

Athabasca University  Master of Arts - Integrated Studies

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN SECOND LANGUAGE
EDUCATION: REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE OF ELT

By

LINDA JANE RAPPEL

Integrated Studies Project

submitted to Dr. Pat Rasmussen

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

May, 2009

INTRODUCTION	4
PART I – NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE	7
Background	8
First experiences: Personalizing the instructional process by incorporating context in teaching.....	9
Delving deeper: developing a sense of culture and incorporating cultural views in teaching.....	13
Venturing into the unknown: establishing a sense of welcome and openness	16
Making choices in learning and developing “ways of being” in a language	20
PART II – A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	22
Situating the literature	22
Communicative Language Teaching.....	25
Language Socialization.....	27
Socio-cultural Perspectives in Culture Learning	29
Intercultural Learning.....	30
Critical Pedagogy in Second Language Learning	32
Post-Methodology in Second Language Education.....	33
PART III – ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES TO ELT	36
The role of ELT in a global world.....	36
Approaching culture learning and socio-cultural approaches in second language instruction.....	38
Introducing culture learning to counter the spread of English and its influence on second language education.....	41
Developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills in second language education as a way to promote cultural tolerance and diversity	44
Implications to adapting intercultural approaches in second language instruction.....	47
Integrating linguistic diversity into second language education: developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills in the practice of ELT	49
CONCLUSION: FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF CULTURE LEARNING AND DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN ELT	52

REFERENCES55

Introduction

This paper presents a critical reflection of second language instruction that integrates researched information from the literature on second language instruction into my own and current practices of teaching English as a Second Language. The goal of this paper is to make meaning of my practices of English Language Teaching (ELT) to Canadian immigrants by examining second language teaching theories and methods and applying researched ideas to second language teaching practice. Through this study, I am particularly interested in exploring the process of introducing intercultural awareness into second language education, not by simply focusing on the objectives of learning the second language, but by building on present cultural knowledge of students and making linguistic connections through cultural perception. The information presented in this paper will draw from a variety of literatures to analyze and interpret autobiographical narratives that display teaching that fosters intercultural competence through cultural awareness. In addition to presenting information from the literature and an account of my own educational experiences in second language teaching, I will critically examine approaches to ELT that counter imperialism and colonization and recommend an approach to ELT that promotes intercultural awareness and cultural tolerance.

Teaching English as a Second Language is a diverse educational practice that draws theory from a number of academic disciplines from the social sciences to linguistics, resulting in a wide range of approaches and teaching strategies that fall under

the umbrella of TESL, or teaching English as a Second Language. Because of this variety in educational approaches, I have maintained a keen interest in how theories affect actual teaching practice and which approaches are considered to be most effective in the various learning environments where ELT is practiced. My interest and purpose in writing this paper is to recognize the importance of implementing cultural approaches in teaching English by reflecting on my own practice of ELT in addition to gaining some understanding of how second language teaching ideology and theory is demonstrated in current language teaching practice. Having stepped into the field of TESL quite accidentally, for some time I have been curious to discover how approaches and methods in second language instruction have gained popularity while others have been discarded. By gaining some knowledge from past approaches and theories in second language education to current ELT practice, I hope to position my work into a historical and social framework that reflects general trends in second language teaching practice.

To complete this study of second language teaching practice, I have compiled the paper into three distinct sections. The first section of this paper contains a collection of my professional experiences as an English as a Second Language instructor. Although I have taught English for a number of years, the accounts that I present are ones that stand out in my memory. After recounting these experiences, I look to the literature for clarification of second language theory and support for the ideas presented in my stories. Because of the influence of globalisation on English language instruction and its relevancy to current second language teaching practice, I have also included a section to this paper that focuses on linguistic and cultural imperialism in second language

education. The purpose of this last part of the paper is to explore the effects of hegemonic structure in second language teaching and discuss the impact of linguistic dominance on culture learning and the development of intercultural awareness in ELT.

Part I – Narratives of Experience in Teaching English as a Second Language

“Communication is an intricate matrix of interacting social acts that occur in a complex social environment...This social environment is culture, and if we are to understand communication, we also must understand culture.” (Porter and Samovar 1982:31 in Damen 32)

When I began my career as an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, people often wondered, “What does she really do?” They thought a teacher was someone who works during the daytime -with children - not as an evening employee at the university or local college. If someone asked about my work, I would normally begin by explaining that I taught English to foreign or immigrant students who came to Canada on either a temporary or permanent basis. If I used the acronym “ESL”, I would usually encounter puzzled looks. After many years of explaining my work to others, I gave up and simply stated that I taught English. If there were any further questions, I would mumble something about being in adult education. A breakthrough finally came one day when I gave my usual reply saying that I teach English to adults, and the surprising response came: “Oh, you teach ESL!”, as if the term had finally become commonplace knowledge.

Until that moment of recognition, I had not been aware of the growth in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the fact that the profession I had entered was becoming a globally-recognized and highly skilled profession that would eventually turn into “a major international enterprise” (Richards 1). With the impact of globalization, there has

been a great need to standardize the practice of ELT to maintain the standards required in a profession, yet without the ability to reflect on the teaching process and the implications that arise for individual students, our capacity as teachers to reach out to or to impact students in the learning process will be limited. With the growth in demand for second language training and the changes taking place in the practice of ELT, the ability to produce and deliver programs that will respond the multitude of student needs in addition to addressing the variety of cultural and contextual settings in which English is taught is becoming an important consideration. Because any kind of teaching, including second language instruction, is never neutral (Hinkel 915), there is a current challenge for ELT professionals to adhere to accepted standards in language teaching while accommodating for individual differences in the learning environment and with the learners themselves.

Background

The interest I have for language and culture began at an early age. My earliest memories of cultural curiosity go back to my elementary school days when I remember two distinct events that marked the respect I currently hold for cultural inquiry and diversity. The first is a recollection of being completely mesmerized while sitting at the kitchen table early one morning by an advertisement on a cereal box featuring a contest where the prize was a trip to Tokyo. I stared intently at the picture of a seemingly far away city with a slim tower and a large mountain in the background and marvelled at the thought of a lifestyle that seemed so different from my own. The second memory is my delight in coloring in my friend's coloring book that included pictures of people around the world dressed in ethnic costumes. Though this was a rather old coloring book that looked like it might have been purchased at a garage sale, it provided me with hours of

entertainment where I would ponder about the color these costumes might be, the types of people who would wear this type of clothing, and the places where these people would live.

In the relatively conservative middle-class neighbourhood of Calgary where I grew up, I didn't find the answers to those questions. But, later, it was no surprise that when it came to embarking on a post-secondary education that I would choose to study a foreign language. Actually, the language I eventually chose to study was not foreign to me, but part of my own cultural heritage. When I decided to enter a French college after completing my primary and secondary education in English schools, I was thrilled to be in a different educational environment that would require me to adopt more critical perspectives in learning, allowing me to question attitudes and ideas about my own culture, language and social behaviour while learning about another language and culture.

First experiences: Personalizing the instructional process by incorporating context in teaching

“If it is true that the more people differ the harder it is for them to understand each other, it is equally true that the more they differ the more they have to teach and learn from each other. To do so, of course, there must be mutual respect and sufficient curiosity to overcome the frustrations that occur as they flounder from one misunderstanding to another.” (Barnlund 14)

I began teaching English as a Second Language in the mid 1980's when many English language instructors were recruited from an ensemble of avid readers, cultural inquirers or students who had simply studied or knew several languages. Although I did

not have much training in second language education other than my teacher training as a primary school French Immersion teacher, it was understood that my skills in teaching French as a Second Language teacher were transferrable to the instruction of English as a Second Language (ESL) because the process of teaching and learning a second language were considered the same, no matter which language was being taught.

The first group of full-time students that I taught consisted of an eclectic group of immigrants who had just arrived in Canada as political or economic refugees. In the first few weeks of classes, one of my students named Tran sat silently in the front row not responding or seeming the least bit interested in any classroom activities. Most of the time, he looked as though he either was asleep or completely indifferent to any of the activities that were taking place in the room. Yet, I was very eager to get a response out of him – even if it was just a nod or a smile, and was looking for the first opportunity to do so. Finally, one day, I noticed the battered look to his shoes, which prompted me to inquire about them. Noticing that they were rather worn and a little outdated, I pointed to his shoes and asked, with a bit of humour and hesitation, “How many miles do you think you’ve walked wearing with those shoes?” After a few minutes of deep thought, during which I was beginning to regret my boldness, Tran managed a wide grin that ended in a huge, short laugh. He couldn’t quite get any words out, but at least there was some response. It was the first time Tran had opened his mouth since he first took his seat in class. After he smiled, he simply nodded in agreement that his shoes did indeed look very well worn and that it was not likely there were many people around wearing either that style of shoes or ones in that condition. He also seemed to recognize that since he was

now in Canada, he may need to get a new pair. He pointed out that the shoes, with holes in the soles and very uncomfortable looking in general, would not suffice as the weather became colder and icier. I imagined by his quick and definitive agreement that he had already encountered some 'slippery situations' wearing those shoes.

“Intercultural communication is difficult.” (Porter and Samovar 15) One of the biggest stumbling blocks to the progress and general education that I discovered was the multiple challenges the students were dealing with in regards to settlement issues and accommodating to a new environment as well as dealing with family situations. Culture shock was a reality that had to be dealt with in direct ways, not glossed over in class by a repetitive style of questioning met with mechanical responses. Sometimes, I would spend hours just listening to one or two students try to voice their concerns; or, rather, the whole class would attempt to piece together the details of a story about housing arrangements or child care concerns. It became a group effort to put a story together. However, it was motivating for the students because these were issues of immediate and real concern to all of them. Not only did this exercise present a motivating learning opportunity for the entire class, but it also helped students to realize that they were not alone in their particular situations. Learning language by helping one another with listening to concerns, providing advice or just simply listening to a problem served to implicate students in the learning process in addition to providing valuable and unique resources for teaching. Often I did not recognize just how valuable these types of experiences could be until one semester when classes came to an end and at the farewell lunch, one of my students would not stop crying. I commented about how difficult taking the next step of

looking for work would be when she quickly turned around and exclaimed, “Oh no, it is you... my classmates...our talking, laughter, that I will miss!”

It was at that point that I realized that following a generic ‘one size fits all’ curriculum without personalizing the material by making some connections from previous experiences to the present learning environment would have resulted in failed learning opportunities and undue stress on the learners. Since many of the ELT texts are created in global language teaching centres either in England or the United States, I felt that the curriculum provided excellent starting points for instruction but fell short on the contextualization of material. It was usually evident after a few weeks with my class that these students, although not necessarily academically inclined, could nonetheless offer a wealth of experience that could be applied to classroom learning situations. It was at that point when I discovered that making use of the students’ previous knowledge and ability to create meaningful classroom interaction lessened the need to rely solely on the texts for information and ideas. Rather, including some means of social engagement and personal exchanges within the class provided more interesting and provocative material for learning and discussion. These types of activities also helped students form a sense of togetherness where they could realize that their situations in learning a second language were not unique. From that moment of recognition on, I decided to focus on the information I had about the students themselves and what they had to offer in order to invite them to enter more fully into the learning process. In my reluctance to base all my instruction on the text, I had realized that using some prior knowledge of the students or

recognition of their previous experiences was an effective and interesting way to encourage adult students and bring the class into a completely new learning environment.

Delving deeper: developing a sense of culture and incorporating cultural views in teaching

“...since we also use language to construct and maintain group identity, and to establish and negotiate social norms of belief, attitude and value. Particular linguistic choices therefore come imbued with cultural significance, and this relationship is a valid area of investigation.” (Corbett 7)

After some time, I began to notice a distinction in the way culture was referred to or taught in ESL classes. I realized that the usual cultural notes at the bottom or margins of texts explaining cultural topics or suggested cultural activities were usually based on broad cultural concepts like special holidays, historical facts or figures and religious traditions; yet, the more I got to know ESL students and understood their needs, the more often I would tend to address simpler cultural issues such as peculiarities in daily exchanges or the habits and behaviours of certain cultural or sub cultural groups that make up the Canadian population. Once again forgoing the recommendation to use the specified text as my primary teaching resource, I relied on student feedback to influence my course of actions. It seemed infinitely more interesting for students to discuss particularities of group behaviour, habits and thought rather than to learn about general cultural traditions and historic facts. Details such as why (some) Canadians took off their shoes before entering a home or in which situations could you hug a woman and shake hands with a man appeared to receive much more response and interest than talking about the details of Christmas when many students, even after living here for twenty years,

would probably never even celebrate Christmas. I realized that it was not the upper case *C* Culture that I would seek to develop in language classes, but a small *c* reference to culture (Johnson, 2005 6) that describes the particularities of every day life.

I found that introducing culture by using the teaching resources to make initial connections that could be directly related to student experiences was the best way to integrate intercultural learning in the classroom. This was not only helpful for the students to develop some sort of mutual understanding, but also served to increase their consciousness about their surrounding environment. An example of this is discussing the weather in Canada. The weather was always a popular topic for even the most diverse group of students and one that elicited general agreement and therefore a much needed consensus amongst students. “Culture manifests itself in patterns of language and in forms of activity and behaviour that act as models for both the common adaptive acts and the styles of communication that enable people to live in a society within a given geographic region at a given state of technical development at a particular moment in time.” (Porter and Samovar 19) Although relatively simplistic, talking about the weather in general was helpful because it brought students together in agreement and pointed out some important considerations to acknowledge in preparing for winter and living in a northern climate, information that students needed in order to make their experience and living conditions in Canada more liveable and comfortable. Most students could relate to the feeling of frozen toes and fingers and would contribute actively to a discussion on this relatively straightforward yet very relevant topic. Discussing and exchanging ideas about how to deal with environmental issues by explaining what tuques are, where to buy

appropriate clothing and equipment for winter such as shovels and ice scrapers as well as talking about winter activities such as tobogganing and careful winter driving provided realistic and practical issues for social engagement within the classroom.

Even in the summer, the weather or environmental conditions are important topics to address. I still remember entering a class full of Japanese exchange students to find them all scratching away after enjoying a previous day of golf. Apparently, mosquitoes are not a problem in Japan, but they are a huge distraction in Edmonton's river valley in the middle of July. Most of these students did not even know what mosquitoes were, never mind about the spray that would get rid of them, until the next day when a bottle of mosquito spray was presented in class during a discussion about bugs and other summertime annoyances. Using the weather and environment as a topic for discussion serves two functions: it helps the learners to contextualize the information presented in class by exchanging information about their personal experiences in their new environment in addition to giving the students themselves a common starting point to express their own feelings. Looking for agreement on topics by pointing out thoughts or feelings that are generally shared in a situation is usually a great way to bridge cultural gaps and produce a positive social environment in the classroom that promotes student understanding of other classmates and the realities of their surroundings.

Once there has been some understanding in the way of agreement about an issue, then the details of separate opinions, points of view or perceptions that follow can be addressed and discussed. Interestingly enough, we can usually see and understand

differences best after there has been some sense of shared commonality. “We need to understand not only cultural differences but also cultural similarities. While understanding differences will help us determine sources of potential problems, understanding similarities may help us become closer to one another.” (Porter and Samovar 30) Making cultural connections such as discussing climate differences or the various habits of certain groups of people not only invites students to enter into the learning process, but also helps students to apply their experiences to the present situation. When this occurs, learning can be more easily achieved because the information becomes more significant, and therefore memorable, to the learner. These are the experiences that most likely ‘hit home’ with each student individually and as a member of a diverse group.

Venturing into the unknown: establishing a sense of welcome and openness

“Teaching, therefore, asks first of all the creation of a space where students and teachers can enter into a fearless communication with each other and allow their respective life experiences to be their primary and most valuable source of growth and maturation.” (Nouwen 85)

Part of my interest in teaching has come from my willingness to venture into unknown territories and unfamiliar terrain. This willingness to accept and welcome the unfamiliar allows me to reflect on everyday aspects of culture and the differences in cultural behaviour and attitudes that are reflected in language. What is especially intriguing about teaching English to the many immigrants who arrive in Canada is the continual discovery and surprise at the wealth of experience that students bring to the

overall classroom environment. Using information about students and their previous experience and knowledge to bridge cultural gaps in language learning provides an effective point of departure in second language teaching. Because “understanding culture, one’s own and that of others, must begin with an understanding of ordinary everyday life” (Barer-Stein 1988 in Cassara 164), sharing ideas and thoughts about typical life experiences are important aspects of cultural integration and developing cultural understanding. In my classes, I tend to focus on sharing ideas and thoughts about typical life experiences such as making dinner, organizing family outings or using a bank machine, which are important aspects of cultural integration and developing cultural understanding.

Questioning students about their thoughts, attitudes and behaviours encourages the reflection of cultural implications that are expressed in language and behaviour. When asking personal questions in English classes, I do not expect students to simply repeat and memorize information important information. I delve further by asking about differences in how information is given and ordered in other languages, or about the appropriateness of asking for particular information in other cultures, to gain some understanding about how other languages format and process information. At times, students may think I am too pushy or curious, or they may simply wonder, “Why does she want to know that? That question isn’t in the book!” However, in doing this I am attempting to develop a general awareness in regards to culture by asking students about their own cultural habits and behaviours in order to introduce new ideas of culture. Leading students to a point where they begin making their own cultural connections

through dialogue and discussion enables students to come to their own conclusions about language and culture and rely on their own perception of the new language. Allowing students the space to come to their own conclusions about the relationship of culture to language lessens the need for teacher explanation and the reliance of students on teacher verification or text memory to construct English for their own use.

“Learning about a new culture involves seeking out information, asking questions and making observations.” (Damen 34) Originally, I had sought detailed information from students about their own cultural heritage for my own benefit, in order to get some insight into their individual learning situations and the challenges that students face in transferring knowledge from their own language to English. However, I later discovered that in addition to developing my own knowledge about how language relates to cultural and cognitive perception, I realized that recognizing comparative and contrasting linguistic elements contributes to the overall learning environment in second language instruction by creating a better general understanding and appreciation for my students and the difficulties they face in learning a second language and adapting to a new culture. Once I could reach out in understanding to students, they more readily responded to my teaching. This process emphasized the social aspect of learning, making it evident to me that people innately have similar personal values, professional inclinations and human desires by the degree of similarity that is discovered in addressing cultural references to learn language.

My sense of openness is an indication of my preference for lessened teacher authority and increased student involvement in the ESL class. According to Brazilian educator Paulo Friere, authoritarianism in teaching leads to “apathy, excessive obedience, uncritical conformity, lack of resistance against authoritarian discourse, self-abnegation, and fear of freedom” (Friere, 2005 73). Accepting and recognizing the unique and individual cultural origins of students while introducing unfamiliar linguistic, cultural and socio-political ideas requires an instructor who has cultivated a democratic sense of fairness and equity in the classroom in addition to a welcoming and hospitable personal manner. In order to assist students transition to new situations where they may be required to develop, or at least understand, different ways of thinking, I often have to temporarily shed my own assumptions and expectations to leave room to facilitate students as they formulate their own identities and knowledge. Though this practice requires a stark honesty about myself and others, it serves to develop an increased understanding and respect for cultural views and norms. In the end, “speaking to and with the learners is an unpretentious but very positive way for democratic teachers to contribute” (Friere, 2005 115) to the learning environment and helps learners make progress in culture learning and intercultural communication. This teaching practice places the instructional focus on dialogue, which is in great contrast to ‘the banking concept of education’, which is more widely recognized in highly structured and authoritarian approaches to teaching (Friere, 1993 54). “In fact, when we consider adult literacy learning or education in general as an act of knowing, we are advocating a synthesis between the educator’s maximally systematized knowing and the learners’

minimally systematized knowing – a synthesis achieved in dialogue.” (Friere 1985, 54-55)

Making choices in learning and developing “ways of being” in a language

Students often comment that in addition to learning about language in my second language courses, they also learn important and useful life skills that can be transferred to other areas of learning or to the improvement of their own lives in general. Like Brazilian educator Paulo Friere (1985), I believe that as teachers, we teach not only our subject matter, but also have a great role in facilitating student development as individuals and citizens. “Teaching involves not just intellectual purposes, but social purposes and responsibilities that are morally and intellectually grounded.” (Pratt 613) Through an autonomous process of language learning that encourages cultural perception and reflection, students are able to actually see how language reflects their individual thought process. In addition to encouraging students to make choices about their own language learning, allowing students the flexibility to come to their own decisions about language use within certain parameters helps students to develop their own voice in the language they are learning and position themselves as they want to “be” in their new language. Although working through this type of learning strategy poses initial challenges for the teacher and students, the advantages of offering choice in language learning pays off in the creativity developed in students’ use of language. During ESL lessons, students who come from more traditional backgrounds are often surprised at the amount of freedom allotted in using language in the classroom setting and find it difficult to struggle through hesitations and insecurities about language use and the amount of control they exercise over the learning process itself. It is often a revelation to students after completing an

ESL course that they have actually formed certain thoughts about personal, academic, social or political matters. This is usually in great contrast to the time when students first enter the class and do not believe that they have an opinion, or at least a valid one, about a certain issue or situation. Yet, when required to say or write something – anything - the result is often surprising. For foreign or immigrant students, the realization that they can direct their own learning and develop their own unique style in language learning helps to build confidence in the student ability to study and, subsequently, become proficient learners of English. Allowing students to examine life experiences and responses to real life situations in the ESL class also helps students to understand and navigate within the new culture that surrounds them.

Part II – A Review of the Literature

Situating the literature

In order to fully comprehend the impact of intercultural learning in second language education, I have found it necessary to look back at the various approaches to second language teaching that preceded current second language teaching methods in order to recognize the progression of language teaching theory and evaluate the various influences in approaches to second language teaching that have resulted in present day second language instruction. In addition to that, I have been interested in how second language teaching has evolved in modern times to accommodate the larger number of second language speakers worldwide and the effects that globalization has had on the instruction of second language in present times.

This review of the literature will present and analyze theories and ideas related to second language teaching and research, especially those concerned with the topics of culture learning and intercultural education in second language instruction by presenting a brief background of second language teaching methods that have been traditionally used in second language teaching and providing a more detailed examination of recent approaches to English Language Training (ELT), giving special consideration to the treatment of culture learning and developing intercultural awareness in second language instruction. The focus of this review is to give a critical account of the how the literature on second language teaching methodology has involved or reflected aspects of culture learning and intercultural development in the instruction of English as a Second Language.

The overall trend of second language instruction has reflected a general progression from traditional educational methods that relied on the memorization of basic linguistic structures in the second language to applications of various approaches that have served to achieve a wide range of goals in second language learning. Using rote learning and memorization in highly structured learning settings could in fact describe the majority of second language teaching environments from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries (Richards and Rodgers 1). The most popular traditional methods of second language instruction used in the past have been the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method and the Audio-Visual Method of language teaching. These methods of second language instruction conformed to a positivist paradigm of educational theory (Johnson, 2006 238), reflecting behaviourist thought and structural linguistics. As a result, the primary focus of early second language teaching methods was to produce cognitive understanding of linguistic structures and grammatical function in the second language (Richards and Rogers 3). In other words, the goal of language teaching was “to know everything about something (the language) rather than the thing (the language) itself” (W.H.D. Rouse 1969, in Richards and Rogers 3). However, with the progression of English into a global language and second language learning becoming a more widespread activity worldwide (Richards 1), structural methods of learning language based primarily on grammatical knowledge of a second language were no longer seen as being effective in developing communicative skills in second language learning because “in themselves they are not complete and need to be complemented by theories of language learning” (Richards and Rodgers 17). In addition to lacking the inclusion of a

social context for learning, these methods were often difficult and impractical to implement (Richards and Rogers 7).

The global environment has had a great role in influencing changes to the perception and delivery of second language programs, especially in ELT. “Rapid and wide-ranging improvements in forms of transportation and communication caused the world to shrink in a figurative sense; we entered the era of the global village.” (Porter and Samovar 15) Today, bilingualism and multilingualism have become “the norm rather than the exception” (Richards and Rogers 1), warranting a shift in second language teaching practice. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was originally adapted from the British structural second language teaching method called Situational Language Teaching (lingualinks website), emphasizing the practice of basic linguistic structures in meaningful situation-based activities (Richards and Rogers 64). The initial aims of CLT arose from the need to establish educational environments that would provide the opportunity to develop the functional and communicative potential of language learners rather than focussing primarily on the “mere mastery of structures” (Richards and Rogers 64). It was believed that implementing a communicative approach to language teaching would produce a greater rate of fluency in the second language by acknowledging the creativity and uniqueness of language (Chomsky 1957) and applying a variety of instructional techniques that could be used and adapted to a variety of educational settings and contexts. As a result, the communicative approach to language teaching has recently been favoured in ELT because of its flexibility and ease in implementation (Savignon 1). Since Communicative Language Teaching first displayed social function

and situational contexts in language teaching, varieties of communicative type teaching approaches have dominated the practice of second language instruction, particularly ELT, creating a series of different implementations to include cultural aspects in language instruction. Adaptations of the communicative approach have appeared after communicative language teaching replaced many of the traditional second language teaching methods and with that, attempts have been made to place more emphasis on developing contextually diverse and culturally rich teaching environments for second language learning.

Communicative Language Teaching

Because communicative language teaching offered a more humanistic approach to language instruction than previous methods (Richards and Rogers 83), it became one of the first methods to recognize and introduce the notion of social function and situational contexts into language teaching (Savignon 13). The communicative approach to second language teaching was initially seen as a more acceptable standard to deliver second language education in global settings because it was adaptable to a multitude of linguistic environments and allowed students to apply grammatical and functional knowledge in “negotiating meaning” (Larsen-Freeman, 1986 123) within contextually specific environments. Communicative language teaching provides a comprehensive approach to second language instruction that integrates language function with grammatical structure (Richards and Rodgers 66). “One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language.” (Littlewood 1) Although many teaching models and versions make

up the practice of communicative language teaching, the primary focus of CLT remains on language *use*, not *usage* (Larsen-Freeman, 1986 123).

Communicative language teaching represented a merging of linguistic and sociolinguistic theory, including theories of British functional linguists Firth and Halliday, Chomsky's critique of structural linguistic theory, and the research of Americans sociolinguists Hymes, Gumperz and Labov (Lingualinks website). The goal of CLT is for learners to attain what has been termed "communicative competence" (Hymes 1972), expanding Chomsky's linguistic theory of competence into a communicative view of language and culture (Richards and Rodgers 70). Developing communicative competence "involves being able to use the language appropriate to a given social context" (Larsen-Freeman, 1986 131). Applying Chomsky's critique of structural linguistics by indicating that language is dynamic and creative to the process of second language learning, developing communicative competency was perceived as a way for learners to internalize linguistic structures by exposure to and interaction within the second language (Corbett 6). In general, a communicative approach to second language learning focuses not only on linguistic competence based on grammatical knowledge, but it also incorporates functional and sociolinguistic norms of appropriateness into developing four skills in language: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Hymes in Savignon 12).

Though social context has been addressed in language instruction in CLT, developing cultural skills and intercultural knowledge has not been an essential aspect of

CLT. Because the aim of communicative language teaching is to provide a basic approach to language instruction that includes both grammatical and functional aspects of learning a second language, a number of versions of CLT have arisen from the original concept of communicative language instruction (Hinkel 3). Among varied practices in CLT, there is a ‘strong’ version and a ‘weak’ version of the communicative approach to language teaching (Howatt 279). The weak version, which has become standard practice in recent years, emphasizes the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English as a primary means of communication whereas the strong version is similar to an immersion approach where language is used to learn other concepts and academic subjects in the second language (Howatt 279). In general, most applications of CLT have included the basic four skill format of communicative language teaching with implementations that better suit different language teaching environments. The result is that a number of approaches to second language education are adaptations of communicative language teaching in more specific instructional settings (Hinkel 891). The most popular adaptations of CLT include those that involve cultural approaches to language learning.

Language Socialization

Language socialization has been recognized as a way to integrate culture learning into a communicative style of language acquisition by immersing students into the second language culturally as well as linguistically (Zuengler and Cole 301) in either study or workplace settings, though its capacity for developing an inquisitive stance to culture learning is limited. In most cultures, socialization represents the first learning experience of schoolchildren (Scollen and Scollen 162), making the process of language

socialization similar to the function of enculturation, which normally occurs in the learning of a native or first language (Damen 140). The goals for language socialization is for students to be capable not only of communicating competently in the second language, but also to develop cultural behaviours and attitudes inherent in native language speakers without being formally taught about cultural aspects of the language. Socialization is simply the “process of just looking around to see what others are doing and then trying to match their behaviour” (Scollen and Scollen 162), and language socialization is achieved through the same informal means of processing linguistic and cultural behaviours. Though language socialization offers opportunities to recognize and adopt cultural behaviour in second language learning, this method of language teaching risks presenting biased or incorrect views of a culture or cultural groups because the information that is presented is often based on a set of assumptions about the cultural group of the second language (Mercer 108) that may or may not be correct interpretations of social or cultural behaviour. The emphasis in language socialization is placed on learning language and developing cultural awareness through experiences in using the second language rather than through a process of acculturation, which places the importance on reflection based on experiences (Damen 140). Implementing a process of acculturation as opposed to socialization combines learning through formal teaching practices based on dialogue and reflection on linguistic and cultural topics in addition to informal methods that provide opportunities to actually use the second language. Though language socialization does place an emphasis on culture learning, the goal of this approach to language teaching is not necessarily to develop cultural awareness, but to integrate cultural behaviours into language learning. The intention of language

socialization is for second language learners to develop a sense of belonging in the culture (Mercer 119) and assimilate into the new cultural environment by the “adoption of the characteristics and behaviours of the new culture” (Damen 141). An intercultural approach to language focuses more readily on adapting to the new culture of the second language through a process of acculturation, which establishes a better sense of awareness and understanding of cultural norms and behaviours.

Socio-cultural Perspectives in Culture Learning

Recognizing that learning is a sociocultural process (Hill 357), a variety of social contexts and socio cultural goals can be achieved by encouraging meaningful social engagement in second language learning. One of the ways to develop relevancy in learning and present a meaningful learning environment is to situate the learning process within an appropriate context while providing opportunities to recognize cultural practices in social interactions. As opposed to encouraging assimilation into a culture, learning within contextual settings focuses on experiential learning and allows students to develop “ways of being” within particular cultural contexts (Hill 357). Because the complex process of meaningful learning requires students to examine their attitudes and behaviours in the “restructuring of one’s relations to the world” (Friedman in Welton 79), using teaching methods that include both experiential and formal learning allows the opportunity for students to develop skills of human judgment and negotiation in culturally appropriate contexts (Hill 359). In other words, students begin to acquire knowledge consciously. Based on the argument that “knowledge entails lived practices, not just accumulated information” (Johnson, 2006 237), presenting learning situations that reflect reality outside the classroom while encouraging the examination of the

connections between language and socio-cultural relationships provides a valuable opportunity to realize the role of language in culture and society. In contrast to assimilation or enculturation, facilitating acculturation into a second language learning represents a “series of processes” that is continuous and takes place over a period of time (Damen 140) where the “teacher’s role is to understand, foster, and encourage the processes of culture learning rather than set prescribed goals for desired degrees of acculturation” (Damen 141). For this reason, educational practices that are situated within appropriate learning contexts will challenge students to apply their learning to changing realities.

Intercultural Learning

As the popularity of ELT spread to a global level, limitations to CLT in its treatment of culture and consideration of individual context in second language learning became more evident (Damen 100-101). Defining particularities in English language learners and educational settings helps to establish intercultural approaches in communicative language teaching by addressing localized instructional issues of context and culture, reinforcing the view that language and culture are inseparable (Corbett 24). “While cultural guidance is seldom part of the stated curriculum of the ESL (English as a Second Language), EFL (English as a Foreign Language), or any classroom, it is nonetheless often a part of the hidden agenda” (Damen 4). Although CLT is regarded as the most progressive and modern approach to second language teaching, it is not viewed as globally appropriate since many of its underlying values are in conflict with those of other cultures (Pennycook in Larsen-Freeman, 1999 2). Because of the heavy reliance on North American and British values, traditional culture teaching in CLT tends to focus

strictly on cultural learning and knowledge of the second language and “pays little, if any, attention to reflection on one’s own cultural identity, on cultural differences or on how cultures relate to and affect each other” (Sercu 19). Promoting cross-cultural awareness “involves uncovering and understanding one’s own culturally conditioned behaviour and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. Thus, the process involves not only perceiving the similarities and differences in other cultures, but also recognizing the givens of the native culture or, as Hall (1969) says, our own ‘hidden culture’”. (Damen 141) As a result, intercultural learning requires a communicative process based on meaningful and realistic interpersonal interaction, integrating an awareness of cultural contexts and an appreciation of cultural aspects of both the language of the learner and the second language.

In contrast to approaches based on language socialization, an intercultural approach to second language learning aims to develop *an understanding* of how a community or language group uses language and how the values and beliefs are articulated and negotiated within the particular language group (Corbett 19). Using intercultural approaches to the study of language reinforces an active recognition of cultural and linguistic elements of language by focussing on developing the ability to “see” oneself as an active participant (Barer-Stein in Cassara 165-166) in the culture of the second language. It is based on the premise that developing cultural awareness is a learned behaviour (Damen 88) that can be transferred from one situation to another, reflecting the viewpoint that once people recognize that they are products of their own cultures, “they are better prepared and more willing to look at the behaviour of persons

from other cultures and accept them non-judgmentally” (Corbett 25). The ability to reflect on one’s own culture while developing an understanding of another culture is accomplished by active observation, clarification, recording, reflection, comparison and analysis of both the internal (native culture) and the external (second language) context (Byram and Feng 912). An important distinction between intercultural learning and other types of second language learning such as language socialization is that once language learners develop a cultural understanding of the second language group, they may or may not wish to adopt the practices or beliefs of the new culture (Corbett 20). In other words, there is recognition of desired degrees of acculturation into a language, which puts language learners in a position of making informed choices about language learning and cultural behaviour, preventing the risk of hegemonic structure entering into second language education.

Critical Pedagogy in Second Language Learning

Reflecting the belief that “education is never neutral and foreign language education has a political role to play in any education system of the world” (Byram and Feng 915), applying critical theory to second language instruction serves to examine the influence of political structures and sociological contexts of the language studied and helps to provide a better understanding of the political scope presented in linguistic contexts. ELT researchers Canagarajah and Pennycook demonstrate how critical theory contributes to developing intercultural competence by attaching more than an objective and value-free ethnographic knowledge of cultures to language learning and regarding language as dynamic representations of social and political constructs indicative of cultural thought and beliefs (Canagarajah 931). According to Pennycook, “a critical

pedagogy does not advocate the teaching of a fixed body of political thought but aims to help students to deal with their struggles to make sense of their lives, to find ways of changing how lives are lived within inequitable social structures, to transform the possibilities of our lives and the ways we understand those possibilities.” (Pennycook 302) Because critical pedagogy in second language teaching views socio-cultural situations in terms of power relationships that are reflected in language use, introducing this teaching practice into second language education calls for language teachers to function as “transformative intellectuals” (Johnson, 2006 248) “who are able and willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform practice, who connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and who work together to share ideas, and exercise power over the conditions of humane life” (Giroux and McLaren 1989, in Johnson, 2006 248). Contextualizing learning by making reference to the socio-economic environment requires educators to progress from a “mentalist” mindset to a “culturalist” (Guile and Young 181) ideology. In addressing the political and social climate that surrounds the learning environment, students discover how organizations structure power, enabling them to perceive hegemonic structures that may be present in learning situations and outside organizations, and empowering them to challenge “dominant cultural codes” that may be operating (Hall 19).

Post-Methodology in Second Language Education

Post-methodology in second language learning recognizes that very few teaching methods can respond to teaching requirements in all situations and for all second language learners (Richards and Rogers 20). In response to the need to provide effective teaching solutions in a diverse educational field such as ELT, post-methodology signals a

return to John Dewey's influence in education that emphasizes learner autonomy, problem solving and critical thinking within a multicultural framework (Bell 330). Because of limitations inherent in any second language method, approach or technique, there is a need to go beyond the constructs of method to find alternative ways of designing effective second language teaching strategies (Kumaravadivelu 537). Brown considers post-methodology as a sign that the profession has finally reached a level of maturity where teachers recognize the multiplicity of teaching contexts and, as a result, function much like doctors. He states: "Our approach...is the cumulative body of knowledge and principles that enables teachers, as "technicians" in the classroom, to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful pedagogical techniques, and to assess the outcomes of those treatments". (Brown in Bell 330) To place an emphasis on second language instructors acting as "technicians" in the classroom, however, is in grave contrast to our position as "cultural workers" (Briton 33), which is required in an intercultural approach to learning. Attempting to recognize the importance of cultural appropriateness in second language education by going "beyond methods" provides an alternative to following an established practice in second language teaching when the role of the instructor moves "from ideology to inquiry" (Larsen-Freeman, 1999 3). In realizing the relationship between theory and practice, post-methodology must rely on the professional capacity of individual instructors to develop a personal theory of second language learning that can be used in practical teaching situations (Kumaravadivelu 540). Advocates of post-method pedagogy maintain that evaluating specific pedagogical practices by allowing the instructor to reflect on the specific context of the language teaching situation and address the unique challenges within the learning

environment produces a more effective teaching strategy than the practice of relying solely on one particular method of second language instruction to achieve goals in second language instruction.

Part III – Analysis and interpretation of intercultural approaches to ELT

The aim of this last part of the paper is to relate information from my own experience and the information from the literature on second language education to present a detailed examination of imperialism in second language instruction. Since concerns about ensuring cultural equanimity and promoting linguistic diversity in second language teaching have become popular topics of debate in ELT circles, I have endeavoured to present a particular focus on these issues to provide a more complete picture of current second language teaching practices and address some of the questions raised about the influence of ELT in a global perspective. In this section of the paper, I will review approaches to ELT that have roots in traditional language teaching theory reflecting a tendency toward linguistic imperialism and colonization, and I will suggest ways of approaching English language instruction that promote cultural tolerance, intercultural awareness and cultural diversity.

The role of ELT in a global world

The impact of English and English Language Instruction (ELT) worldwide has created a need for diversity in instructional processes and teaching methodology that recognizes how language is situated in use and acknowledges how language is located within ‘larger discursive frameworks’ that make up “the cultural and political moments of the day” (Pennycook 34). To ensure that the instruction of English holds “an additive rather than a subtractive” feature in language development (Lambert in Phillipson, 1992 306), there “must be a paradigm shift in the study of the diffusion and impact of English, one that would be less ethnocentric and that does justice to linguistic and cultural

pluralism” (Kashru, 1996 in Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999 30). However, because of the difficulties encountered in accommodating cultural components into the practice of second language instruction, cultural content has often been removed from ELT syllabus (Corbett 1) in favour of providing uniformity and continuity in English language training worldwide. English professionalism, the hegemonic structure of ELT policy makers and monolingual ELT policies have been primarily responsible for the emergence of linguistic imperialism into English language teaching. Yet, since effective intercultural communication is based on the assumption that there is “an honest and sincere desire to communicate and seek *mutual* understanding” (Porter and Samovar 30), placing a strong emphasis on conformity, measurability and practicality in assessing the quality of communication goes against cultural respect and diversity by reinforcing the importance of uniformity and standardization that embodies institutionalized society.

Second language communication is becoming widely recognized as a source of intercultural dialogue in a global world. However, without measures of protection to ensure the preservation of languages to maintain the cultural link within social and political groups, language risks being used as a method for “social control and... the mediation of social justice” (Phillipson et al, 1995 1). Because language can contribute to building intercultural understanding, the focus of second language teaching must shift from a perspective of learning *about* languages to learning languages for *use* in communication amongst people of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds in an increasingly interconnected world. The acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity is necessary for the protection of languages and the promotion of cultural and linguistic stability to people of all nations. Since language represents a core cultural value for most

groups, threats to language arise when cultural diversity is no longer tolerated and ethnic groups are no longer allowed to be different (Phillipson et al, 1995 7), or to express their cultural individuality. Stephen Wurm sums up some of the arguments for the need of linguistic diversity in the following statement:

Each language reflects a unique world-view and culture complex, mirroring the manner in which a speech community has resolved its problems in dealing with the world, and has formulated its thinking, its system of philosophy and understanding of the world around it. In this, each language is the means of expression of the intangible cultural heritage of people, and it remains a reflection of this culture for some time even after the culture which underlies it decays and crumbles, often under the impact of an intrusive, powerful, usually metropolitan, different culture. (Wurm, ed. 2001 13 from Skutnabb-Kangas website)

Approaching culture learning and socio-cultural approaches in second language instruction

Language researchers and practitioners interested in culture learning and the development of intercultural awareness in second language education have recently begun to take stock of issues in English language training stemming from the practice of ELT on a global level. If language is perceived as a mechanism of cultural transmission, then advocating highly structured means of communication and language teaching such as those found in traditional language teaching methods have the potential to destroy linguistic and cultural diversity, going against the goals of intercultural communication. Yet, complexities involved in developing and accessing teaching methods and materials

that are socially constructed to reflect the social, cultural, economic and political forces present in the specific ELT context (Larsen-Freeman, 1999 1) have often deterred individual instructors or program developers from traversing this tricky educational terrain. “Cultural norms so completely surround people, so permeate thought and action that few ever recognize the assumptions on which their lives and their sanity rest.” (Barnlund 13). Because of the current interest in providing cultural orientation in second language instruction and the difficulties involved in integrating cultural elements into second language education, questions have been raised about the cultural appropriateness of teaching materials and hegemonic tendencies of placing priority of one culture over another (Johnson, 2005 1-2). Consequently, the task of implementing cultural practices that serve to weaken hegemonic tendencies in second language instruction presents additional challenges for second language instructors who wish to establish critical or intercultural approaches to language teaching.

Culture learning can be referred to as the ‘fifth dimension’ (Damen 1987) of language learning, complementing the four language skills that comprise the foundation for traditional communicative language teaching. “Culture here refers to people’s ways of making sense of their lives, where such sense-making is understood in terms of productive signifying practices that are organized in various conventional ways.” (Pennycook 66) Since culture is encoded into the everyday conceptual linguistic metaphors that are often taken for granted (Bryam, 2002 1), and language communities are made up of “people who *regard themselves* as using the same language” (Pennycook 27), developing an awareness of cultural behaviour must therefore include the recognition

of language involved in daily exchanges and routine behaviour in the appropriate social context of the second language. By endeavouring to create learning situations that acknowledge the cultural aspect of language learning, second language instruction makes a positive contribution to society by cultivating learners who appreciate cultural similarities and differences and can identify with experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse language groups, encouraging cultural diversity and tolerance in addition to promoting a plural linguistic environment.

Socio-cultural approaches to language education support the idea that humans develop as ‘participants in cultural communities’ and “that their development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities” that are in a constant state of fluctuation (Rogoff, 2003 in Johnson, 2006 238). Because languages represent complex “systems of knowledge” that determine how the world is viewed by a collective group of individuals (Chomsky and Foucault 119), developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills is essential to understanding and working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. “To understand how a community uses language it is deemed necessary to understand the community: the dynamic systems of its beliefs, values and dreams, and how it negotiates and articulates them.” (Corbett 19) The intercultural element in this kind of second language education requires learners to respect the home culture and language while incorporating aspects of their own culture into the new language and culture (Corbett 4).

Introducing culture learning to counter the spread of English and its influence on second language education

In response to the global phenomenon of ELT, a sense of “professionalism” (Phillipson 1992) and pragmatism (Block 2001) has permeated the practice of English language instruction, originating from an organized centre to periphery areas where English is taught (Phillipson, 1992 53). According to Phillipson (1992), the majority of influence and power in ELT is shared primarily by British and American ELT organizations, reflecting educational theories that demonstrate linguistic qualities. Professionalism in ELT is viewed as being responsible for the narrow focus that has come to surround the practice of English language teaching by not taking into consideration the impact of economic and political attitudes in the training of ELT instructors. Although appearing to be neutral on the stance of language teaching itself, the ELT central authority has not remained neutral in the association of promoting western values in promoting English language training (Phillipson, 1992 306-307). This narrow focus in ELT training has created a gap between the technical aspects of the profession and the cultural and socio-economic implications of language teaching. The limited scope of training provided for international English language teachers risks putting second language instructors in the position of being ‘technicians’ as opposed to ‘cultural workers’ (Briton 33), which, in global settings, results in portraying hegemonic attitudes that dominate the ‘centre’ of the ELT establishment in Great Britain and North America by neglecting to address important contextual and cultural issues that would prevent teachers from adopting modes of behaviour that reflect attitudes of linguistic imperialism in their work as teachers (Phillipson, 1992 307-308). Refusing the challenge to develop more critical perspectives and reflective stances in teaching is allowing narrow views to

permeate the practice of ELT globally. “*If* the empirical-analytic tradition’s world view does not accurately reflect our reality and it ‘is inherently repressive’,... and *if* ‘the attempt to formulate universal laws governing social phenomena leads to the misrepresentation as eternal or natural of what should instead be seen as historically specific and alterable’(Keat, 1981), *then* the ideas of the empirical-analytical tradition clearly would be far from neutral and objective and obviously should not be used to shape an ethico-political order that would perpetuate this form of domination.” (Briton 54-55)

Approaching language teaching from an overly pragmatic standpoint that follows traditional models of linguistic structuralism and reflects a “positivist view of language that suggests that all languages can be free of cultural and political influences” (Pennycook 12), perpetuating situations of linguistic domination in English language instruction. Because of the popularity of English and marketability of English language proficiency, there is the additional assertion that “by its international status English is even more neutral than other languages” (Pennycook 12). However, choosing not to address political influences and contextual paradigms in English language teaching reinforces the belief that “ELT is non-political (and) serves to *disconnect culture from structure*” (Phillipson, 1992 67). Viewing English language teaching as an activity that is “neutral” and holds no political scope is contrary to the precepts of Applied Linguistics (Phillipson, 1992 306) and adult education in general. “Like it or not, choose we must, for to refuse to do so *consciously* is to support the existing ethico-political order *unconsciously*.” (Briton 55) Reverting to traditional positivist second language teaching

models as a solution to dealing with the complexities inherent in developing culturally based second language programs replicate 1970's attitudes and approaches to second language educational practice as described below.

English was seen as a means of communication which should not be bound to culturally-specific conditions of use, but should be easily transferable to any cultural setting. Authenticity was a key quality, but only insofar as it provided reliable models of language in use. Content was important as a source of motivation, but it was seen as equally important to avoid material which might be regarded as 'culture bound'. Throughout the 1970's and much of the 1980's, syllabus design and materials writing were driven by needs analysis, and culture was subordinated to performance objectives. (Pulverness 1996:7 in Corbett 1-2)

In addition to the focus on professionalism in ELT, a task-based approach to language learning that is characterized by the tenets of efficiency, calculability, predictability, control and standardization (Block and Cameron 119) has influenced recent ELT practice. This focus on efficiency and pragmatism originating from influences of the global economy and international business has reinforced a need for communication skills in a common language, English, in order to ensure success in a technological society (Rannut 100). Today, English has become synonymous with globalization. In English language instruction and how the world views English in general, "English is favoured in all activities within the 'modern sector'" (Phillipson, 1992 315). Additionally, the natural transition of systems and policies, most commonly

referred to as the ‘free market response’ has been replaced by overt control in attempt to ‘unify’ people and countries by common language, commerce, values and thought, resulting in structures and organizations that emphasize centralization, homogenization and mono-cultural efficiency, which are in stark contrast to linguistic diversity (Skutnabb-Kangas 192). In an effort to maintain uniformity in English language instruction, English language teachers are often trained to achieve specific goals that are focused primarily on the linguistic aspects of language learning while ignoring cultural aspects of language acquisition (Block and Cameron 119). The result of this tightly structured style of teacher training is an excessive reliance on efficiency and uniformity, creating instructional situations where English language teachers have not received training in the larger areas of policy formation or intercultural relations that would reflect their positions as aid workers in addition to being ELT providers (Phillipson, 1992 302).

Developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills in second language education as a way to promote cultural tolerance and diversity

Approaches to second language instruction in North America and globally have traditionally focussed on the exclusive learning and use of the second language in foreign language classes. Consequently, policies in ELT practice in North America have reflected a preference for ‘English Only’ in the classroom and within the learning process. Rather than endeavouring to develop language policies that demonstrate a pluralist orientation, the influence of English has produced bilingual language policies that have served primarily as a *bridge to assimilation* into the English language and culture rather than to create an outlet for the interests of diverse cultural groups to be observed (Ricento and

Burnaby 43). “Arguments about the need for national or cultural identity are often seen as being opposed to those about the need for mutual intelligibility.” (Crystal 22) In attempt to create a cohesive and unified national identity in areas of high immigration and diversity, assimilation into the English culture and language has generally been the favoured approach to the linguistic development of all peoples. As a result, in North American society, learning English has been perceived as the key factor to success and access to power for all people (Rannut 100).

Canada is a “polyglot country with 11 different aboriginal language families, two official languages, and over 100 other languages actively used by immigrants and their descendents” (Ricento and Burnaby 65). The Canadian approach to linguistic and cultural policies since the formation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) has been defined as “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Ricento and Burnaby 48). Yet, very little has been done in the past to reflect this reality of cultural and linguistic diversity, except in the creation of second language programs in most schools countrywide. “Until recently, the political culture of Canada has been relatively traditionalist, hierarchical, establishmentarian, deferential towards authority, statist, and corporationist.” (Ricento and Burnaby 59) Even though Canada’s linguistic policies have undergone various changes throughout the history of the country such as language rights being inserted into the constitution in 1876 (MacMillan 1998) to emphasize and include the French as equal founders of the country, the cultural and linguistic duality of the country from the beginning of confederation has resulted in Canada’s legal and political orientation to be based on group rights, or collective rights, rather than a populist agenda (Ricento and Burnaby 27). Although Canada has been more tolerant in its approach to

language than other areas of North America by retaining a bilingual stance in regards to language, there is no fully multicultural stance to public policy (Ricento and Burnaby 47) that supports linguistic diversity in second language education.

Recently, the inception of communicative approaches in second language instruction has greatly influenced the practice of ELT by introducing socio-political and socioeconomic contexts into second language instruction and changes to the ways English is taught and used worldwide (Johnson, 2006 236). In opposition to “English Only” practices that have traditionally dominated North American linguistic policy (Pennycook 19), there is currently a trend to provide minority groups with language training in their own languages. Additionally, the transition to a post-modern society holds promise that multilingual attitudes may be starting to re-emerge. As Skutnabb-Kangas declares, “The post-modernist state has no control over the traditional markers of a sovereignty; sovereignty has disappeared.” (Skutnabb-Kangas 199) In an article that details transitions involved in moving from a modern, structured society to a post-modern world, David Graddol (2006) demonstrates the current shift towards multilingualism in many nations by indicating that “monoglot English graduates face a bleak economic future as qualified multilingual youngsters from other countries are proving to have a competitive advantage over their British counterparts in global companies and organisations” (Graddol 4). New and more accepting attitudes of language, culture and lifestyle are portraying post-modern ideals of global individuality. This shift is also giving way to the trend of new Englishes that are evolving in reaction to the spread of English that has taken place worldwide as global societies merge (Phillipson, 1992 196).

Implications to adapting intercultural approaches in second language instruction

“Language professionals have a special responsibility to address the linguistic and cultural dimensions of diversity.” (Maffi 1996, in Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999 20) In order to do this, teachers must apply conscious reflection to the thought that underlies their actions (Larsen-Freeman, 1999 3). Though teacher training in second language education has traditionally been structured around a positivistic paradigm reflecting the assumption that teachers were to gain understanding exclusively about course content and teaching practices in teacher education programs and apply those principles to classroom experiences (Johnson, 2006 238), this narrow view of teacher training does not leave room for the flexibility necessary to create culturally dynamic learning environments. The current challenge for language instructors is “to position teachers as knowers and to position their ways of knowing that lead to praxis alongside the disciplinary knowledge that has dominated the traditional knowledge base of L2 (second language) teacher education” (Johnson, 2006 243). Consequently, intercultural notions should be integrated into teaching methodology, not simply applied as an add-on to a communicative syllabus (Sercu 121). Reflective of Dewey’s model of education, incorporating “attitudes of open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination)” (Johnson, 2006 248) are necessary to facilitate intercultural learning in addition to the ability to reconsider and reconstruct social identities and previously held ideas and beliefs about language and cultural groups to develop new ways of thinking. To accomplish this complex task, language instructors must be willing to become reflective in their approach to second language learning, to “‘evaluate received opinions’, critically examine the life

they are ‘living in the midst of the doxae’, and come to understand their innermost selves, ‘the theory of whose limits and functions is among the doxae’” (Briton 34), which is what Hegel refers to as ‘Dialectic’ thinking, emanating from reflective action instead of depending solely on outside ideologies (Briton 35) for instructional insight. Some skills indicative of the capacity to facilitate an intercultural approach to second language instruction are “the ability to look upon oneself from the outside, the ability to see the world through the others’ eyes, the ability to cope with uncertainty, the ability to act as a cultural mediator, the ability to evaluate others’ points of view, the ability to consciously use culture learning skills and to read the cultural context, and the understanding that individuals cannot be reduced to their collective identities” (Sercu 2).

In order to achieve intercultural connection, second language instructors must also have either some knowledge, or at the very least an active interest, in the constructs of culture and how cultural identity and ideals influence individual and group behaviour (Barer-Stein in Cassara 164-165). “...If teachers are to pass on culture-specific and culture-general knowledge to their pupils, demonstrate to their pupils how they can relate and compare cultures, prepare pupils for intercultural contact situations and help them to better understand their own cultural identity, they will need a thorough understanding of the target culture as well as their own culture, next to some understanding of foreign cultures in general.” (Ryan and Sercu 39). The teaching context in intercultural education imposes an “interpretative or situational paradigm” (Johnson, 2006 236) on second language instructors that accounts for the needs of the learners, the specific context of the learning environment and the socio-cultural aspects of the larger community or

communities to which the students belong. In his study on the implications of teaching culture in second language classes, David Johnson addresses the dilemma “for ESL teachers to include and integrate culture in their language classes without hegemonizing” (Johnson, 2005: 2). Focussing on learner requirements in larger socio-political and cultural settings presents a need to “shuttle between cultures and communities” by encouraging the use of reflexivity in planning and teaching to develop a “meta-cultural awareness of codes and conventions” (Canagarajah 146). Since language use implies “a position within the social order, a cultural politics, (and) a struggle over different representations of the self and other” (Pennycook 34), the inclusion of cultural attitudes in the teaching of English is important to successful language development, contributing to higher levels of understanding and language proficiency (Johnson, 2005: 2). In order to foster intercultural communication in a language class, a teacher must have an adequate socio-cultural knowledge of the language community of the second language and a command of the pragmatic contextual use of the foreign language in that linguistic community (Sercu 5).

Integrating linguistic diversity into second language education: developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills in the practice of ELT

Few second language learners ever achieve ‘native speaker’ linguistic competence, yet an intercultural education can provide learners with an opportunity to adopt valuable skills of observation, explanation and mediation that contribute to an overall sense of ‘intercultural communicative competence’ (Byram, 1997 in Corbett, 2003: 4), enabling learners to acquire adequate skills to navigate in a second language at a variety of proficiency levels. The differing levels of linguistic proficiency in second

language learning as well as degrees of integration into communities where the second language is used indicate that there exists a variety of purposes for learning a second language (Ricento, 2005 897), which gives rise to the notion that it may be more important to teach language learners how to navigate and negotiate meaning through the second language rather than to focus on learners achieving native-like proficiency in a second language. “Foreign language learners are in a position of someone who is outside the target (second language) group, looking in. Learners may not wish to adopt the practices or beliefs of a culture, but they should be in a position to understand these practices and beliefs if they wish fully to comprehend the language that the members of the target (second language) culture produce.” (Corbett 20) Because not every language learner desires to become a full, active member of a linguistic community, nor is expected to do so, requiring that all second learners work to become fluent in a language presents an unattainable goal (Damen 6). The influence of global English has produced a broad spectrum of English speakers and a wide variety of the type of Englishes spoken in different situations (Kachru 128), so the prerogative of linguistic assimilation into a standardized version of the second language and culture is dependent upon situational contexts and the choice of the learners themselves.

Instead of focussing on an acquisition of standardized English, intercultural approaches to second language education trains learners to become diplomats in the differentiation of cultures “from a perspective of informed understanding” (Corbett 2). Using intercultural skills, learners should develop the ability to “mediate successfully” during cultural exchanges in intercultural situations (Sercu 120). In doing so, though,

there are risks that short-cuts will be taken in the analysis and discussion of intercultural behaviour, and thus a tendency to stereotype or use broad generalizations in reflecting on cultural behaviour. Linguist Adrian Holliday, who has completed much research in the area of intercultural education, warns second language instructors and students of being wary of 'large' culture approaches to describe ethnic and national entities by using stereotypes that produce reductionist overgeneralizations and otherization of foreign languages, societies and individuals (Holliday in Larsen-Freeman, 1999 4). What Holliday (2004) refers to as otherization is the notion of retaining of sense of exclusion in thinking about different cultures as opposed to adopting an approach to culture that is based on tolerance and understanding. In his work entitled *Intercultural Communication: an Advanced Resource*, Holliday outlines various exercises and discussion activities designed to discourage the application of stereotypes in dealing with cultural information.

In general, what is needed to create intercultural awareness is the development of a sense of cultural understanding, not a reduction of cultural tendencies to stereotypes for study purposes. Developing cultural knowledge entails establishing "new ways of engaging culturally with the world and our understanding of it (that) require(s) new political and intellectual forms of expression" (Phipps 38). Approaching cultural communication in this way involves a teaching process that would "endeavour to work through the contradictions of culture and language" (Phipps 38), requiring teachers to take a critical stance in analyzing cultural behaviour and linguistic reproduction.

Conclusion: Final Reflections on the impact of culture learning and developing intercultural awareness in ELT

Teaching English as a Second Language requires an instructor to live in a world 'in between'. A good second language instructor is able to critically examine his or her own language experiences in order to provide detailed references of language to attitudes and behaviour for the students being taught. To successfully navigate between two or more worlds of communication, an ESL instructor must be in a constant state of flux and flex in order to describe culturally laden behaviour in linguistic terms. At some point, an instructor must also be able to cross barriers of understanding, aptitudes, behaviours, desires and knowledge to make connections necessary for student comprehension of material. In most cases, there is a need to continually question and readjust value judgements and attitudes to suit the learning environment. Since the culture to which one belongs is the root of an individual's identity (Cassara 17), language very often defines personal perception and structures realities. Language also reflects the lived experience of an individual (Derrida, 2001 196) that can be subject to change depending on the situational and cultural contexts that are presented in language learning and use. As a result, language teaching will vary depending on the particular environmental conditions, the requirements of the students and the personalities and experiences of the students themselves (Hinkel 3), making it questionable whether one method of language teaching would be suitable and appropriate for all English language teaching situations (Larsen Freeman, 1999 1). To deal with these intangible factors in language instruction, using a variety and combination of teaching strategies in ELT may be the best response to the need for providing contextually appropriate and culturally sensitive teaching methods and

materials while continuing to apply principles of linguistic communication and flexibility in language learning and use.

As confirmed through the literature on second language instruction and through my own experiences in teaching ESL, developing cultural awareness and establishing a climate of intercultural dialogue in second language classrooms has a strong positive influence on language learning and the ability to use language effectively in second language communication. An important part of the dialogue in culture learning and intercultural communication is the recognition of both the native and second language cultures in language instruction. Fostering a positive view of the native culture of second language learners in order to adopt cultural norms and behaviours in a new language encourages progress in second language learning because it is based on the acceptance of a new language and culture rather than the loss of the old one. Cultivating cultural awareness and intercultural skills in second language education promotes an open mind and “a positive disposition towards the unfamiliar” (Sercu 20), which serves to increase students’ ease and ability in functioning in the second language. In addition to teaching students how to mediate in communicative settings, intercultural learning offers the opportunity for students to develop skills in social observation and explanation (Corbett 3). Overall, allowing students to develop their own cultural cognition in a second language based on recognition of previous experience will, in the long term, help to develop a sense of confidence and proficiency in approaching and using languages for communication.

My experiences as an ESL instructor have taught me that significant language learning can be achieved through making cultural connections and developing intercultural awareness in second language education. In general, what I have learned from my teaching practice is to recognize the individual student who is placed before me and remember his or her purpose in being there. My understanding of the role of a language instructor is that it encompasses not only ensuring linguistic understanding in meaningful social learning environments, but also providing an emphasis on culture and invoking intercultural awareness during instruction. For me, offering opportunities for students to become culturally aware in learning a second language has resulted in students becoming more confident and creative communicators in the second language by gaining some understanding of how linguistic structures are tied to imbued cultural references. Recognizing that language is not simply a collection of structures accessed for the purpose of making meaning but “the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits its beliefs, values, and norms” (Porter and Samovar 27), I have come to realize that the context and nuances of language use must be made clear through and within continual dialogue about the relationships between language meaning and use.

References

Books and Articles:

Barnlund, Dean, C. (1985). Communication in a Global Village. In Richard Porter and Larry Samovar, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing (pp. 5-14).

Bell, David M. (Summer 2003). Method and Postmethod: Are they really so incompatible? In *TESOL Quarterly*, 37 (2): 325-335.

Block, David and Cameron, Deborah, Eds. (2001). *Globalization and Language Teaching*. London: Routledge.

Briton, Derek. (1996). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: A Post-Modern Critique*. Albany, NY: State University Press.

Byram, Michael, Ed. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Byram, M. and Morgan C. (1994). *Teaching-and-Learning Language-and-Culture*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, Michael and Feng, Anwei. (2005). *Teaching and Researching Intercultural*

- Competence. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (pp. 911-930).
- Canagarajah, Suresh. (2005). Critical Pedagogy in L2 Learning and Teaching. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (pp. 931-950).
- Canagarajah, Suresh. (2001). Globalization, methods, and practice in periphery classrooms. In David Block and Deborah Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and Language Teaching*. London: Routledge (pp. 134-450).
- Cassara, Beverly B., Ed. (1993). *Adult Education in a Multicultural Society*. London: Routledge.
- Chomsky, Noam and Foucault, Michel. (2006). *Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*. New York: The New York Press.
- Corbett, John. (2003). *An Intercultural Approach to Language Teaching*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Crystal, David. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Damen, Louise. (1986). *Culture Learning: the fifth dimension in the classroom*.
Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Derrida, Jacques. (1973). *Speech and Phenomena*. Evanston: Northwestern University
Press.

Derrida, Jacques. (2001). *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge.

Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press.

Freire, Paulo. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum
Publishing.

Freire, Paulo. (2005). *Teachers as Cultural Workers, Letters to Those Who Dare to
Teach*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Freire, Paulo. (1985). *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*.
Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.

Geertz, C. (1976). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Graddol, David. (2006). *English Next: A World in Transition*. London:
British Council.

- Guile, D, & Young, M. (1998). Apprenticeship as a Conceptual Basis for a Social Theory of Learning. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(2): 173-192.
- Hall, B. (2006). Social Movement Learning: Theorizing a Canadian Tradition. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of Adult Education: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishers (pp. 230-238).
- Hill, L. (2005). Community (of practice). In L. English (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education* (pp. 122-126).
- Hinkel, Eli., Ed. (2005). *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Holliday, Adrian, Hyde, Martin and Kullman, John. (2004). *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book*. London, England: Routledge.
- Howatt, A.P.R. (1984). *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J.B. Pride and J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Johnson, David. (2005). Teaching Culture in Adult ESL: Pedagogical and Ethical Considerations. In *TESL-EJ* (9)1:1-12.
- Johnson, Karen E. (2006). The Sociocultural Turn and its Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education. In *TESOL Quarterly* (40) 1: 235-257.
- Kachru, Braj B. (1990). *The Alchemy of English: the spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a Postmethod Pedagogy. In *TESOL Quarterly* (35) 4: 537-560.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. (1986). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacMillan, C. (1998). *The Practice of Language Rights in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mercer, Neil. Ed. (2000). *English Language Teaching in its Social Context: A Reader*. Florence, KY: Routledge.

Richards, Jack C. (2003). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. MA: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, Jack C. (1985). *The Context of Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nouwen, Henri J. (1975). *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of Spiritual Life*. New York: Image Books.

Pennycook, Alistar. (1994). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. NY: Longman Group Limited.

Phillipson, Robert and Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. (1999). Englishisation. One Dimension of Globalisation. In David Graddol and Ulrike H. Meinhof (Eds.), *English in a Changing World*. Oxford: Catchline (pp. 19-36).

Phillipson, Robert, Rannut, Mark and Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, Eds. (1995). *Linguistic Human Rights: Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Phillipson, Robert. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, Robert, Ed. (1999). *Rights to Language: Equity, Power and Education*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Phipps, Alison, M. (2004). *Modern Languages: Learning and Teaching in an Intercultural Field*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Porter, Richard E. and Samovar, Larry. (1985). *Intercultural Communicator: A Reader*. Belmont California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Pratt, D. (2005). Teaching. In L. English (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 610-615).
- Rannut, Mark. (1999). The Common Language Problem. In M. Kontra, R. Phillipson and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds.), *Language: A Right and a Resource*. Budapest: Central University Press (pp. 99-110).
- Ricento, Thomas. (2005). Considerations of Identity in L2 Learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (pp. 895-910).
- Ricento, Thomas and Burnaby, B., Eds. (1998). *Language and Politics in the United States and Canada: Myths and Realities*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Richards, Jack C. (2003). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. MA: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, Jack C. (1985). *The Context of Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryan, Phillis and Sercu, Lies. (2005). Familiarity and Contacts with Foreign Cultures. In Lies Sercu, *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence: An International Investigation*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd. (pp. 39-50).

Sampson, G. (1984). Exporting language methods from Canada to China. In *TESL Canada Journal*, 1/1.

Savignon, Sandra, J. (1983). *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice. Texts and Contexts in Second Language Learning*. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Scollen, Ron and Scollen, Suzanne, Wong. (1995). *Intercultural Communication*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Sercu, Lies. (2005). *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence: An International Investigation*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. (1999). Linguistic Diversity, Human Rights and the 'Free' Market. In Miklos Kontra et al (Eds.), *Language: A Right and a Resource*.

Budapest: Central European University Press (pp. 187-122).

Welton, M. (2005). *Designing the Just Learning Society: A critical inquiry*. Leicester: NIACE.

Zuengler, Jane and Cole, AnneMarie. (2005). Language Socialization and Second Language Learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (pp. 301-316).

Websites:

“Communicative Language Teaching” Retrieved July 24, 2007.

<http://www.sil.org/LinguaLinks/LanguageLearning/WaysToApproachLanguageLearning/CommunicativeLanguageTeaching.htm>

Larsen-Freeman, Diane. (1999) “On the appropriateness of language teaching methods in language teaching and development.” From *The Fourth International Conference on Language and Development*, October 13-15. Retrieved July 30, 2008.

http://www.languages.ait.ac.th/hanoi_proceedings/larsen-freeman.htm

Linguistic Society of America website. Retrieved, July 20, 2007.

<http://www.lsadc.org/info/lsa-res-rights.cfm>

Power, Ted. “Communicative Language Teaching Theory.” *English Language and Teaching*. Retrieved July 20, 2008.

<http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/esl0404.html>

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. "Language Policies and Education. The Role of Education in Destroying or Supporting the World's Linguistic Diversity." (April, 2002) Roskilde University. Retrieved July 16, 2007.

www.linguapax.org/congres/plenaries/skutnabb.html

Terralingua. Website Retrieved July 16, 2007.

www.terralingua.org/