1991) showed that the grammatical ability or language proficiency on standardized tests such as TOEFL, does not necessarily guarantee the pragmatic ability of the individual. As a result, based on these investigations, it is urgent to start conducting research regarding to how 'Metapragmatic Awareness' can be developed in foreign language learning contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pragmatic Transfer in Foreign Language Learning Contexts

The genesis of the concept 'transfer' has its research-based origins in the controversial term of "interference". Van Obercke (1976) highlighted that the concept of 'interference' was adapted from the field of physics, and it refers to the encounter between two wave motions resulting in a reinforcement, or otherwise in the dissolution of a wave; however, other sciences such as pedagogy, psychology, electronics and linguistics have taken this concept to explain the negative part of this linguistic phenomenon as synonymous of disturbance. The concept of 'transfer' in the context of foreign language learning had a negative denotation at first, when it was called 'interference'; however, Selinker (1972) found that this concept of 'interference' could also be seen from a positive perspective, and therefore, it could represent an important linguistic apprenticeship-stage for students to learn a second language.

His book *Interlanguage* published in 1972, states that 'language transfer' can be positive, when the influence of the mother tongue facilitates the learning of a foreign language; however, this can also be negative when it causes an error. The definition of Odlin (1989) is probably the one that has been used mostly in the research field of second language learning, given that, this author relates 'transference' to a negative and positive phenomenon. Furthermore, Odlin (1989) pointed out that the similarities and differences in both languages results in the transfer of several linguistic features from different domains.

Finally, the term "cross-linguistic influence" was introduced by Shardwood-Smith and Kellerman (1986) to indicate that at the time of transferring may also occur some other events, such as prohibition, borrowings, and other



aspects related to the loss of the second language; However, as it was alluded previously, Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) mentioned that both terms, that is, 'cross-linguistic influence' and 'transfer', are interchangeable and theoretically considered neutral given their positive and negative connotations.

Once cleared the evolution experienced by the concept 'transfer' or "cross-linguistic influence", it is necessary to mention the fact that there is a vast repertory of studies regarding transfers from different linguistic domains, such as morphosyntactic, phonetic-phonological and lexical-semantic that occur when learning a second language; however, pragmatic transfers have not been widely documented, that is, currently there are more questions than answers, in regards to what pragmatic elements are those that can be transferable and which present less susceptibility. Escandell Vidal (2009) stated that it is difficult to detect the influence of socio-cultural factors (extralinguistic) on the verbal behavior that students transfer from the first language to the second one.

The research conducted in 1957 by Robert Lado seems to be the first study associated to pragmatic transfer. In one of his major works on linguistic transfer this author emphasized the fact that cultural aspects in learning foreign languages could be transferred from the mother tongue to the second language. On the other hand, Riley (1989) noted that pragmatic errors occurring at the time of 'transfer' are the consequence that individuals during the communicative act get to impose social norms of their first culture, in a scenario in which would be more appropriate to use the addressees' socio-cultural standards. In this case, Escandel Vidal (2004) reaffirms this idea because this author mentioned that at the time of transferring pragmatic patterns, we use our knowledge of the world, the observable behavior, and the expectations created by the situation, that is, most second language learners tend to transfer cultural aspects and linguistic behaviors of their first language when learning a second one. Therefore, these students who are learning a foreign language must acquire the new system of pragmatic conventions during their learning process.

2.2 Metapragmatics and Metapragmatic Awareness

The emergence of Metapragmatics (Mey, 1993) and Metapragmatic Awareness (Veschueren, 2000) has brought a number of different points of view regarding its methodological design and main objectives in teaching foreign languages. On the one hand, Roberts (1998) mentioned that this is a meta-level to consider, which implies the perspective of the speaker in certain



events and the relationship between the communicative act and its participants. Furthermore, Nikula (2002) gave us a reflective concept involving the use of the language, and provided an example. For instance, at one point a mother can tell that her daughter was very rude when she talked in a certain inappropriated way to an individual, which indicates that every culture has certain standards that dictate or indicate the way in which someone must start, get involved, maintain and conclude a conversation depending on the situation or context.

Vershueren (2000) stated that Metapragmatic Awareness is like a reflexive interpretation when speaking, while Kinginger and Farell (2004) noted that Metapragmatic Awareness is defined as the knowledge of the social meaning of linguistic forms and second variable recognition of the ways in which these forms are used depending on the social context; however, for purposes of this study, it was decided to opt for the definition given by Sarangi (1996) where he referred to this as a “resource for intercultural understanding” (p. 63), since the speakers deduce what they are doing in a specific scenario by self-monitoring the structures they employ. We judge that this definition is associated more with our study because Sarangi (1996) sees the Metapragmatics as a phenomenon to infer pragmalinguistic intercultural understanding through certain resources during the communicative act.

On the other hand, there have been some researchers who have ventured to explore this field, i.e, to analyze and investigate how not developing ‘Metapragmatic Awareness’ can directly influence negatively on students who are learning a foreign language when having a conversation with a native speaker.

Tanaka and Kawade (1982) investigated the perception of courtesy by native English speakers and advanced students of English whose first language was Japanese. One finding was that Japanese students who were advanced students of the language and who were in Japan when learning English, tended to choose strategies with a less degree of courtesy in certain situations. The study found that 14.2% of these students, that is, advanced students, selected less polite strategies and more direct expressions, such as “*I want to borrow your car*” or ‘*Lend me your pen*’ their father or friends. On the other hand, only a few native speakers (5.2%) chose these strategies. As a result, this can be interpreted as a clear indicator that learning English as a foreign language signifies not to be exposed to situations where one can learn the specific ‘socio-pragmatic strategies’ of the second language.



Moreover, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) conducted a study with Hebrew students, and these authors found that these learners transferred certain pragmatic aspects from their mother tongue to some rules of the second language. This research was conducted with Hebrew students in a foreign language learning context, focusing exclusively on the speech act of apology. The study demonstrated that students tended to transfer the 'Hebrew feature' of using semantic expressions that show a lower degree of apology in comparison to English. On the other hand, Olshtain (1983) conducted another study, but at this time, the apology act was made by students learning Hebrew as a second language. The participants were native speakers of English and Russian and showed different degrees of transfer. The American participants had the highest degree and were followed by the Russians.

Finally, a study by Eslami-Rasekh (2004) focused on exploring what aspects can play an important role in the classroom to expose students learning English as a foreign language to situations where they could improve their Metapragmatic Awareness. The study investigated the effect of explicit Metapragmatic instruction in regards to the understanding of speech acts of advanced students of English as a foreign language. The speech acts selected were requests, complaints and apologies were as the focus of teaching and the aim of this study. Consequently, this study found that conversations with teachers, cooperative grouping, "role plays" and other pragmatic orientation tasks were the main strategies to enhance their understanding of the speech acts of the second language.

2.3 The Development of Metapragmatic Awareness in the Foreign Language Teaching Field

The foreign language learning classroom has become the only place where students can come to practice, write and master their skills in the second language. Therefore, the development of 'Metapragmatic Awareness' must be one of the main objectives when learning a foreign language since this represents a 'cognitive- fixed link' towards an intercultural understanding; nonetheless, to what extent this must be an unconscious or *compos mentis* learning process?, what cognitive impact has choosing one of these pathways? or should it be a synchronous process in the foreign language classroom?. To achieve this, some researchers in this field have proposed various aspects or strategies to consider in order to develop this meta-level.

House (1996) showed that by Metapragmatic instruction and discussion, students can get to make significant gains in the pragmatic ability when learning a foreign language; however, this author mentioned that it is



vital to investigate what strategies can help the educator to enhance student's Metapragmatic Awareness, with particular emphasis on settings where English is learnt as a foreign language but also in second language learning contexts.

Another aspect to consider in the foreign language learning classroom has to do with 'input enhancement', which is defined by Fukyua and Clark (1999) as an implicit pragmatic technique that provides Metapragmatic information. However, Takahashi (2001) proposes a much broader and deeper vision on 'input enhancement'. She distinguishes three different degrees and types about "input enhancement". First, this author tried to define 'explicit teaching', which implies a Metapragmatic explanation of form-function relationships of the structures of the language being learned. On the other hand, "comparison way" is another type of "input enhancement" in which students compare their own discourse structures with native speakers. Finally, the "search form", is the one in which students must identify destination strategies within the prescribed scenarios.

Finally, with respect to the foreign language teacher, Glasgow (2008) stated that they should definitely have a highly-developed 'Metapragmatics Awareness' of the second language and should be able:

- 1) To help students plan effective conversation strategies.
- 2) To engage in conversations with precise Pragmalinguistic forms.
- 3) To provide students with a broader repertoire of what 'they can say' depending on the context.

3. OBJECTIVES

General:

This qualitative conversation analysis has as main objective to conduct a micro-analysis of the corpus of this study, i.e. the recordings, focusing exclusively on *Metapragmatic mechanisms*.

Specific:

- i. To analyze the data to determine what type of *Metapragmatic mechanisms* are used in the ongoing discourse.
- ii. To classify in the typology proposed in this research the different types of *Metapragmatic mechanisms*.
- iii. To identify whether the participants of this study employed some other *Metapragmatic mechanisms* not included in the typology proposed.



4. METHODOLOGY

The process that was established in this study can be explained as follows:

First, participants were selected according to their level of English, in this sense, we decided to choose 20 Mexican students enrolled in a B.A in English Language Teaching, who were born in Mexico and who learned English in the same context. It was necessary that they had never taken English courses in a native country. As a result, all of them had to have from 550 to 600 points in the TOEFL IBT exam, that is, a high intermediate level. On the other hand, once it was selected the participants, it was decided to record the natural learning environment of these students. Consequently, it was decided to record 10 sessions of 50 minutes where these students were taking one of their courses and had a natural interact between them and the teacher. It is vital to mention that the educator who taught the class was a native English speaker. Finally, once the data was gathered the recordings were analyzed qualitatively through the micro-analysis of the transcripts and trying to group the *Metapragmatic mechanisms* found in the typology proposed in this research.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results that have been achieved through this micro-analysis mentioned previously, indicate that the participants tended to use an insubstantial number of *Metapragmatic mechanisms* despite the fact that these are students with a high-proficiency in English. These mechanisms are: (1) Disclaimers (Hedging, Cognitive Disclaimers y Apologetic Markers), (2) Polite Markers (negative politeness), (3) Commentary Markers (Manner-of-speaking Markers) and (4) Mitigation markers (Pseudo-conditional Markers).

The findings of this research are presented in the following section:

a) disclaimers

"Disclaimers" range from a simple sentence to a complex sentence, most often accompanied by the adversative conjunction "but". Tyler (1978) gives some examples of these 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' in English:

(1) a. *I'm only joking.*

b. *This is serious.*

c. *I'm speaking to you as a friend.*



d. ***When I say X, I mean Y.***

Similarly, Overstreet and Yule (2002) cited the following expressions that function as 'disclaimers', and they mentioned that they share a formula which is interpreted as "not X or whatever, but Y".

(2) a. ***I don't mean to sound like your mother or anything, but....***

b. ***I wasn't trying to be nosey or anything, but***

c. ***We don't mean to cause a fuss or anything, but ...***

It can be appreciated in (2) that it is employed a "mechanism of clarification," issued by the speaker to the addressee, in order to avoid any misunderstanding. It is here when we can talk about a "Metapragmatic Mechanism" that functions as an "intercultural shield" or "intercultural softner", and as a result, they can do a great deal to avoid some kind of pragmatic transfer from their mother tongue to the second language. Moreover, for purposes of this study, it was decided to opt for the definition of Hewitt and Stokes (1975), who offer a typology of these mechanisms. These authors define 'disclaimers' as 'verbal devices employed to prevent early doubts and negative characterizations' (p. 3); however, it is essential to state that since in the present study were only found some of these mechanisms, it was decided to consider only some "disclaimers" from their typology, that is, "Hedging" and "Cognitive Disclaimers", and add another mechanism to this typology, that is, "Apologetic Markers", which we suggest, based on their characteristics, function as "disclaimers".

Type I: Hedging

- ***I could be wrong on my facts, but I think ...***
- ***I really haven't thought this through very well, but ...***

Type II: Cognitive Disclaimers

- ***This may seem strange to you ,but ...***
- ***Don't react right away to what I'm going to say, but...***

Type III: Apologetic Markers



- **Forgive me for my way of speaking, but.....**

In the study, as mentioned above, were found only certain 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' functioning as 'disclaimers'. Some of these are "hedging", "cognitive disclaimers" and "apologetic markers".

- *Heading*

"Hedge" is defined by Schröder and Zimmer (1997) as one or more lexical-syntactic elements or even a clause used to lessen the impact of a statement or to modify a postposition, while 'hedging' refers to the textual strategies that employ these elements so that they may function with specific communicative purposes, in this sense "hedging" given its nature can be categorized as a 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms'.

In this study, the following constructions in (3) are clearly functioning as "hedging", and as a result, as "Metapragmatic Mechanisms":

(3) a. ***I might not be okay with this idea, but...you could evaluate us different.***

b. ***I could need to think it better, but...you are supposed to be less strict.***

c. ***I would be possibly incorrect, but... you could give us fewer assignments.***

d. ***I had better think it twice, but...stop the lesson in the next chapter, we are tired.***

e. ***I should perhaps reconsider it, but...give us more examples of the lesson***

Based on the analysis, all constructions in (3), we can determine that they are functioning as 'intercultural shifters' and 'intercultural softeners', that is, they represent to some extent a "socio-pragmatic armor-plating" that is using the non-native speaker to avoid any misunderstanding, by announcing the addressee that the addresser's intention is simply to share an opinion that he/she has. Additionally, all examples given in (3) exhibit a common grammatical particle, that is, an auxiliary that from a semantic perspective demonstrates a sense of 'communicative backing', since it is accompanied by elements that make it achieve that status in the clause.

For example, in (3a) the modal 'might' or 'could' instead of being expressing their natural sense of "low probability or likelihood", the fact that the individual is expressing that he/she will be right or not with the idea that



he/she is about to say, it gives the addresser a shield which protects his/her idea, which is a direct suggestion that he/she is doing, shaped by socio-pragmatic issues of the mother tongue of the participants of this study, ie, Spanish, and consequently, this 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' prevents a pragmatic transfer from their mother tongue to the second language, English.

On the other hand, the same process happens in the rest of the examples mentioned above, that is, the auxiliaries are not performing their primary function, but giving signaling the addressee to respect the idea he/she has, and avoiding certain communication breakdown during the speech act, and as a result, not transferring socio-pragmatic patterns from their first language (Spanish) to their second language (English). If we analyze (3b), it is avoided transferring a suggestion that almost has the status of an obligation, in (3c), the transfer of a direct suggestion, and finally (3d) and (3e) is avoided the transfer of a direct request. It is inevitable to mention that in Spanish, there is a marked tendency to make requests, orders, suggestions, directly; however, in English are required some other socio-pragmatic resources that make requests, orders, suggestions, among others, not that direct.

- *Cognitive disclaimers*

The nature of these mechanisms is based on the fact that in addition to protecting what is said by a non-native speaker, they prevent the addressee, that is the native speaker, of not finding the message as disrespectful, as an impolite way of requesting information or assistance, or a way not supported socially in that culture to suggest, give an opinion, refusing to do something, give a compliment, among others. These mechanisms are more associated with inhibiting a possible negative reaction of the native speaker that may have an 'adverse backspin' on the communicative act. In the examples below, it can be seen some constructions with "cognitive disclaimers" that were used by the participants in this study:

(4) a. ***It might be surprising to you, but...I don't find interesting this lesson.***

b. ***I expect not to offend you with this, but...you could be more dynamic.***

c. ***It will look awkward these words to you, but... I don't get the gist of the topic.***

d. ***Don't take my words as an offense, but... can you speak slower during the lesson?***



e. *Don't assume I am trying to intervene in your decisions, but..can you do it again?*

f. *I am not encouraging you to change your mind, but... give us more time to finish.*

In (4a) we can observe that the speaker is expressing an opinion on a topic, in which it is implied that he/she is not interested in the lesson: however, before giving his/her direct opinion, it is employed a "cognitive disclaimer", preventing the native speaker that the utterance may be found 'socio-pragmatically unforeseen and offbeat'. Consequently, it is avoided the pragmatic transfer of a direct opinion that in Spanish is usual, but in English is interpreted as an impolite way to express an opinion.

In the example (4b) occurs almost the same situation as in (4a); nonetheless, in this construction is expressed that perhaps what will be mentioned can be found offensive by the addressee, moreover, the transfer of a direct suggestion is avoided, that is, 'you could be more dynamic'. In (4c) the cognitive disclaimer 'Don't take my words as an offense, but...' is an alerting system that warns the addressee of something atypical, in (4c) the non-native speaker is expressing his opinion on the issue, saying "I don't get the gist of the topic", this case is similar to (4a), where it is a avoided a pragmatic transfer of a direct opinion.

On the other hand, in (4d) and (4e), there is a 'negative grammatical particle' in the 'cognitive disclaimer', that is 'don't', which is expressing that what is being said by the addresser must not be decoded as an offense or with the intention to influence on the decisions of the native speaker or addressee. For example, in (4d) and (4e) both messages are aimed to performing a "pseudo-indirect request"; namely, commonly these constructions are formulated with certain auxiliaries, such as 'could you', 'can you', 'would you' preceded by a vocative and decoded as indirect requests; nonetheless, these are 'socio-pragmatically non-standardized ambiguous events'; that is, in some geographical areas, the formula vocative plus the indirect request (*can you?.. could you?...would you?*) may be decoded as more 'directness-oriented' and less polite, and in some others are more 'indirectness-oriented' and more polite.

Finally, in (4f), it is clearly signaling that the intention of the non-native speaker is not to take part on the decisions of the addressee, but the student invites the native teacher to pay attention to the direct request, which in this case is quite frequently in Spanish, but English is interpreted as



a synonym for "toughness" or "discourtesy"; however, the "cognitive disclaimer" "I am not encouraging you to change your mind, but" helps the communicative act not to have any kind of socio-pragmatic or socio-cultural misunderstanding.

- *Apologetic Markers*

The last mechanism found in the corpus of this study within "disclaimers" are "apologetic markers". These are elements that show "Metapragmatic Awareness", as they act as a 'multifunctional device', that is, they perform three main functions: a) to protect the 'socio-pragmatically influence opinions' of the non-native speaker, b) to announce the native speaker not to react negatively towards what is being said, and c) to express a high degree of blameworthiness through an 'intercultural shield' or 'intercultural softener' to ensure no misunderstandings, which to certain degree soften the conversation.

In the study the following constructions as "apologetic markers" were found:

(5) a. ***Forgive the way I am going to say this, but...you have to tell us what to study.***

b. ***Excuse me for taking this position, but...I don't understand what you are saying***

In example (5a), we can appreciate that the non-native speaker is expressing some degree of 'repentance' for what he/she will say, by using the verb 'Forgive'. However, it must be inferred that this represents a "forged guilt" that the non-native speaker is used as an 'intercultural softener' to express his/her opinion during the speech act. In this case the speaker is emitting a direct request; however, the "apologetic marker" is working as a 'Metapragmatic Mechanism' that prevents the transfer of such direct request which is common in Spanish but not in English.

b) Polite Markers

The principle of courtesy is divided into four strategies: "direct behavior", 'positive courtesy', 'negative and indirect behavior' (Hirschová 2006). In the study only some mechanisms associated with the third strategy, that is, 'negative behavior' were found. Consequently, it will be provided a brief introduction of these markers "negative behavior".



These markers allow the non-native speaker to evade any conflict, such as disagreements or criticism, added to this, these markers have as main function smoothing an expression through certain mechanisms, such as indirect questions. In fact, the desired expression is introduced through certain formulas of courtesy. For example, '*Could you be so kind ... Sorry to bother you, but....*'. The addresser is indirect in order not to damage the communicative act (Hirschová, 2006). Therefore, given the characteristics of these markers proposed by Hirschová (2006), we judge that they may function as 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' not allowing the pragmatic transfer from the first language to the second one.

In the following examples were found the next constructions with "Polite Markers":

(6) a. *I was wondering if you could....give us more time to finish the assignment.*

b. *Would you be so kind of....not finishing the class until 10.*

In (6a) the non-native speaker uses "I was wondering" which provides a sense of courtesy with one of the most powerful devices to express politeness; however, as indicated above is only a mechanism whose primary function is to express formality rather than a request. On the other hand, the conjunction '*if*', the pronoun '*you*' and the auxiliary verb '*could*' or '*might*' add to the 'code-message', which is an imperative construction a more 'indirectness-oriented sense'.

Finally, in the example (6b) the auxiliary verb '*would*', the pronoun '*you*' and the verb "be" plus the addition of the adjective '*kind*', which expects a "benevolent attitude" of the addressee, makes the command "don't finish the class until 10, not to have a negative effect on the communicative act.

c) Commentary Pragmatic Markers

According to Fraser (1996)

... these markers are lexical expressions that have both a representational meaning that specifies a complete message, as a sense of procedure, noting that the purpose of this message is to function as a comment on any aspect of the basic message.

(p.179)



For purposes of this research, it was decided to analyze only one type of these markers, that is, "Manner-of-speaking markers" as we believe that they function as "Metapragmatic Mechanisms".

Manner -of- Speaking Markers

These are markers, as mentioned by Fraser (ibid) by which 'the speaker may signal a commentary in which the basic message is transmitted' (p. 181). In the following examples are shown certain construction with 'Manner-of-speaking markers':

- (7) a. ***Speaking candidly***, you need to stop smoking.
b. ***Speaking frankly***, we need to leave right now.

In the examples in (7), it can be observed how in both cases, that is, (7a) and (7b) there are 'Manner-of-speaking Markers' which are introducing the basic message in a non-direct way. Firstly, in (7a) "*Speaking candidly*" serves to introduce a direct request, which is '*you need to stop smoking*'. Therefore, "speaking candidly" serves as a 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' essentially as an 'intercultural softener', as it reduces the degree of impoliteness. On the other hand, in (7b), 'speaking frankly' fulfills the same function as "speaking candidly" in 7 (a), because it helps the command "we need to leave right now" to decrease its level of "directness-oriented".

In the study were found certain mechanisms used by participants which functioned from our perspective as "Manner-of-speaking markers" and as a result, as 'Metapragmatic mechanisms'

In the examples shown in (8), it can be seen some constructions with these markers:

- (8) a. ***Speaking honestly***, we must do another assignment less complex.
b. ***Now talking frankly***, you have to explain the class slower.

In (8a), the main message is '*we must do another assignment less complex*', which a direct request is made by the non-native speaker; however, before this message, we can appreciate that the non-native speaker employed '*speaking honestly*', which serves as a "Manner-of-speaking marker", which in turn causes the status of the direct request to decline to a suggestion. The use of "must" have to be carefully used, since in Spanish direct requests with this auxiliary are often used; however, in English the use of this type of

construction has to be accompanied by other resources that make it more indirect and polite.

In (8b), we find the same case; however, this example is surrounded of other grammatical particles but with the same pragmatic function, that is, the non-native speaker is making a direct request 'you have to explain the class slower' and previously using the 'Manner-of-speaking Marker', which in turn prevents the transfer from Spanish to English of this direct request.

d) Mitigation Markers

'Pseudo-conditional Markers' are within the group of 'Mitigation Markers' and these in turn indicate a desire to reduce the impact of the basic message (Brown and Levinson, 1998). Therefore, given the role that these authors pointed out on these markers, we can determine that they can function as 'Metapragmatic mechanisms'

In the following examples some constructions with 'Pseudo conditional markers' are shown:

(9) a. *If you could give me one minute of your time, where is the bathroom?*

b. *If I am not that direct, where is the school?*

c. *If you don't mind, can I use your restroom?*

In (9), we observe that all of the examples have an 'if clause' which is situated within adverbial subordination and expresses a condition; however, the function of these subordinated clauses is not a condition, but to demonstrate a high degree of courtesy or politeness so as not to make questions so directly. Here at this stage, we are on the scenario where it is needed to clarify certain points on the role of 'Pseudo-conditional Markers'.

Haspelmath (1995) stated that a pattern that distinguishes adverbials from the rest has to do with their 'linear arrangement', that is, while coordinate clauses are linked with the previous sentence, adverbials may appear both preposed and postposed to the main clause. Regarding the 'linear arrangement' of adverbial subordinate clauses, this operation is more related to a pragmatic function. On the one hand, adverbial clauses that are preposed to the main clause have particular organizational functions in discourse. In its basic use adverbial clauses that appear at the beginning serve to present information that is assumed pragmatically, providing a 'thematic ground' for new information to be found in subsequent clauses (Haspelmath, 1995).



On the contrary, adverbial clauses that appear postposed are employed at the level of communicative interaction between the speaker and the addressee; however, for example, if we have a conditional clause postposed as in (10), it does not indicate a condition as it normally would, but rather in this case serves as a polite pragmatic marker.

(10) I will use your restroom...**if you don't mind**.

At this point we can argue that in (10) "*if you don't mind*" complies with the characteristics of a 'Pseudo-conditional Marker'; however, since it is situated postposed to the direct request, it may to some extent not have such a long-lasting pragmatic function, unlike if it were located preposed to the direct request. The argument is based on the fact that when situating at the speech level a direct request and then followed by the 'Pseudo-conditional Marker', it promotes that the addressee from a cognitive perspective encodes first the direct request by the preference on the encoding-hierarchical level, as this is the core-message and the addressee is giving more preference to the direct request than to the "Pseudo-conditional Marker".

Givón (2014) stated that adverbial clauses have been affected diachronically in English by 're-interpretation', a common mechanism driving de-subordination that converts these subordinated clauses into manipulative indirect speech-acts eliding their main clauses. In (11) this author gave us some examples:

(11) **a. Subordinate ADV-clause:** *It would be nice if you could get me a spoon....*

b. Indirect speech-act: *Now if you could get me a spoon?*

As a result, based on the examples given in (11), to what extent these 'if clauses' are indeed de-subordinated and are encoded as indirect speech acts in English? Could these 'de-subordinated if clauses' represent the grammaticalization of a 'Metapragmatic mechanisms'?

In the corpus of this research, only a few structures with 'pseudo-conditional markers' were found. The following examples in (12) can serve for the analysis of these 'Metapragmatic mechanisms':

(12) **a. *If you don't mind*, can you repeat the instructions of the assignment?**

b. *If you have time*, can you tell us our grades?



In (12a), we can see that the core-message is a pseudo-indirect request 'can you repeat the instructions of the assignment?', which is performed by a non-native speaker to a native speaker, however we can observe that the 'Pseudo-conditional Marker' 'if you don't mind' is preposed to the pseudo-indirect request avoiding the transference of a request, while in (12b), the same situation is occurring, but in this case is encoded by another "Pseudo-conditional Marker" "If you have time".

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we adopted the new perspective of 'Metapragmatics' given by Bublitz and Hübler (2007), in which the co-authors focus on how participants in the discourse employ certain "metta-utterances" and on the pragmatics of these resources. It was appreciated the frequency in which students of a B.A. in English Language Teaching with a high-intermediate level of English produced only some constructions with this type of 'Metapragmatic mechanisms'. On the other hand, we could prove that these resources in turn served as mechanisms for not transferring direct requests, direct opinions, direct suggestions, among others, which are very common in Spanish, but not in English. Based on these observations and analysis, we can conclude principally in EFL contexts the teacher is required to develop this 'Metapragmatic Awareness' in their students, because in such learning environments, the EFL classroom becomes the only place where students can improve these 'Metapragmatic skills'. On the other hand, this study arose some limitations and questions, among them is the design of the instrument, that is, the recordings were made without any stimulus that could facilitate exposure to a scenario where the participants could employ more constructions functioning as 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' and in turn not allowing the pragmatic transfer to English of direct requests, direct opinions, direct suggestions, among others. Another aspect has to do with the fact of, how far these 'Metapragmatic Mechanisms' in another type of context have the same impact regarding 'intercultural understanding', that is, the contact between Spanish and English may have provoked that in certain contexts, such direct requests, direct opinions or direct suggestions common in the Spanish discourse, now are acceptable from socio-pragmatic and cultural perspective in the English discourse, or at least do not negatively intervene in the communicative act? Finally, we can consider that this is a new field that needs to be explored, and the results of this study have led us to consider both the unknown and the challenge to further explore this topic not only in English learning by native speakers of Spanish, but how these mechanisms

behave when learning some other languages, and if they avoid pragmatic transfer in such cases from the mother tongue to the second language.

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**‘THE CHINESE DREAM’: SOFT POWER AND CHINESE PUBLIC
DIPLOMACY IN ENGLISH**

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Abstract

CCTV News is the 24-hour English news channel owned by Chinese Central Television. The channel addresses a potentially large international English speaking viewers, even if no official viewership figures are available. This article is based on the content analysis of two programmes broadcast by CCTV News: ‘*Dialogue*’, a political talk-show discussing China’s role in international issues; and ‘*UpClose*’, a programme based on lifestyle interviews, and especially its series dedicate to explore and promote the ‘Chinese Dream’, one of the latest Chinese Government’s slogans.

Keywords: China, satellite television, Soft power, talk-show, television interviews, Chinese Dream.

1. INTRODUCTION

CCTV News, previously known as *CCTV-9*, is the English news channel promoted and managed by China Central Television (CCTV). The channel, which can be considered as an illustrative example of the new style of Chinese public diplomacy, was launched in September 2000, and in 2010 has been revamped in its form and content. A new funding plan approved by the government allowed the channel to broaden the international network of its news correspondents and offices, including new regional branches, specifically targeting some key geopolitical areas with dedicated channels (such as *CCTV Africa* and *CCTV America*). In the official presentation of the network on its website we learn that:

CCTV NEWS is China's contribution to greater diversity and wider perspectives in the global information flow. With a special focus on China, the channel also emphasizes events taking place in Asia and all developing countries. It provides international audiences with a window into understanding China and the world at large.

The emphasis on a central role in world politics for China, and to present the channel as a "contribution to the plurality of international perspectives" and at the same time as a 'window' on contemporary China is implied also in the channel's slogan: '*CCTV NEWS, Your Link to Asia*'. According to official sources, the channel has a potential of 85 million viewers all over the world, and is currently broadcast in more than a hundred countries (via satellite, cable and digital TV).

As pointed out in several recent studies, the Chinese media environment, divided between market and political imperatives, has gone through and still is in a phase of transition started some twenty years ago, trying to cope with external and internal pressures at the same time (Ma, 2000; Shi, 2005; Yuezhi, 2008). Still, some studies have argued that the partisan approach characterizing *CCTV News* is no more 'culture specific' than the model of commercial-professionalism dominant in the West, and that the Chinese journalists most of the times are not subjected to explicit censorship control from the government but are more generally committed to spread a national perspective essentially matching that of the government (Jirik, 2004; Dong and Shi, 2007). As such, the international viewers of *CCTV News* are presented with analysis and debates on Chinese economy, updates on the state of Chinese foreign relations and news on Japan and other Asian states and internal matters are portrayed in a Chinese perspective. As one of its former managers declared, the aim of the channel is:

...to voice a Chinese perspective on world affairs and to break the Western voice's monopoly on the news. Our opinions on the world are quite different from those of *CNN* and the *BBC*. [...] We are taking great efforts to minimise the tone of propaganda, to balance our reports, and to be objective. But we definitely won't be reporting as much negative domestic news as the western media.

(Cui, 2004 in Jirik, 2008, p.419)

This national perspective on domestic and international issues is spread through the TV channels in English (the main channel plus its channels for the African and American continent), as well as through *CCTV*'s online website. Apart from the Chinese and the English version, the website offers contents in nine other languages (French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Korean,



Mongol, Tibetan, Uyghur, Kazakh). Despite this significant coverage, the academic interest in CCTV's website has been quite limited so far, and especially considering the growing importance of the online broadcasting the use of the *CCTV News* website and its contents should be further explored. The channel launched an audience survey in 2013, though at present the results are still unavailable to the public. In addition, no other official viewership figures are available to determine the actual amount of followers. The limited observable data at the moment suggest, however, that the channel didn't succeed in building a strong international community of followers: no readers' comments are visible under any article published on the website, and the positioning of *CCTV News* on the social media is weaker than that of main competitors such as *Russia Today*, *Press TV* or *AlJazeera English*. Still, some of the contents presented on its website can be considered as relevant examples of *CCTV News*' political and cultural discourse. Similar to other state-promoted international channels, the editorial line of *CCTV News* can be seen as an example of what Joseph Nye famously defined as 'soft power' (Nye, 1990). As Quing Cao pointed out, though, while Nye defines the concept as only externally oriented, i.e. aimed exclusively at changing the behaviour of people outside the US, China's soft power is both internally and externally directed; it is focusing primarily on internal/national culture building, with the external dimension/international influence as a natural extension of internal cultural rejuvenation (Cao 2011).

This article offers a content analysis of two television shows which aired on *CCTV* in 2013 and are also available for viewing on the channel's website. The two different kind of programmes - a political talk show and a lifestyle and 'human interest' programme - cover a wide range of topics that are not only confined to explicit political issues. Here, some of the main topics and recurring discourses that have been offered to an international public by the Chinese news channel in English during the last years are discussed in further detail.

2. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO CCTV PROGRAMMES

2.1. 'Dialogue'

"*Dialogue*" is a prime time daily talk show designed to discuss domestic and international issues, promoting China as a mediator or counterpart in regional and world politics. Following the episodes published from April 13th 2013 to May 13th 2013, it is possible to see how Chinese 'soft power' is displayed and presented into a global media arena characterized by economic, political and discursive conflicts. According to the channel's official page, the show "presents personalities who have insightful stories, influence and



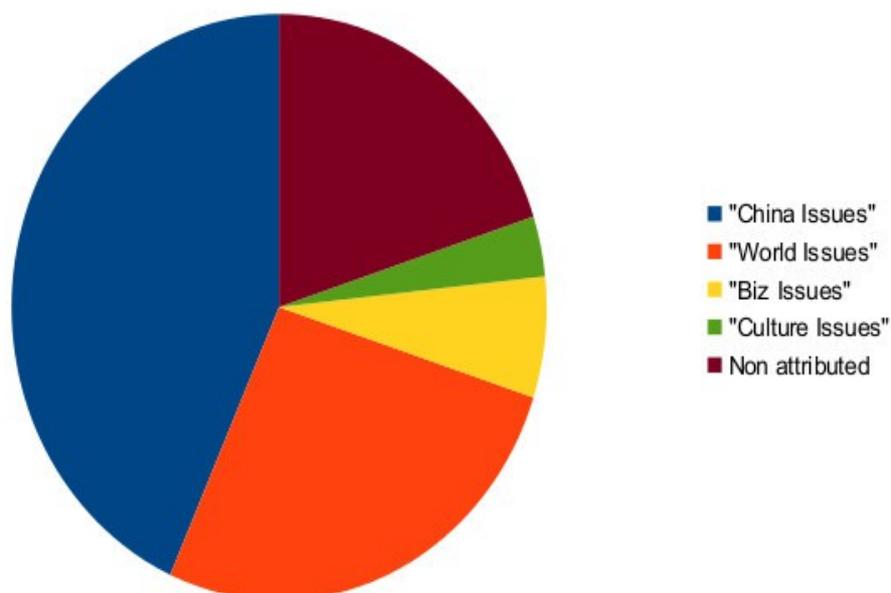
charisma. 'Dialogue' influences decision makers in government, business and academia. It's one of the most acclaimed and influential programs on *CCTV News*".

Facing these personalities in the studio, there are the two hosts Tian Wei and Yang Rui, a female and a male, both experienced journalists, characterised by two different and complementary hosting styles, as described in a recent study.

The two hosts present contrasting faces to the world. Yang is an aggressive (often impolite) male interviewer, while Tian Wei is the opposite: female, attractive, suave, polite, inquisitive, and intellectual. While Yang Rui often gives a negative and nationalistic image abroad, Tian Wei offers a softer and more inquisitive face of China to international audiences. Yang Rui fancies himself 'China's Mike Wallace' and has consciously studied the late American anchor's aggressive on-camera style.

(Shambaugh, 2013, p. 185)

The 30 episodes analysed between April 13th 2013 and May 13th 2013, can be found on *CCTV News* website organised along the following four categories: '*China Issues*', '*World Issues*', '*Biz Issues*', and '*Culture Issues*'.



However, in practice this division does not necessarily reflect the content of the episodes, and episodes within one category can be centred around a variety of topics.

In this content analysis it becomes evident that most episodes approach all kind of different topics with the same focus on China's role in international relations that inevitably ends up being the pivot of all the discussions displayed in the show. For example, many of the episodes falling in the '*China Issues*' category are in fact concerning international relations; and conversely, several episodes identified as '*World Issues*' are more focused on the foreign or domestic policy of China. For these reasons, to analyse the contents, an alternative classification is used here that is based on the main topics discussed during each of the single episodes.

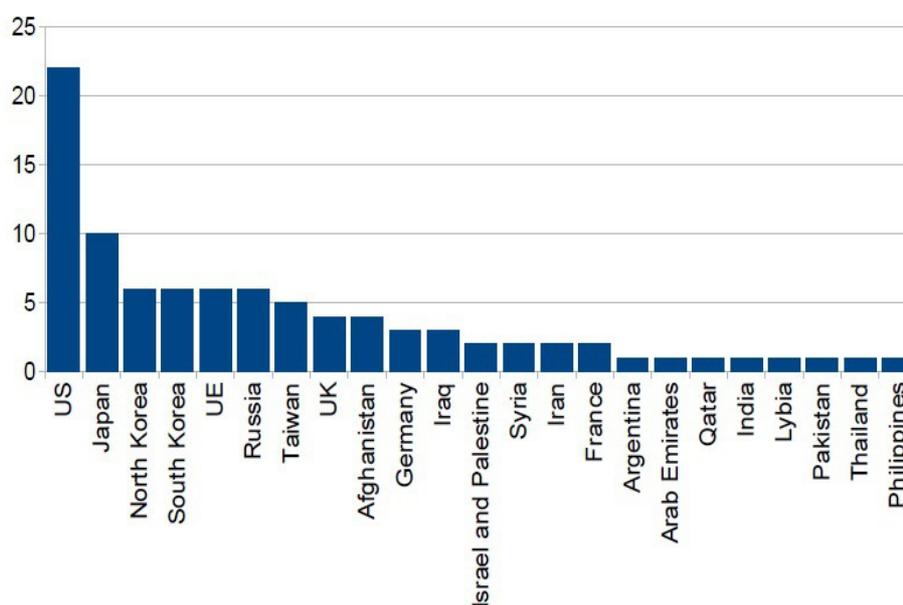
Below is a list of the contents found in the 30 episodes analysed. Even if within every episode of the programme more than one issue can be debated, for the purpose of this classification only one topic has been attributed to each episode, a choice based both on the titles and on the observation of the full episodes. Also, to gather different items with related topics, a more broad definition has been attributed to every grouping. As a result, what emerges from this classification is that most broadcasting time was dedicated to debate the relations between China and United States, together with China domestic issues. The other more recurrent topics are the relation between China and Japan, China's role in Asia, China's international influence; the only group of non-Chinese related topics has been labelled as '*Global Issues*'. This evidence is valid for the period considered, but, given that the episodes selected reflect the average content of the rest of the year, as observed until the end of 2014, it can be extended to the last two seasons of the show.

China-US relations	China-Japan relations	China's role in Asia	China's economy and domestic issues	China's international influence	Global issues
4/13/2013 "Kerry visits China"	4/14/2013 "Anti-Japan dramas draw fire"	4/25/2013 "Tensions escalate on Korean Peninsula"	4/15/2013 "Xi's vision for military"	4/26/2013 "Impact of Hollande's visits to China"	4/16/2013 "Bomb attack at Boston marathon"
4/17/2013 "Kerry outlines US-Asia policy"	4/23/2013 "Japan MPs visit Yasukuni Shrine"	4/29/2013 "Mainland talent show captivates Taiwan"	4/19/2013 "Shanghai postgrad poisoning"	04/30/2013 "Teen golfing star Guan Tianlang"	4/18/2013 "Life and legacy of the Thatcher"
4/22/2013 "Better human rights protection urged"	05/02/2013 "China-Japan ties under new strain"	05/11/2013 "Sino-Thai ties & diplomacy in Asia"	4/20/2013 "7.0 magnitude earthquake hits SW China"	05/01/2013 "Decline of west & rise of rest"	4/24/2013 "US licks wounds after Boston bombings"
05/03/2013 "New China-US partnership"	05/06/2013 "Japan walks a dangerous path"	05/13/2013 "Taiwan fisherman killing ignites regional tension"	4/21/2013 "M-7.0 quake hits Lushan county"	05/07/2013 "Israeli & Palestinian leaders visit China"	4/28/2013 "We-media's bigger role in China ties"
05/04/2013 "Asia and US foreign policy"			4/27/2013 "China's economic growth & currency war"		
05/05/2013 "Sino-US ties face historic opportunity"			05/09/2013 "China's new economic blueprint"		
05/12/2013 "Pentagon report on China's military"			05/10/2013 "China gets serious over food safety"		

Given that the program is mainly focused on discussing the relations among China and other nations, another possible way of deducing the channel's political priorities and perspectives on world's affairs is by looking in how many episodes a country is mentioned during the show.

For this purpose, the number of episodes in which a nation is mentioned is considered. The mention can, in fact, be made by any guest in the studio, even if the nation is not immediately related to the main topic of the segment. No distinction is made on how many times the name of a nation is repeated during a single episode.

The result is that, as shown in the table below, there is a quite limited number of countries that dominate the discourse during the show's airtime. From 30 episodes analysed, the United States is mentioned in 22 of them; Japan in 10 episodes; North Korea in 6; South Korea in 6; European Union in 6 (counted separately from its member states; of them, only a few were mentioned autonomously: UK in 4 episodes; Germany in 3, and; France in 2). Russia was mentioned in 6 episodes, Taiwan in 5; Afghanistan in 4, followed by Iraq (3), Israel (2), Palestine (2), Iran (2), and Syria (2). Other states were only mentioned in a single episode (Argentina, Arab Emirates, India, Libya, Qatar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand).



Broadening the classification from categories to key topics allows for include also subjects which are relevant even if not included in the main issue to which the episode is dedicated. To do this, for each episode, the 4 main topics discussed were listed. By combining these topics for 30 episodes, a cloud was created indicating the main issues debated in the show (see below). It is evident that some of the topics are recurrent in the programmes' discussions due to them being main happening at the time of the broadcasting: this is the case of news stories such as the Boston Marathon bombing or the Euro-zone debt crisis. However other topics, not subjects of the main news at the time, are equally recurrent: among these are the US

Japanese guest was invited in the show (a professor from Kyoto University), and he was actually interviewed in all the five episodes centred on Japan politics. Almost the totality of the academic guests had a stable or temporary position in Chinese Universities (20 out of 23), while the former politicians or members of consultancy companies were mostly Americans (6 out of 8). Only 7 of the 45 guests were women. In most of the episodes, two of the guests were present in the studio, while occasionally joined by one or two online guests connected via telephone or satellite feed. In four cases, though, the episodes were dedicated to 'face to face' interviews. The 'special guests' to which the one-to-one interview format was dedicated in the period considered are: Niall Ferguson, Professor of History, Harvard University; Robert Wescott, former Economic Advisor to President Clinton; Richard Armitage, Former US Deputy Secretary of State, foreign policy advisor of Reagan and Bush, ex military in counter terrorism, and now head of Armitage international consultancy society; Randall Schriver, President of Project 2049 Institute; Former Deputy Assistant US Secretary of State, East Asian and Pacific Region. To summarize, of these four 'face-to-face' interviews, three were with former American politicians and consultants, and centred on relations between China and United States, and one with a British scholar, speaking about the decline of the West and the rise of the 'rest'. What seems to emerge through all these different parameters, by looking at this television show from different perspectives, is that the only valuable 'Dialogue' for its authors is mostly a continuous power confrontation between China and the US, where the latter is embodied in turn by different guests, all of which testify to recognise the growing political and economical role of their counterpart.

2.2. 'UpClose'

Nevertheless not every part of *CCTV News* editorial line is overtly political. An example of the channel's 'soft-news' experiments is 'UpClose', a weekly program of one-to-one interviews that has been on air every Saturday on *CCTV News* from 2004 to 2014. Every 30-minutes-episode was dedicated to a single interview with Chinese or international public figures or celebrities, among which were actors, singers, businessmen, politicians, university professors, and diplomats. Looking at some of the episodes available on the programme's page of the *CCTV News* website, it is possible to see how some of the most important Chinese social, economic and political issues have been 'culturally translated (Sakai, 1997) for a non-Chinese public with a 'lifestyle interview' approach. The only host of "UpClose" from the beginning was the Chinese/American journalist Eyee Hsu. In an interview displayed on the website of the program, she stresses the relation between the capacity to



converse with different subjects and the possibility to develop an international mindset: "I believe that being a good listener is one of the most important characteristics in a person. Only by listening to others can you gain a richer perspective and really begin to learn about how to be a global citizen" (2012). The program frequently issued special 'series', beside the normal episodes, presenting several interviews connected by the same topic. In the period considered, between November 2012 and June 2013, there were two special series: '*Ambassadors on changing China*', and '*The Chinese Dream*'. Many of the program's episodes are centred on the value of the personal experience in China while considering a broader political, economical or cultural context. One of the common threads in interviews with such different individuals could be summarized as "what China did for the interviewed, what it can do for the rest of the world". Here, only interviews from the '*Chinese Dream*' series will be considered, as this category strongly reflects the CCTV cultural agenda, and is still at present one of the keywords in Chinese public diplomacy.

The idea of a '*Chinese Dream*', in fact, is a recurring motive in the new cultural policies of the Chinese government since November 2012. The expression started to appear outside China after a book by Helen H. Wang with the same title was published in 2010, highlighting the rise of the middle-class in China. Since November 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping began promoting the phrase as a new slogan, which became popular in Chinese and international media. While in the book by Wang the dream is mainly about personal success, essentially echoing the American consumerist Dream, the Chinese Government's version puts more emphasis on its collective dimension. As pointed out by the General Secretary himself, during a meeting with US President Barack Obama in June 2013,

By the Chinese dream, we seek to have economic prosperity, national renewal and people's well-being. The Chinese dream is about cooperation, development, peace and win-win, and it is connected to the American dream and the beautiful dreams people in other countries may have.

(Kuhn, 2013)

Earlier, in February of the same year, an article published in the Chinese government newspaper *People's Daily* had stressed more clearly the difference between the two national dreams.

The American Dream is this: regardless of one's background, with hard work and determination, one can achieve whatever one aspires. The Chinese Dream promotes the concept that what's good for the country will be good for individuals. It reflects the Eastern culture of collectivism and believes as long as the country is strong people will be rightfully benefited.



(Wang, 2013)

According to author Helen H. Wang, most of the Chinese internet users didn't reacted positively to such a vision of their country's policy, at least considering the average users of Weibo, the most popular Chinese social networking platform.

Among nearly 700 comments, almost none of them bought into the party line. An overwhelming number of them appeared angry and sarcastic. In the past, middle class Chinese tended to not talk about politics. They were more interested in getting on with their lives and improving their economic conditions. Now, they are beginning to speak up and voicing their opinions. They are also beginning to think more individualistically and think for themselves. They are clearly frustrated with the direction the country is heading – corruption, and a lack of the rule of law and political reform.

(Wang 2013)

Unconcerned by these cold inner reactions, in 2013 CCTV even launched a section of its website especially dedicated to 'The Chinese Dream' issue (the homepage is shown in the screenshot below), where people from abroad are invite to contribute sharing their 'The Chinese Dream' with the rest of the online community.



To transform the slogan into 30-minutes television episodes, the series of *'UpClose'* dedicated to the Chinese Dream consists of interviews with successful foreign people who decided to live and work in China. Interview questions typically explore the personal life experiences of the guests, their opinions about the Chinese Dream, as well as their own personal dreams and aspirations.

Jaime Florcruz, Bureau Chief of *CNN* in Beijing, makes a clear comparison between the Chinese and the American Dream. "There are similarities", he states, "The dream of a beautiful China also includes having a job, a nice home, a good life for themselves and for the next generation"; it is a 'very pragmatic' dream", he states, but at the same time, "it's also a collective, national idea... There is a strong sense of resonance and communality".

For other interviewed, such as the businesswoman Roberta Lipson, founder of a chain of private hospitals based on the American system in China, "the country is in a very special moment of its history – change and developments bring dynamism and opportunities that cannot be found elsewhere. When I arrived in China at the end of the Seventies, I thought 'There's something to do', and I started to work in the medical and healthcare business'. According to Lipson, the "Chinese Dream is about people that want to make a contribution in the modern world'. At the same time she admits that the fulfilment of her dream would be "the application of the private healthcare model everywhere in China", which makes her personal aspirations sound quite in contrast with the national interests.

In a similar way the Kenyan model and business woman Doris Kwaka tells in front of the camera how "China just adopted me, giving me more and more reasons to stay. My Chinese dream is to have satisfaction and achievement of all the goals that I have set. I am in the right place at the right time and I have around the right people". Her dream is, "in the end, to go back and set a cosmetics factory in my country", but seems to be set in a quite distant future, while the present is still dominated by 'all the opportunities' found in China.

While the Chinese economy is growing fast and the number of businessmen stressed as a result of their lifestyle is also rising, there's apparently also space for initiatives dealing with these problems. The Indian yoga master Yogi Mohan, founder of the "Yogi yoga" fitness empire, explains to Eye Hsu and to the viewers that "many young people are now choosing to become yoga trainers as a career – and this can only happen in China. As a dream, I always wanted love from the people and respect from my students, and I got that". His strong ethical business model doesn't prevent his yoga



classes to be more expensive than those in the West, according to a fleeting remark by the host. "Money will only come if you work well and hard and serve other people, not if you think only about business", Mr. Mohan commented.

The only worries expressed by some of the interviewees concerning the status quo in China are related to the management of the environment and that of the resources. According to Roberta Lipson, 'The pollution has gone to a point where the government has to do something'. In the words of Jaime Florcruz, "My dream for China is that will keep up growing, to become maybe in a few years the first economy in the world, a soft power...[...] A positive force in the world for peace and sustainable development, growing not at the expenses of its people and its environment and not even at the expenses of other countries".

3. CONCLUSIONS

A quite singular world map emerges by connecting the focus points and discursive lines traced during the episodes of a political talk show such as 'Dialogue'. The Japanese nationalism seems to be considered one of the most serious issues by the state-funded Chinese channel, and one of the common threads of many political debates. In 2013, *CCTV News* even assigned to this issue a special section on its English website, signalled by a banner on the homepage. At the same time, even though less advertised, the issue of the American influence appears to be the truly dominating one. Not only in terms of explicit political debate, as in the case of the many discussions over the new military policies in Asia launched by the Obama government, the so-called 'US pivot to Asia' (Symonds, 2013), but also in smaller details – such as the organization of the contents of the website and the formats chosen, or the kind of guests invited – *CCTV News* reveals that most of the 'Dialogue' efforts are pointing especially in one direction: towards the other shore of the Pacific.

On the other hand, a more transversal and inclusive approach aimed at raising interest around China is gaining ground in the channel's editorial line, following the idea behind the slogan of the 'The Chinese Dream' and using the support of international testimonials. It seems that *CCTV News*, through emphasising this slogan, is seeking a new consensus, to overcome the barriers of cultural differences in the international audience watching from outside China. By focusing on personal success stories, and by trying to connect the collective and the singular dreams and aspirations, a programme like 'UpClose' strategically minimizes the centrality of the geopolitical and economical levels emphasised by other shows, while playing the card of the cultural charm that for centuries fascinated foreigners visiting China, even



though it now takes form in a television version, using Western formats, and is combined with a good dose of success-oriented pragmatism.

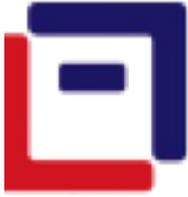
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**A TALE OF MANY LANGUAGES: ENGLISH LANGUAGE
POLICIES IN ALGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper is a personal reflection that will attempt to foreground the evolution of the English language in Algeria since this country regained its sovereignty from French occupation in 1962. It will further demonstrate that this evolution, far from being smooth, took place in a tumultuous linguistic context fraught with political rifts the intensity of which echoed the rhythm of the power struggle among the successions of decision makers in whose hands the linguistic realities of Algeria have been shaped. More importantly, in light of the current sociolinguistic paradigm, this paper will make recommendations for a much wider integration of English within the varied linguistic spectrum prevailing in Algeria.

Keywords: Language policy, English language teaching, bilingualism, Algeria

1. THE EVOLUTION OF ALGERIA'S SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Bilingualism and diglossia have for a long span of time characterized the Algerian sociolinguistic landscape. The geographical location of Algeria at the crossroads of Africa, Europe and the Arab world has for centuries exposed Algeria to an array of cultural and linguistic influences, which, for the most part, have had a considerable bearing on the current linguistic reality of Algerians. Three languages, in varying degrees of importance, occupy the linguistic scene: Arabic (in its standard and dialectal form), French and Berber.

Any discourse on English language policies in Algeria cannot be dissociated from the political tug of war between Arabic and French prevailing in this country since it won its independence from France in 1962. The sociolinguistic history of Algeria since the French set foot in 1830 in what was going to be the biggest French province overseas is characterized by two distinctive but antagonistic periods:

1. an 'all-French' period that lasted as long as lasted the occupation itself, and
2. a period of 'Arabization' at the outset of independence.

For the French colonial power, French language was the language of modernity, a medium through which access to the civilized world could be achieved and the superiority of which needed to be ascertained. On the other hand, the Arabic dialect of the indigenous people was discredited and devalued. In the eyes of the French, Arabic dialect was only capable of conversational attributes that could not even be reflected in a written form. In this uneven war between French and Algerian dialect, classical Arabic was perceived as a serious contender towards which French authorities expressed a great deal of hostility that culminated into officially considering it a foreign language in 1938. If the Arabic dialect was perceived as a backward language incapable of embracing twentieth-century modernity, classical Arabic was presented as the language of the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, attesting to medieval ideals too anachronistic to have any grip on the real world. Relegated to a subsidiary position, classical Arabic flourished underground as a martyr-language, but was endowed with enough symbolic value for it to become, linguistically and politically, a stumbling block against French hegemony and around which rallied much of the Algerian resistance against French occupation (Benrabah, 1999). It was, therefore, only legitimate for the nascent post-independence Algerian state to declare classical Arabic as the official language of the state and the people, in a move more akin to a deeply-rooted resentment of the language of the occupier than to a well thought-out long-term national linguistic policy.

At the dawn of independence, however, French was still the medium of communication among the elite and educated circles in general. For the government in place, this was only a temporary transition while a rigorous Arabization policy was being implemented. The process was twofold: first to expedite the process of Arabization at all levels of education through a massive recruitment of Arabic teachers from the Middle-East, namely from Egypt, but whose competency and credentials were more often than not subject to criticism, and secondly to educate French speaking civil servants in



Arabic to bring them to a level of efficiency that would allow them to attend to the destiny of a country deprived of the most necessary means in any country's renaissance, education. Illiteracy was rampant, infrastructure was scarce and unemployment maintained large populations under the scourge of poverty. But albeit the fact that Algeria was to experience a formidable shift towards development thanks to the substantial presence of natural resources under the vast territories of its Saharan soil, the process of arabizing Algerian society, through successive governments, was an arduous and painful process that, by and large, did not yield the expected outcome. In fact, the language rift between a French-educated segment of society holding key positions in sectors such as the economy, science and technology, and an Arabic-educated segment, active in sectors such as education, culture and ideology, widened to reach irreconcilable degrees.

More importantly, this conflict, which, on the surface, appeared to be circumscribed to a struggle in which language would be the driving force for the country's development, concealed a deeper, more insidious struggle over the control of power. Discrediting the sacrosanct notion of authenticity that the advocates of Arabization attributed to classical Arabic, French language promoters found in Tamazight, or Berber, a linguistic ally in their belief that classical Arabic, being a foreign language, was not a genuine reflector of authenticity and only the promotion of local dialects such as Tamazight would guarantee the preservation of Algerian identity and the consolidation of national unity. On the end other of this conflict, classical Arabic advocates, in their attempt to promote an image of classical Arabic as a language of openness opposed to the image and backwardness and fanaticism with which, rightly or wrongly, with which it has for a long span of time been associated, found in the English language the only viable means able to supplant the hegemony of French language in Algeria. By virtue of the international aura it enjoys and the prestige in which it is held in all spheres of human activity, English was perceived as *the* powerful medium with which French would not rival.

Now after five decades of successive attempts at rooting classical Arabic in Algerian society, it seems that this long undertaking is still laborious and has borne little fruit. The ongoing schism of French versus Arabic is still an issue that triggers polemical and passionate debates, and with English coming into full force, these debates have increased in intensity. The present linguistic reality in Algeria is quite murky and offers no clear indication as to which side linguistic predominance will shift. Classical Arabic, by constitutional decree, is still the official language coexisting with other national vernaculars. French, despite repeated but unsuccessful efforts



at undermining it, is everywhere and remains the medium of instruction *par excellence* in higher education. Aware of the importance of foreign language education, a reform by the government in 2003 insisted on the early teaching of foreign languages. The novelty of this reform was that English was introduced at grade six, three years earlier than what had until then been practised. But this measure, despite its importance, was not taken at the detriment of French, which still continued to enjoy considerable status by being introduced right from grade two. Nevertheless, it was a battle that English won and which was going to herald future breakthroughs. Indeed, despite the fact that Algeria remains the second French-speaking country in the world, it has not remained immune to the expansion of English.

2. PRESENT LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

Half a century since independence, the Algerian linguistic issue and its ramifications is far from being settled and seems to be more of a reaction to the changing of times occurring at a global level than the emanation of a rigorous linguistic state policy capable of shaping the nature of education and the development of the country for the years ahead. What has always prevailed is a tacit coexistence of a cluster of languages the destiny of which is shaped by the fluctuating ideological considerations of the ruling authorities. Presently, classical Arabic, inseparable from the Qur'an and Islam, is, as such, seen to be capable of generating social cohesion and national unity. However, it is not used for communication and its function is confined to the media, the humanities in the universities and religious discourse. Aside of these attributes, this language does not serve any socializing function. Algerian Arabic, on the other hand, remains the lingua franca on account of its extensive use by most of the population. Being essentially an oral language, it has never received an institutional status. However, in this awkward combination of classical Arabic and Algerian Arabic, Algerians find themselves writing a language they do not speak and speaking a language that they do not write. As to Berber, it remains a regional variety confined to the region of Kabylia and other areas in the north. French, on the other hand, has kept its privileged position among the educated and is widely used in higher education, economy, research and technology. This seems, for now, the prevailing *modus vivendi*, but amidst the sterile controversy as to which language should take the lead, English is slowly but steadily gaining ground.

3. ENGLISH: AN END TO FRENCH HEGEMONY?

The use of English seems to be expanding inexorably in Algeria with a large segment of society, students, teachers and high-profile managers in



particular, anxious to learn English rather than French. French supporters within and outside of Algeria, alarmed by the steady surge of English, have deployed countless efforts to halt this expansion but to no avail. Algerians are aware that, in the contemporary context of globalisation, knowledge of English is essential for cultural and business exchange as well as international communication. Thus, the old battle between French and classical Arabic has given rise to a new battlefield for linguistic monopoly between French and English. Even though French, for obvious historical reasons, has been an integral part of Algerian life socially and politically, the country's shift from a state-centered economy to an open, though still timid, market economy has led to the proliferation of foreign companies, mainly American, in the oil industry for the most part, and given English a vantage point by virtue of its being the lingua franca among all the foreigners present on the Algerian soil be they American, British, Chinese, Koreans or Europeans.

Shifting economic trends, however, cannot by themselves spark this growing interest in English, and there is reason to believe that there is significant diplomatic pressure from the Americans on the Algerian government for the implementation of school reforms in favour of English. Significant also is the direction that the American administration is taking vis-à-vis the fight against global terrorism and which finds in Algeria a serious ally in this respect. In recent years, the relations that the two countries have entertained have been more productive. The U.S. is increasing trade with Algeria beyond the military and oil-related assistance and is developing exchange to include cooperation in the field of education so much so that the role ascribed to the US embassy for the promotion of English has gained considerable prominence. On the ground, the U.S. is working discreetly to strengthen collaboration with Algerian schools and universities and to provide training for administrators in higher education. Many projects are emerging at a larger scale through the work of American delegations traveling to Algeria in order to observe the evolution of the teaching of English at all levels of education. Through the cultural services of the U.S. embassy, too, a number of American universities have offered to accommodate Algerian graduates with exceptional academic merits in order to pursue advanced programs not adequately supported by Algerian universities. In another move to step up efforts for the promotion of English, the U.S. embassy has recently launched the El-Amel summer camp, a centre that provides daily English courses at Berlitz School in downtown Algiers. Enrolled students can not only improve their English language proficiency, but they can also acquire leadership and writing skills, prepare for their TOEFL test and receive assistance with their applications to American



universities. Open to students aged 14 to 18 years with a good school record, this camp offers a variety of services free of charge.

Not so far from the U.S. embassy, the embassy of the United Kingdom is adopting a similar stance and is trying to respond to the growing need for the acquisition of English. In June 2012, Ambassador Martin Roper inaugurated a new English school in the coastal city of Bejaia, the second of its kind in addition to the one in Oran. Other similar schools will see the light in other parts of the country as part of a start-up project initiated by the British Council in January 2012¹. In a country where French has had kingly status for nearly two centuries, the emergence of English centres looks like a revolution in the making. The purpose for the presence of these schools is to meet the requirements of language teaching quality and to train interlocutors to address the strong demand for communication exchange at a time when economic cooperation between the U.K. and Algeria is growing considerably. Therefore, support from the U.S. and the U.K. is certainly a reality even if it does not receive widespread publicity.

Encouraging the advancement of English has not been the sole appanage of foreign institutions such as the British Council and the U.S. embassy. Part of the Algerian educated population itself, particularly in the field of science, feels the need to learn English, a language unrivalled in the world of scientific and technological publication. A vast majority sees in English the key to access information on a global scale. Researchers, in particular, perceive the expansion of English favourably as it represents a real asset for their professional development. They are aware of the dominant influence that English exercises in international scientific venues and the remarkable audience their works may receive if published in English compared to the little interest their publication generates when conveyed through French. The widespread formula of '*Publish (in English) or perish*' seems to have a resounding echo within these intellectual circles. It is worthwhile noting, too, the proliferation across all Algerian universities of English studies departments that rely entirely on local teachers for a daily delivery of courses destined, surprisingly, not only to undergraduate students but also to students pursuing Master's and PhD programmes. Considering the

¹ This is quite a spectacular initiative considering the low profile that the British Council has always kept in Algeria. The only significant incursion that this institution had in the past was in 1988 when Mr. Paul de Quincey, the Cultural Attaché, responded positively to the request I made as head of English at the University of Oran to have our graduate students benefit from a three-week summer school hosted by the University of Nottingham. This initiative was the first and the last of its kind. The subsequent civil unrest that ravaged the country during the nineties was going to halt any initiative of this nature.



serious shortage of resources in terms of qualified manpower and adequate training, the sheer existence of such plethora of English departments with a paucity of assistance, but managed somehow against all odds, deserves praise and merits encouragement. Even though the provision of courses in these departments is geared towards training future high school and university teachers and, to a lesser extent, translators, these burgeoning centres are a fertile ground for the development of English in a country where seventy percent of the population is under the age of thirty and more open than ever to the outside world. A look at the massive use of satellite dishes and the extensive use of the Internet in major Algerian cities gives a clear indication of how this country, on a scale almost unique in the entire Mediterranean region, has become a vast recipient of foreign cultures channelled exclusively through Arabic, English and French. In this unprecedented exposure to the outside world, English is encroaching upon French territory to the extent that the French parliament, as far back as 2004, blew the whistle to caution against the gradual decline of French in Algeria in favour of the English threat².

4. CONCLUSION

In the current context of globalization, it is only natural that English enjoys a consistent and growing influence when French seems to be losing ground. However, in this ideological war for linguistic supremacy waged behind the scenes and the prospects of which remain uncertain, Algerians remain clear-headed in their approach to the warring languages around them. The educated younger generation, in particular, relieved from the emotional burden of the French language faced by their predecessors in the aftermath of the war of liberation, does not question the strong presence of English. These youngsters see in the coexistence of languages a real possibility of reconciling national unity and modernity. Thus, multilingualism, far from being the spectre of the loss of identity, as the old and conservative proponents of French and Arabic vainly purport, is, on the contrary, a source of enrichment for society. It is recognition of one's own plural identity, a vital key to embracing exogenous cultures and to developing the values of respect and tolerance. Today, English, together with the deeply-rooted legacy of Arabic and French, offers a valuable opportunity for young generations to aspire to an enlightened society where every individual has a voice in this rich linguistic diversity.

² The word 'threat' was used by French parliamentarian Yannick Faveneck during the 2004 parliamentary debates advising his Minister of 'Francophonie' to take serious measures against the growing hegemony of the English language in Algeria. This was reported in the French daily *Le Matin* of June 21, 2012.



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TOWARDS AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO TEFL IN ALGERIA

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Abstract

Nowadays, the need to mediate between languages and cultures has increased with globalisation, the presence of television programmes from foreign countries and with the exchange of commerce. This has led to new notions of trans-national and intercultural literacy which would recognize that 'communication with others who do not share our background' and 'exposure to and contact with other modes of thinking' is becoming crucial to our daily lives (Cook-Gumperz, 1986, p. 43). Language functions as a vehicle for acquiring knowledge of the world, and culture permeates all levels and stages of modern language teaching. As a result, there is a growing concern in the international language teaching profession that the social and intercultural dimension function of the language be restored.

In Algeria, however, English as the global *lingua franca* seems to have been culturally neutralised in the sense of the separation of the language and its cultural component. TENOR, 'teaching English for no obvious reason' may be the reason why students continue to learn English solely for instrumental purposes, and many teachers of English still focus on the language "for purposes not directly related to culture" (Asworth, 1985, p.119). A new intercultural rationale for English language teaching is therefore required. In this paper, I would like to suggest a path up to this approach and attempt to answer such questions as: why should teachers of English as a foreign language engage in the study of discourse across cultures? Should they examine the discourse of another culture in order to glean a more direct knowledge and understanding of that culture's framework in the same way as Claude Lévis Strauss's passenger peers into passing cars and observe the faces and gestures of others? Or should they, like Geertz, use language comparisons

between cultures to help illuminate the diverse language phenomena all around us?

Keywords: Algeria, EFL, Critical pedagogy, Pedagogical Innovation, Intercultural dialogue, Social transformation.

The cultural dimension of learning is, from now on, the objective of the large consensus in which nobody could be against without risk of being either someone ignorant and/or someone incompetent, or someone who is like a dinosaur of pedagogy.

Abdallah-Pretceille & Porcher, (1996)

1. INTRODUCTION

In an age of internationalisation and growing local responsibility for curriculum development, European, U.S, and African countries, albeit for different reasons, have shown more interest in the cultural component of language teaching. As a matter of fact, the current teaching landscape is dominated by two catchwords: 'intercultural' and 'multicultural.' These terms characterise two educational attempts to understand and overcome particularity, by building bridges between one culture and another.

The growing global interdependence that characterises our time calls, thus, for a new generation of globally competent individuals interested in learning about the world and how it works. New fields, such as sociology, psychology and ethnology have been brought into a reconsidered cross-disciplinary education for language teachers. In the 1970s, language teaching was made to serve more democratic social goals. It was meant to meet the local needs of local speakers and listeners in locally situated contexts of communication. The cultural component of language teaching came then to be seen as the pragmatic functions and notions expressed through language in everyday ways of speaking and acting. This understanding of culture brought into focus the synchronic axis of language use.

Broadly speaking, there has been a development in the purposes and emphases of language teaching, from linguistic competence to sociolinguistic or communicative competence, and then to intercultural competence. This 'intercultural approach' to teaching foreign languages has, however, raised some controversy not only among politicians but literary scholars as well. For



both, language teachers are responsible for teaching ‘only language,’ not culture nor politics.

Nonetheless, it is acknowledged nowadays that language proficiency alone is inadequate. As a matter of fact, modern language teaching and learning highlight interculturality and reconceptualise goals in terms of producing ‘intercultural speakers’ who will be actors and mediators in globalised contexts (Buttjes & Byram 1991; Byram & Zarate 1994; Kramsch 1993 & 1998). As communication is holistic, it also requires knowledge of the ways culture and language interlock and an understanding of how interaction across cultures operates. Beyond the traditional knowledge of cultural facts, and the realisation of cross-cultural conflict, an intercultural approach aims at gaining an understanding of the way these facts are related, i.e. how as a pattern they form the cultural fabric of a society.

Education in Algeria in recent decades has undoubtedly undergone significant changes. The impact of new economic and social realities has hit the sector hard. Some of the issues of concern today include the management of quality and the teaching of foreign languages. The Algerian society is seeking to increase knowledge, enhance dialogue, and generate new ideas across the fields of arts and culture, policy and business, and education. However, the teaching of a foreign culture as a component of foreign language teaching has traditionally been caught between the striving for universality and the desire to maintain the country’s cultural particularity. Preparing our youth to engage the world and participate fully in today’s and tomorrow’s world, thus, demands that we nurture both their global and cultural competence. This involves rethinking traditional teaching practices.

This paper,¹ based on my own experience of TEFL, explores the critical relationship between language and culture. It aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of an intercultural approach as an alternative road to developing Algerian students’ critical cultural awareness. The theoretical framework I propose here for teaching culture through language suspends the traditional dichotomy between the universal and the particular in language teaching. It embraces the particular as a platform for dialogue and as a common struggle to realign differences. In this regard, it not only fosters linguistic vigilance and discursive circumspection, but also reaffirms the language teacher in his/her full social and political responsibility.

1 This is an elaborated version of a keynote paper given at the first conference on « Mediating between Languages and Cultures: an Interdisciplinary Approach, » organised by the Department of English of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem, on 27-28 January 2015.



2. INTERCULTURAL APPROACH AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

There is still no consensus on a definition of culture. Therefore, many perspectives and theories can be implemented in its definition. The term 'cultural' has often been associated with the term 'social,' as when one talks about the 'socio-cultural' factors affecting the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In my discussion, I will take both adjectives to refer to the two sides of the same coin, namely, the synchronic and diachronic context in which language is used in organised discourse communities. Both terms refer to an individual's place within a social group and his/her relation to that group in the course of time.

Irrespective of whether we are talking written or oral culture, highbrow or popular culture, noteworthy events or everyday life's events, the term 'culture' has always referred to at least two ways of defining a social community. The first definition, which comes from the humanities, focuses on the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions and the mechanisms for their reproduction and preservation through history. The second definition, which comes from the social sciences, refers to what educators like Howard Nostrand call the 'ground of meaning', i.e. the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community (Nostrand, 1989, p. 51).

Just like culture, what is understood by the intercultural approach and its desired outcome intercultural competence is difficult to define. Intercultural competence is the ability to 'decentre,' to understand the other's perspective, to anticipate misunderstanding and to act to overcome that misunderstanding, above all it is the desire to interact with others in non-stereotypical and unprejudiced ways. Intercultural competence can thus be defined as involving new 'attitudes', "skills of interpreting and relating' as well as 'skills of discovery and interaction" (Byram, 2008, p. 69).

3. THE EXTENT TO WHICH CULTURE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER

With ever-increasing globalisation in international business, the increasing movement of people around the world, and social networks, contact between cultures has increased. One of the tasks of education, including language education, is to prepare students for this globalised world. Moreover, with English as the international language the need to mediate between languages



and cultures seems to be on the rise, which appears to make the study of ICC even more relevant nowadays. Language without cultural relevance is nearly useless as material culture is constantly mediated, interpreted and recorded – among other things – through language. It is because of that mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher.

In the intercultural approach, moreover, the socio-cultural aspects of language are stressed. The focus is on how things are said, not only on what is said. Skills like reacting, analysing, and “interpreting the world and knowing how to behave” are considered key elements for successful intercultural communication. Risager (2009) sums up the socio-cultural aspects of communication as follows and puts them in a global perspective:

We are all, as human beings, citizens of a world that is connected in so many ways. Intercultural competence is very much the competence of navigating in the world, both at the micro-level of social interaction in culturally complex settings, and at macro levels through transnational networks like diasporas and media communications.

(Ibid, p.16)

Thus teaching a foreign language cannot be reduced to the teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. Since communication is related to context, and culture is context dependent, communication cannot be culture-free (Cortazzi and Jin 1999). Separating culture from language teaching simply will lead language learners to assume that a foreign language is an epiphenomenon of their first language, and thus learn and use EFL through the prism of their first culture. Where this occurs, as it does in Algeria, learners are likely to be learning “a codified version of their own language” (Byram 1991, p. 18). In other words, their learning of a foreign language may be an approximation of their own language and culture acquisition. Therefore, part of a teacher’s responsibility is to “teach culture as it is mediated through language” (Kramsch 1998 p. 31).

Promoting intercultural speakers tends to allow language teachers to see themselves as “brokers between cultures”, to use Kramsch’s words (p.30). Teachers can also take other aspects of culture, such as age, gender, class and ethnicity into account, since these factors can have an effect on learners’ ‘interpretation of discourses.’ Including explicitly aspects of culture in language lessons, from both learners’ and others’ cultures, lessens misunderstandings that can arise in interpreting a text or an utterance. Such misunderstandings and critical incidents are not exclusively caused by a lack of language skills; very often they are initiated by cultural differences as can be seen through the following examples:



Example 1

In the Algerian culture, it is commonplace to insist when offering a meal to a guest. Therefore an Algerian person in the United States, after being offered a meal and refusing politely, could be unpleasantly surprised not to be given anything to eat. The American host would not realise that refusing food is a sign of modesty and the person offering the meal should insist.

Example 2

A British person might be amused if an Algerian person, on hearing the conventional greeting “How are you?” starts complaining about her health. The Algerian, on the other hand, would wonder why her interlocutor was amused.

Example 3

The Japanese have perhaps the strictest rules of social and business behaviour. While in Algeria, the exchange of business cards is bound by no specific rule, the Japanese business card would need a rulebook on its own. In Japan, business cards should be exchanged immediately on meeting in order to establish everyone’s status and position. When the card is handed to a person in a superior position, it must be given and received with both hands and the receiver must take time to read it carefully and not put in his/her pocket as it is done in Algeria.

These examples clearly show that knowledge of the culture of a given community is of great importance for successful cross-cultural communication. Even if the participants in the above-described situations spoke English fluently and were well informed about cultural facts such as famous works of art and religious celebrations, this knowledge would be of little help to avoid misunderstanding and offending the interlocutor. Such misunderstanding of verbal or non-verbal messages often leads to the formation of a distorted picture of another society and its culture.

4. COMPETENCIES THAT ALGERIAN STUDENTS NEED IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

While multiple skill sets have been put forth as essential to prepare our future workforce, surprisingly developing cultural awareness remains absent in public discourse. Preparing our youth to participate successfully in a world of increasing social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity requires teaching them about the qualities of peoples over the world. Cultural competence would then incite them to revisit their own nation’s qualities in a



way that captures its multiple relations with other societies. In this sense, providing students multiple opportunities to examine what happens when cultures meet is of the essence. The task of nurturing intercultural knowledge is not the responsibility of social studies teachers alone: it behoves second language teachers to renew their curricula as well.

The framework for cultural competence articulates two core capacities at the heart of the intercultural approach: the capacity to recognize others' and one's own perspectives and the capacity to communicate ideas effectively across diverse audiences. To be prepared for a world of growing cultural interaction and diversity, students will need to understand what happens when cultures meet and influence one another. It will also help them recognize how different audiences may interpret information informed by their own perspectives. Students who are able to investigate cultural interactions are more likely to be reflective about the complexities they present, perhaps to aid cultural dialogue through community service or raise awareness about different perspectives. By using the foreign language as a medium for extending socialisation and acculturation of learners, the integration of language and culture is a process that can develop ICC competence.

In Algeria, however, generally speaking, we have lost the focus on what is usually called 'progressive' education for the most part because of the absence of pedagogy. And English language pedagogy is still in its infancy because the dichotomy between language and culture does not seem to be an entrenched feature of foreign language teaching. As a result, foreign language teaching has lost sight of one crucial factor namely, the mediating function of language in the social construction of culture. The separation has kept language teaching within strict structural or functional bounds.

5. WHY DO EFL TEACHERS NEGLECT THE CULTURAL FACTOR IN THEIR TEACHINGS?

I see three main reasons:

1. They may feel that students at lower proficiency levels are not ready for it yet.
2. They may feel that it is additional material that they simply do not have time to teach.
3. Or simply may feel that they do not know enough about it themselves to teach it adequately.



I myself asked this question to an Algerian language teacher and he replied: *'how can I teach the intercultural dimension when I have never left my country?'* This may look quite logical at first glance, but we should not overlook the fact that the main aim of teaching the intercultural dimension is not the transmission of information about a foreign country.

The intercultural dimension is mainly concerned with helping learners understand:

1. How intercultural interaction takes place;
2. How social identities are part of all interaction;
3. How their perceptions of other people and others people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication;
4. How they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating.

So a teacher does not have to know *everything* about 'the target culture.' This is in any case impossible and in fact there are many cultures associated with a particular language. For example, there are many countries where French is spoken as the first language, and within these countries there are many variations on beliefs, values and behaviours; in other words many cultures.

Of course, there is some factual information which learners need about other countries where the target language is spoken, but this is available to teachers in reference books, through the internet and so on. This kind of information does not depend on having been to the countries in question, and in fact when one does visit another country it is not this kind of information that one acquires. In this respect the issue of cross-curricular dimension comes into focus to highlight the point that intercultural education need not be linked to language alone, but can extend to the exchange of information/experience on content subjects across the curriculum.

6. HOW CAN THE ALGERIAN TEACHER PROMOTE THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION IF S/HE HAS TO FOLLOW A PROGRAMME OF STUDY AND TEACH GRAMMAR?

The set programme of study is likely to be based on themes as well as grammatical structures. Themes treated in textbooks can lend themselves to development in an intercultural and critical perspective. The key principle is to get learners to compare the theme in a familiar situation with examples from an unfamiliar context. Starting from the exercises proposed by the textbook, teachers can devise further exercises, reinforcing the same grammatical structures, but using a different range of contexts and examples.

One important contribution to an intercultural perspective is the inclusion of vocabulary that helps learners talk about cultural diversity. This can include terms such as human rights, equality, dignity, gender, bias, prejudice, stereotype, racism, ethnic minority; and the names of ethnic groups, including white groups. Therefore a set curriculum or programme of study can be modified and challenged by simple techniques which make learners aware of the implicit values and meanings in the material they are using.

Needless to say that an intercultural lesson should take place in a relaxed atmosphere. Students need to be active class participants, making choices and taking decisions. Interested, involved, responsible students are certainly motivated students. In this kind of exercises, not only do students learn about other cultures, but they also get involved in speaking. So in addition to developing intercultural competence, the teacher also develops communicative competence.

7. THE MATERIAL NEEDED TO PROMOTE THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION

One would expect EFL textbooks to reflect a diversity of cultural contexts and to include intercultural components that can raise Algerian learners' awareness of intercultural issues and thereby involve them in communicating effectively and appropriately in a wide range of ICC situations.

Sources of information used in this approach are authentic texts, including audio recordings and a variety of written documents and visuals such as maps, photographs, diagrams and cartoons at lower levels. The activities involve understanding, discussing and writing in the target language. The approach to the materials is always critical. There is every



reason for applying such principles to all topics studied in the target language. It is a question of challenging the reader by bringing together texts and visual materials which present contrasting views.

In the cultural model, a literary text is a good vehicle for presenting such cultural notions associated with the given language. With its wide range of instances of real-life language in various situations, literature provides unique opportunities for promoting cultural awareness among learners. The use of appropriate literary materials for language teaching purposes fosters cultural awareness and human values development in learners. As the values of a society constitute a part of its culture, discerning values inherent in a literary work is necessary for understanding it (Valdes, 1986, p. 138).

Because the readers' cultural backgrounds and ideological stances affect their reading of multicultural literature, literature instructors must help students reflect on their cultural backgrounds and switch ideological stances to learn other perspectives so as to expand their cultural horizons. Richard Beach proposes several steps that would enable students to make this ideological stance shift. The first one consists in drawing students to make links between their own experiences and the racial and cultural differences portrayed in the work of art. Then, they critically analyse these experiences, reflecting on their beliefs. Students who are unfamiliar with the racial and cultural differences of the characters may be resistant or remain silent at the beginning because they have difficulty relating to the differences. The task of the instructor here is to encourage students to actively observe these differences from another perspective, such as the perspective of a person from that culture. This shift of stance helps students reflect on their initial responses and attitudes and explore the contextual meaning of these differences (Beach, pp.85-86).

In *A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories*, Beach advocates the use of an ethnographic study to read and discuss multicultural literature for students to shift the focus of personal responses to cultural responses (pp. 148-50). The ethnographic approach allows students to observe and experience people's behaviours in contexts, thus reinforcing their understanding of cultural values and beliefs. This is particularly important for the teachers who have to be aware of "historical and cultural discrepancies and inaccurate interpretations" as well as important social cultural issues (Fang, Fu, and Lamme, 1999, 297).

English literature teachers have to grapple with the issue of teaching a literary work from an unfamiliar culture, to provide students with a point of entry into a culture other than their own. The teacher can make students



work in groups, focusing on one cultural practice or tradition depicted in the work and exploring the cultural norms, values, and traditions behind it. The discussion that follows serves as a springboard for the students' realisation of the value of the cultural insiders' perspectives and the importance of expanding their cultural knowledge as well as for developing empathy toward the work from different perspectives.

Therefore, teaching literature within a cultural model enables students to understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures, and ideologies. Such an understanding of the diversity of thoughts, feelings, behaviours affectively engage learners when reading literary texts and make the language learning tasks an enjoyable one. Moreover, such cultural understandings can promote second language learners' communicative ability.

8. CONCLUSION: WHY DOES AN EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE MATTER IN ALGERIA?

The implementation of an intercultural approach in a foreign language teaching course will help future language teachers understand not only the multiple socio-cultural factors that are implied in the teaching of a foreign language, but also the importance of critical cultural awareness to be able to understand other cultures without losing perspective of the local reality.

As mentioned earlier, the intercultural dimension in language teaching aims to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity. It is based on perceiving the interlocutor as an individual whose qualities *are to be discovered*, rather than as a representative of an externally ascribed identity. Intercultural communication is communication on the basis of respect for individuals and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction.

Clearly, if EFL learners are to become successful intercultural communicators, it is essential to provide them with a solid knowledge of the different world cultures, and to develop the ability to compare their native culture to other cultures, to evaluate critically and interpret the results of such comparisons, and to apply this knowledge successfully in both verbal and non-verbal communication, for both *transactional* and *interactional* purposes.



Moreover, in today's world, there is much intolerance towards and prejudice against other nations and cultures. Intensive intercultural education is a good way to sow the seeds of tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and respect. In sum, culture must be seen as a moment caught "in between a plurality of practices that are different and yet must occupy the same space of adjudication and articulation" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 57). If language teaching is to have a broader educational purpose of promoting understanding and tolerance and generally of fostering cross-cultural communication, then it would need to go beyond the pedagogy which focuses on the limited objective of practical proficiency. In other words, English can be taught in relation to Algerian culture, since Algeria has a range of different beliefs, value systems and educational doctrines to those of English speaking countries. Cultural awareness can, for example, include knowledge of some practices linked to food, clothes, greetings, pastimes, forms of politeness, and so on, as manifestations of cultures in learning a language and its communicative functions.

As Algerian educators, we are certainly not alone in recognising the importance of preparing students to cooperate and compete in the global scene. Setting up a framework for intercultural education will not only open students' eyes and minds to the realities of the world but also awaken them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity, human rights for all, peace and conflict prevention, interculturality, and citizenship. It will enhance their commitment to cultural diversity and the importance of intercultural understanding and acceptance of differences. Breaking down stereotypes is making students realise that we are all irreducibly unique and different, and that given different circumstances, *I* could have been *you*, and *you* could have been *me*. This is where advocates of critical foreign language pedagogy propose replacing the Us/Them, Insider/Outsider binarism that essentialises people in one or the other of their many cultural dimensions, for instance, a Muslim/Christian, Arab/ Western, a Woman/Man or a Black/White by a focus on what Bhabha calls the "social process of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 57). This dialogic process attempts to situate the cultural component of language teaching at the moment of rupture or disjuncture between interlocutors' assumptions and expectations.

Within this theoretical framework, one may want, in the future, to define the language teacher not only as the impresario of a certain linguistic performance, but as the catalyst for an ever-widening critical cultural competence, as an agent of social change (Kramsch). And this is what is mostly required in Algeria. The awareness of culture in teaching foreign languages is a *sine qua non* in Algeria, not only for efficient communication,



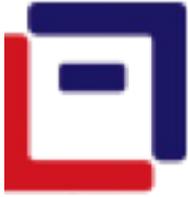
but also and mostly because it addresses the ethical issues. Fighting xenophobia and ethnocentrism, avoiding prejudice and discrimination is from now on the responsibility of the pedagogues and the people in education.

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THE 'FICTION OF HOMOGENEITY' IN ONE OF JONATHAN SWIFT'S GULLIVER'S TRAVELS ARABIC TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract

Since writers' discursive thirst is not usually satisfied at first shot, literary works go through a number of revisions and editing before reaching a readable opus. Sometimes, this one works in consonance with the contextual idiosyncrasies (social traits, political mindsets, etc.) of the reader, and some other times not. Here, the work is said to have 'trespassed' its original topos to get to a different milieu with 'variegated' parameters. Such is the case of translated texts which vacillate between keeping the texture of the Source Language Text (henceforth, SLT) and giving it a 'face-lift'. In fact, translators have got particular trainings, convictions channeling their moves which, more often than not, buttress John Lyon's "fiction of homogeneity". The Target Language Text (henceforth, TLT) reveals a side of the translator's subjectivity and even ideology because translation as such is a human enterprise. Regardless of that, the notion of *homogeneity* is sometimes jeopardized by the *nature* of the text at stake. A telling instance could be drawn from Jacqueline Abdelwahab's (2005) Arabic translation of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels. Throughout the present paper, I shall try to peruse the translated text to account for the translator's attempt to preserve a quasi coherent TLT version, but again to point up some of her 'amendments'. Actually, the author seems less preoccupied with some original English words/data and simply omits them and/or appends others.

By paying special attention to the effect of text types on the translator's performance, my aim will be to see if the fact of translating for a young audience affects the feature of homogeneity so devalued by Lawrence Venuti (1998). Eventually, the paper is an attempt at assessing children's literature from a translational lens. This may spell out the process of homogenization, its feasibility and lacunas.

Keywords: Arabic translation, children's literature, English, homogenization, text-types.

1. INTRODUCTION

First published in 1726, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* rapidly became a classic in the province of children's literature. Since then, it has undergone several revisions, adaptations as well as translations. It is commonly acknowledged that part of the merits of literature is to make us disclose the potential of going beyond the 'linguistic bars' erected by men. More than an internal exploration of the self, it is an exceptional means of mesmerizing people within an enchanted atmosphere where every word has its special load. At a micro-level, children's literature is among those fertile grounds in which exquisiteness and wonder grow. Yet, its poetics and rhetoric remain the translator's great challenge. The present paper aims at underlining the fluctuation of homogeneity in a text meant to be read by a different category than that of adults. The will to preserve a certain faithfulness vis-à-vis the SLT appears to be enfeebled by the TT. In this respect, Katharina Reiss explored this venue and proposed a typology of texts that helped in establishing a theoretical background on which to map translational 'conducts' onto texts properties (narration, description, etc.) One should note, for instance, that translating for a young audience requires a system based on a certain didactics and a number of methods aiming at easing the child's comprehension and enhancing his fantasy. Consequently, the adventure story at stake should go with the reader's intellectual capacity and his 'pre-packaged' knowledge. For this reason, many touch-ups, some necessary and others not, could be attested in Jacqueline Abdelwahab's (2005) Arabic version.

2. KATHARINA REISS'S TEXT TYPES

At the beginning of the 1970s, Katharina Reiss proposed the concept of 'equivalent text'. By so doing, she basically carried the concept of equivalence a step further. In her works, she analysed the degree to which translation succeeds to establish a communicative value and the point at which equivalence has to be searched for. As a matter of fact, the whole procedure aimed at getting at a systematic process of evaluating translations. To reach this, she established a typology of texts by planning a specific translational approach for each type. Hence, her unit of translation (UT) was categorically the text and not the word or the sentence. She goes on saying that it is possible to establish a typology of texts since the different languages and



cultures of the world agree, more or less, on the same categorizations. As a result, she distinguishes between the *informative*, *expressive* and *operational* texts as universally established text categories¹. According to her (1989)

...the assessment of a translation requires that in the first place one must determine the kind of text the original represents; the translator's conception of the translation (to be inferred from his manner of translating); and the aim of the translated text. Only when these factors have become established is one in a position to judge a translation "fairly"...

(p. 97)

Reiss marked out the first category (the informative texts) as texts containing simple facts, information, opinions, etc. The second type (the expressive) corresponds to a more creative composition in which literary creation is characterized by a strong presence of the author; aesthetics as well as form is what must be reproduced to ensure an acceptable TLT version. The third kind of texts (the operational) looks for an after-reading effect quite reminiscent of Austin's (1962) *perlocutions*.

The next step was to associate each type with a specific translation approach. Thus, if the text is informative, its content must be rendered as such in the host language. Similarly, if the SLT is written for the sake of transmitting an artistic content, the TLT content must be rendered into a corresponding artistic form. As a translating method for this type, she proposed the notion of *identification*. Put differently, the translator should try to know about or *identify* the artistic intention of the SLT author in order to reproduce the artistic quality of the text.

Finally, if the SLT intends to generate a reaction, the TLT content should also bear this intention and generate an analogous response. To sum up, the informative text puts emphasis on *content*, the expressive one on *form*, and, ultimately, the operative text on *effect*. For that to take a concrete shape, Reiss suggested the method of *adaptation*. She gave the example of "white is beautiful" which, according to her, should be adapted to "black is beautiful" in order to be *adopted* by a reader from South Africa for instance.

¹ More recently, Reiss published a book entitled *Translation Criticism: The Potentials and Limitations* in which she focused on the relation between criticism and the TLT but also on its extra-linguistic determinants. She came to consider, in addition to her TT Theory, all of talent in lettering, susceptibility to language internal stability, idiomatic usage, as well as fidelity to the SL author's aim. Translated by Erroll F, Rhodes. St. Jerome Publishing and the American Bible Society, 2000.

This is indeed what could be evidenced in the shortened version of Gulliver's Travels. The translator seems less preoccupied with the disposition of the words on the page and adapts them rather in accordance with the child's predisposition to grasp particular information at the expense of other data. Hence, and following Reiss's classification, the text is *operational* in its aspiration.

The typology seems to be a handy one indeed, especially in a domain where TTs differ. But, it is obvious that texts are not as unambiguous as this stratification might suggest. This is because one text seemingly pertaining to one category may well be categorized under another, or may merely have another function than that attributed to it at first sight (M. Aumüller, 2014). A biography, for example, could have an informative as well as an expressive function. In the same prospect, an advertisement could have an expressive but again an informative purpose. Actually, a narrative could be informative, expressive as well as operational. So, it is not easy to delineate or to trace a thin line between all three.

One plausible explanation for this intermeshed relation is the *hermeneutic* nature of translation or, say, the open-endedness of its interpretation. In fact, that there are as many interpretations as readers for a single text. This is indeed how Reiss looked at translation, namely as a personal *appreciation* of the SLT from the translator's angle and that of the TLT from the reader's one. In what follows, some of the properties branding children's literature will be highlighted.

3. SOME INSIGHTS INTO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

It had been possible to conceive of literary translation as a category standing on its own from the 17th century onward; a period in which some important intellectual movements arose in England as well as in France. These, as the period indicates, were mainly due to the emergence of what the English poets John Denham (1615-1669) and Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) dubbed the "libertine" manner of translating, and what was in France to be known as "*les belles infidèles*" (cf. Georges Mounin, 1955). As regards children's literature, it was during the 19th century that translators had been given freedom to alter at their guise integral texts meant for a young category of people. This 'libertine' way of translating, however, had an impact on the homogeneity of the TLT as regards its 'faithfulness' to the SLT as it contributed to the loss of some original details since the adapted versions were usually shortened. The good news is that no one was blamed for that since the heterogeneous versions obtained had been easily accounted for as we shall see later.



Furthermore, when we talk about literary translation and its exigencies, we cannot avoid talking about the ideological aspect and the degree of acceptance of "foreignness" by the host language. To substantiate this claim, consider this satiric dialogue between a Frenchman and a German which highlights the nationalist ideology of each by accentuating the domesticating French culture and its subsequent repercussions on the French translating policy (Venuti, 2003).

Frenchman: The German translate every literary Tom, Dick, and Harry. We either do not translate at all, or else we translate according to our own taste.

German: Which is to say, you paraphrase and you disguise.

Frenchman: We look on a foreign author as a stranger in our company, who has to dress and behave according to our customs, if he desires to please.

German: How narrow-minded of you to be pleased only by what is native.

Frenchman: Such is our nature and our education. Did the Greeks not Hellenize everything as well?

German: In your case it goes back to a narrow-minded nature and a conventional education. In ours, education is our nature (p.108).

This strong claim clearly shadows the open-mindedness of the German translational behaviour which seems to welcome "otherness" if compared to the French one which is more conventional and source-oriented. We can, thus, figure out the rival translation norms that run all through Western history. Foreignizing or domesticating, source- or target-oriented translations have been described by Douglass Robinson (1996) as being *idiosomatic norms* powered by *taboo* (p.28). In other words, both parts of the existing debate are taboo-driven and normative. Taboo is there when we translate too freely and wander too far from one's culture/identity, but also when we translate too closely and hinder the diffusion of the TL culture and/or identity.

This 'inbetweenness' (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999) in which the translator should position himself is quite reminiscent of postcolonial, particularly migrant writers who find themselves torn between their local identity and the hosting 'frame'; the presence of some African terms in Chinua Achebe's works may mark this stance. This practice contradicts accommodation but it certainly fosters novelty and linguistic 'exoticism'. This is what makes out of the notion of 'self-allowed inventiveness' an unavoidable 'blueprint' branding any literary production. About this notion, Inês-Oseki-Dépré reports that Henry Meschonnic (1999) makes a distinction between *traducteur* and *introduceur* basing this categorization on the translator's ingenuity in 'challenging' the original writer: "En effet, un traducteur qui n'est que

traducteur n'est pas traducteur, il est *introduceur*. Seul un écrivain est un traducteur"² (p.84) (my emphasis).

Nevertheless, the rules of creativity cannot bear the same degree of application. It is sheer truism that working on adult literature demands particular translational procedures that do not obtain in children's texts. The commonly acknowledged 'heaviness' of literary writings should be 'lithed', the detailed descriptions avoided, and the elaborate words replaced by basic and easy ones (Frank Steel Smith, 1968). In fact, the translator is supposed to look at the text with the eyes of a child. The first goal is purely didactic, in the sense that every word should be there to develop the child's reading skill. Certainly, this move cannot be separated from his/her external environment. As a second objective, the translator should have access to the young reader's 'cultural bath' to avoid any possible clash. Most if not all Arabic translations of Gulliver's Travels, including this one, have purposefully avoided an excerpt where Gulliver extinguishes an impressive fire by urinating on it during the war between both kingdoms. This scene had been censured in different versions, either by deleting it or by replacing it by some water thrown on the blazing fire. The aim is to sweep away any taboo and to reach a certain social acceptability and/or religious integrity. In what follows, a succinct analysis of a number of modifications brought by J.M. Abdelwahab highlights a lack of homogeneity with the SLT.

4. CORPUS ANALYSIS

The chapbook is presented in a page-by-page translation. Each Arabic version is immediately followed on the next page by its English rendering. From the start, there is an omission from the part of the TL translator of the adjective 'little' in the sentence "Forty more *little* men followed him" (my emphasis) (p.2) which was translated into 'لحق به أربعون رجلا آخرون' (p.1) Even though Arabic is said to be a non-economic language, it is as if the translator wanted us to deduce or infer this information from the aforementioned sentence 'He was smaller than my hand' 'كان حجمه اصغر من يدي' (ibid.), but part of children's literature translation principles is to avoid any vagueness that might spoil a smooth reading produced, here, by the omission of the adjective "little".

It can also be noticed in the second paragraph that the author uses the present simple tense when he describes the reasons for Gulliver to be there. Interestingly, the Arabic version uses the past simple tense that reminds us of

2 "Indeed, a translator who does only translate is not a translator, he is an introducer. Only a writer can be a translator." (My translation)

the way our grand-mothers used to tell us about fairy tales and fables using the famous formula “كان يا مكان في قديم الزمان” which easily translates into “once upon a time”. True, when children stories are recounted in the Arabic version, the use of the past usually springs out as part of our discursive practices. Yet, this does not mean that we can equate Swift's narrative style to that of Arabic fairy-tales.

On the same page, there is a change in the order of adjectives. Where the original author uses “clever and funny”, the TL translator employs rather “مضحكة و ذكية” (p.4) This move seems unnecessary; the author might have done it randomly or with a special intention. But what is clearly subjective is her addition of the adjective “famous” in “كتب سويفت كتابه المشهور رحلات جولفر” while it is simply mentioned in the original version ‘Swift wrote Gulliver's travels’ (ibid). Here, the translator felt the need to detail the fame of the story to show the importance of reading it; as part of a didactic process. Gradually, the translator takes more freedom and adds an extra-information as far as the name of the ship on which Gulliver embarked is concerned. The ship is named ‘Antelope’ (p.4) and the translator renders it by a transliteration, viz. “انتيلوب” (p.3) then puts between inverted commas ‘الغزال’ which is the Arabic literal translation of the word antelope. This strengthening of the learning process comes at the expense of the homogeneity of the SLT, though. But it is well justified by the TT.

Another translational choice concerns the change of ‘our’ into the 1st personal pronoun ‘I’ in ‘لن اكتب شيء عن رحلتي’ / ‘I will not write down everything about our journey...’ (ibid.) Then, the translator opts for sheer faithfulness when she renders authentically ‘...on our way to East Indies’ / ‘في طريقنا إلى جزر الهند الشرقية’.

Undeniably, this creates a mismatch between both texts that leads to a kind of puzzlement for the reader who may think that Gulliver is travelling alone then the ‘our’ comes to contradict his/her former interpretation. On a different plane, and to support the idea of omitting details and making it easy for the child to grasp only important ideas, the translator deletes the adverb ‘after’ few lines further. In the original version we find: “It was after seven at night”, whereas, in the translated one, the adverb ‘after’ had been omitted to obtain “وصلت السابعة ليلا”.

In the next paragraph, however, the translator adds a detail when she uses the adjective ‘عميق’ meaning ‘profound’ in ‘و استغرقت في نوم عميق’ as a matter of *collocation*. Etymologically, it was J.R. Firth who first coined the term and used it in linguistics. In this case, it is a strong collocation because there is a predictable formulation in which the first word calls for the second.

On page 8, a non-justified omission of the idiomatic expression "He threw up his hands" occurs. This one has no counterpart in the TLT (p.7). An equivalent Arabic word might have been "استسلم".

Additionally, there are cases in which what can be said in one language cannot be said in another. On page 10, the author might have used the word *strings* instead of *arrows* for its 'softness' for children, whereas no possibility is offered in Arabic. Consider: "I saw thousands of strings/" "رأيت آلافًا من السهام" (p.9). We cannot use the word "عيدان", for instance, because the whole sense of danger will wane.

By the end of the first chapter, a justified amendment could be attested. "Glumdalclitch cried because I was very weak" (p.44) had been rendered as follows: "بكت مساعدتي الصغيرة لأنني ضعفت كثيرا" (p.43). Glumdalclitch is the name of a farmer's daughter who became Gulliver's assistant. He called her so to mean 'little helper'. Here, the name of the girl might complicate the smooth reading of the text by a child due to its complex pronunciation. That is why, I suppose, it was borrowed only once in the Arabic version:

"اعتنت الفتاة بي في كل الأوقات ليلا ونهارا و كنت ادعوها ب لقد (p.41) "Glumdalclitch" "مساعدتي الصغيرة" on every other occasion. However, this cannot be said to be a systematic move adopted by the translator who preferred, a few pages next, to keep the intricate name of the "Houyhnhnms" horses (p.64) which was transliterated "الهوينهنم" (p.63) all along the third part of chapter three; while she could have rendered the philosophical load of the name which actually stands for the "perfection of nature" as advocated by Swift.

Many of these aspects of deletion, addition and interpretation punctuate the work, but for space limitation I shall stop at these few itemizations that do perhaps underpin the fragmentation recognized in literary translation.

5. CONCLUSION

The time whereby translators used to be blazed at the stake is gone, but exigencies to preserve the essence of the SLT still make ends meet (Jakobson, 1959; Nida, 1964; Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995; Fawcett, 1997; etc). In fact, translators have got specific cultural backgrounds and ideologies guiding their activity which, frequently, lead us to rethink the concept of homogeneity *per se*. Indeed, the different amendments brought in the TLT distort the original picture one is to have about the story. This distortion enfeebles the interconnection both versions are supposed to have, and leads to non-congruency. Even though, what may lessen from a rather severe criticism of the final upshot is that the non-homogenization of SLTs with their TLTs in



children's literature relies on two convincing arguments. The first one deals with the child's learning process, whilst the latter touches the text's conformity with his/her social reality. Coming back to the notion of *interpretation* as one of translation studies catchwords, I would say that its protean or elusive nature forms different layers that would be challenging even when reading the SLT. This is also a plausible reason that adds to the fictitious aspect of homogeneity; how can we obtain homogeneous copies when we cannot agree on one definite understanding? Insofar as TLTs are concerned, the 'myth of synonymy' averred for words on account of divergences in etymology, pronunciation, graphology, and contextual use, makes it impossible to think about the existence of a TLT that would stand as a 'carbon copy' of the original. Therefore, the fiction of homogeneity takes place at two levels: at the SLT on account of the multifarious interpretations associated to it, and at the TLT because of the nonexistence of 'true' counterparts. Eventually, by paying special attention to the translator's performance, I could actually conclude that the fact of translating for a young audience affects the feature of homogeneity, as it lessens from the 'ethnocentric' tradition recognized for translation in general.

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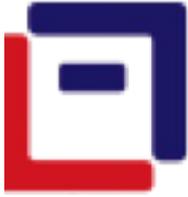
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**FOREIGNISM OR EXOTOCISM: THE CONFRONTATIONAL
INVOLVEDNESS OFN R.F. BURTON'S RENDITION IN THE
*ARABIAN NIGHTS***

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Abstract

The advanced postulation here is: An analysis of Burton's translation unfolds that his invisibility and source text favoritism aim at enlightening his compatriots on the sexual matters tackled in *The Nights* and contributing into alleviating the lame prudery of his disingenuously traditionalistic Victorian society. Burton eulogizes the educational worth of the book's unrepressed sexuality and as an ethnologist does not see the completion of his anthropological and ethnographical enterprise but through an extremely accurate rendition of the text. He also condemns those who see it only as a fairy book on escapist fantasies into the voluptuous world of concubines and black slaves. Within the precincts of this research, I come to conclude that Burton's project realization could not, sorry to say, transcend the aesthetic plane to the socio cultural one he aimed at because he sidestepped the unbalanced configuration of power relations that may influence the linguistic transfer between Eastern culture(s) and the Victorian one; assumed "inequitable" cultures. Accordingly, instead of upsetting the feelings of moral gratification and cultural ascendancy of Victorian reader, Burton's translation of the *Nights*, being dramatically foreign to the apex of exoticism, actually corroborates those feelings. Hence, Burton's non meditation strategy impinges on his most wanted effect which is only realized at its socio-political scale.

Keywords: the Nights, translation, foreignism, non meditation, strategy, effect, culture

1. THE EVOLUTION OF ALGERIA'S SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The Arabian Nights was introduced to the West by French Orientalist Galland (1704), and was maneuvered to fit into the standards of the well wrought neoclassicism of the French literature at the time. Notwithstanding, the English translator and orientalist Burton (1821-1890) was not contented with either this translation or others seeing through them an unwholesome bowdlerized depiction of the eastern original; being chiefly “unsexed” only to gratify the conformist taste of Victorian England, (R. Irwin, 2004). In this spirit, the present paper examines the drive behind and the corollary of Burton’s choice of a non meditation strategy in his rendition of *The Nights*. The focal investigatory standpoints of this study are: What does lie beneath Burton’ foreignizing strategy? Is it an articulated intent on the part of the translator to contrast, to the extreme of exoticism, this difference to the leading social values in his Victorian culture, with the end of criticizing some of the most unshakable (and, to his mind, reverting) of them? And ultimately, is his strategy fluent with the effects he wanted to attain?

As a matter of fact, Burton considered that it was high time to present the English readers with a “full, complete, unvarnished... copy of the great original” (1885 I, p. ix). His intention was to illumine his confreres on sexual issues. In response to “the mock-modesty which compels travelers and ethnological students to keep silent concerning one side of human nature, “I proposed”, he said, “ to supply the want in these pages” (1888 VI, p. 437). He grieves over the ills that came up from the unawareness caused by keep all ages in dull naiveté of sexual and intersexual matters.

Actually, Burton’s literary project is a contribution to the sunup of a new age that would witness the closing stage of the limping priggishness of Victorian England. For a proper enjoyment of his translation, he demanded “the sound common sense of a public, which is slowly but surely emancipating itself from the prudish and prurient reticences and the immodest and immoral modesties of the early sixth century” (ibid, p. 439). While criticizing the moral pretension of the time, Burton also mocks the “mental prostitution” of his own culture. He calls out: “how many hypocrites...who would turn away disgusted from the outspoken Tom Jones or the Sentimental Voyager, revel in and dwell fondly upon the sly romance or study of character whose profligacy is masked and therefore the more perilous” (ibid, p. 404). This was Burton’s denunciation of the contemporary double standards in relation to what counts as appropriate understanding.

In the same way as Sir William Jones quipped long gone, “that anything natural can be offensively obscene never seems to have occurred to



the Indians or their legislators" (1885 I:, p. xv-xvi), we must remember that vulgarity and lewdness, if truth be told, les *turpitudes*, are matters of time and place. What is offensive in England, for instance, is not so in Algeria. Hence contextualizing the *Nights* is an immediate forthcoming step.

2. SITUATING THE NIGHTS

With reference to Burton's translation, it encloses copious pieces that were appalling to contemporary readers who were the key elements fashioning the context of reception. Burton is, at best, defensive when engaging in the question of the outspokenness whereby the tales embark upon sexual matters. A long way from seeing it as defying Victorian "virtuous" minds, he attempts to validate what he names the turpiloquim (Latin, meaning "dirty talk") of the tales building on a sort of cultural relativity (1885 I, p. xv-xvi).

Admittedly, Burton was self- assuredly convinced of the enchantment that his readers would experience from a purposely foreignizing translation; he writes: "I have carefully Englished the picturesque turns and novel expressions of the original in all their outlandishness" (ibid, p. xiv). Such "Englished picturesque" can be substantiated in the prolific use of *saj*, which is an end rhyme often utilized in earliest arty Arabic prose. Although knowing that it would raise objections and contentions among his compatriots, Burton conserved the use of *saj*. Examples of *saj* might include: "without stay or delay", "wrath exceeding that lacked no feeding", "this heart of mine! O dame of nobelest line", "whatsoever woman willeth the same she fulfilleth, however man nilleth" (ibid, p. 10). Used rather in an erratic manner in the *Nights*, *saj* sounds non-natural, wearisome, even more, awkward more particularly when employed in prolonged passages. A case in point is: "and out of it a young lady to come was seen, white skinned and of winsomest mien, of stature fine and thin, and bright as though a moon of the fourteenth night she had been, or the sun raining lively sheen" (ibid). This spectacularly carbon copy reproduction of the original was decidedly slippery as it was sharpened by him occasionally copying out even the grammatical structure of the original. One such example is found in sentences that reflect the standard verb-subject word order of Arabic: "It hath reached me...that the king' son to himself"; "in the midst of the recital, appeared the day"; "then came forward the Greek". Likewise, we can detect phrases that are visibly influenced by the Arabic noun-adjective word order: "artificers and past masters...skilled in making things curious and rare"; "splendid stuffs and costly"; "a masterful potentate and a glorious"; "its then king was a tyrant dire" (ibid).



Despite being a dominant foreignizing technique in Burton's translation, literalism is not the only technique Burton employed. His translation is punctuated with archaic words and expressions that appeared obsolete and weighty to his contemporaries. He employs "thou" and "thy", "aught" and "naught" roughly on a regular basis.

Burton's translation is indeed the immediate result of how the *Other* is often a construct of language, created, among other things, as a surrogate to the repressions and fantasies of the self (1885 a, p. 464-5). *The Thousand Nights and a Night* proffers an unembellished portrait of Eastern peoples. However, the English reader was not yet positioned to find that the Easterner sees the world with the eyes of their culture wherein natural world, intuition and impulse count for more. Hence, being communicative on sexual subject matters is usual in Eastern world view as opposed to the Victorian Saxon who is withdrawn or unvoiced; an account which is indisputably out of place or shall I say out of time for their contemporary countrymen. Importantly, the value system shift does not hinge solely on place (where one is) but most outstandingly on time (when one is). The Medieval Arab is highly imaginative, and their world is peopled with mystical beings. Their nerves are extremely excitable and hysterically poignant. In opposition to this effervescence and liveliness which one gets as a reward of a hot climate, stands the stiff suppression of the Victorian. Does not echoing such ambience in a Victorian setting alienate Victorian readers?

3. FOREIGNISM OR ALIENISM

The Translator's Invisibility of L. Venuti takes on a translation précis which maps out "the rise of transparent discourse in English language translation from the seventeenth century onward" (1995, p. 40). The condition of valorizing the domesticating strategy in translation is kept on to take over the modern Anglo-American translation performance, to the detriment of cultural plurality. Newman and Morris, he contends, were members of "a small group of Victorian translators who developed foreignizing strategies and opposed the English regime of fluent domestication" (ibid, p.119). Newman, more particularly, was the one who "enlisted translation in more democratic cultural politics...pitched deliberately against an academic elite" (ibid).

Burton's translation enterprise of the Arabian Nights maybe considered as the quintessence of what Venuti endorsed in translation. The linguistic singularity and cultural plurality of the text can but be fostered by the foreignizing strategy. Besides, the translator, here, deliberately brings to light this dissimilarity so vigorously to accentuate the opposition to the



prevailing social values in his culture, seeking hereby to condemn the most ingrained- worse still demeaning to his mind- of them all. Even though, the overemphasized contrast in the translated text yielded, as anticipated, to the translation become more “eccentricizing” or “alienating” than foreignizing. For the values of one’s culture become simply more tolerable when one is exposed to the extreme foreignness of the translated Other. Such weirdness seems the most unrelated and, thus not worth consideration. The sentiment of the Victorian readers’ proper contentment does not seem to be disrupted to the least, as Burton so wholly hoped for; instead, the translated text bears out the cultural supremacy of its readers in every respect. Burton’s chief objective is basically aborted because in order for the discrepancy in a translated text to defy its readers’ beliefs of themselves and/ or of the Other, the two cultures and languages drawn in must be in apposite configuration of power relations with the source text culture either in an identical or privileged position of political power.

Yet, far from ignoring the political insinuations of his translation, Burton was plainly trying to call attention to them. In his prologue, he denounces Galland and his English copycats because they “degrade a chef d’oeuvre of the highest anthropological and ethnographical interest and importance to a mere fairy book” (1885 I, p. xi). His, conversely is “a book whose specialty is anthropology” (ibid, p. xviii). It is “my long dealings with Arabs and other Mahommedans”, he says, “which would permit him to bring the Orient home to the English readers just as though they had lived there” (ibid, p. xxiii). Admittedly, it is the English receptors’ entrenched belief of a distracting uneven power relation between themselves and the Other which seems to fashion the upshot of such translation in a manner that Burton did not sketch out or foresee.

In this spirit, T. Asad accentuates the power relations that may encroach the linguistic transfer between different cultures in his article “The Concept of Cultural Translation”, ensuing what he termed “the inequality of languages” (1986, p.156). To be capable of transforming a language pattern by way of introducing new structures and “modes of intention”, to use Benjamin’s phrase (ibid) is not sufficient. The success of such an enterprise (ibid, p. 157)

depends on the willingness of the translator’s language to subject itself to this transforming power...I want to emphasize that the matter is largely something the translator cannot determine by individual activity...that it is governed by institutionally defined power relations between the languages/ modes of life concerned.



The efficiency of challenging the fluency principle hinges on what cultures assume to be part of the translation enterprise. It follows that translations between European cultures that partake into the same power praxis may successfully dispute such principle as opposed to cultures that are not essentially at the heart of this political authority.

Translations are not expected to be read in remoteness from other representations that by now are present in the target language. This body of other texts is what Edward Said terms "archive" (1994, p. 41ff.), an assemblage of ideas, patterns, and presumptions amassed right through a history of several sorts of contacts with another linguistic community- which goes back to an interpretive construction through which the linguistic and arty products of another culture are screened. Put differently, the receptors of a translation are conditioned to think of the source culture as a critical feature in deciding how they respond to its alteration. Assumingly, translations from Arabic or Persian, Sanskrit cultures- seen substandard or at least manifestly unconnected- could not in the slightest shake their unshakable minds.

4. CONCLUSION

The dynamism of the effect produced by translation does not merely boil down to the translator's strategy, i.e. whether they employ a domesticating (mediating) or a foreignizing (non mediating) approach. The main flaw many of us make is that we tend to confound the strategy of translation (which is restricted to the textual plane) with its effect, which is materialized solely in its socio-political dimension. As Bennett (1999) puts it, "it is simply not enough to declare that a particular action can have some effects, without explaining just how these effects are likely to arise" (p.131).

A minimalist or reductionist stance would be that which regards either strategy to be satisfactorily workable to produce the translator's intended meaning. At the same time as the domesticating and foreignizing strategies, all told, can have such changeable effects, the politics, as well as the morals, of translation is a concern that cannot be played down to one procedure. Instead, it is the corollary of an involvedness of a state of affairs that covers the interference of the translators and the alternatives that they go for.

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