Web page activity 3.1

Debate the two positions taken below (readers may wish to consult the book and article referred to first).

In his 1999 publication *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in Language Teaching*, Canagarajah described the contemporary state of ELT in ‘postcolonial contexts’ thus:

A debilitating monolingual/monocultural bias has revealed itself in the insistence on ‘standard’ English as the norm, the refusal to grant an active role to the student’s first language in the learning and acquisition of English, the marginalisation of ‘non-native’ English teachers, and the insensitive negativity shown by the pedagogies and discourses towards the indigenous cultural traditions. (Canagarajah 1999: 3)

In the article ‘ELT and “the spirit of the times”’ (2007a) and the follow-up to it (2007b), Waters argues that this sort of stance is itself a result of Western ‘political correctness’ gone awry. ‘It is political correctness itself which is the primary present-day cause of cultural chauvinism in our field’ (2007b: 367). One of the arguments that Waters makes is that political correctness construes the world as ‘being made up of “oppressors” and “victims”’ (2007a: 358); one in which, in the ELT context, non-native speakers are cast as a ‘victim’ class, obliged to learn a ‘standard’ variety of English which automatically disadvantages them, so making the learning of a ‘non-standard variety’ such as EIL more appropriate. Waters points out that this takes the same ‘reductionist’ stance (ibid.) that makes the non-native speakers be perceived as victims in the first place.
Web page activity 3.2

Attitudes to the attainment of ‘Standard English’ can be ambivalent. While aspiring to what is perceived as a standard form of the language, there can be resentment at the ‘loss of cultural identity’ that would result from perfecting it. In the words of one NNES teacher, ‘I don’t want to be what I am not. I am Italian. I have my own culture … my roots are Italian’ (Jenkins 2005: 536). Such ambivalence can be detected even among ‘Inner Circle’ NES cultures. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, teachers can resent being required to teach British English, a variety not their own (as it is the norm used in the ELT coursebooks used there) and which has colonial connotations. At the same time, teachers can, paradoxically (though in line with other research cited in Chapter 3), consider British English as the ‘correct’ variety (Parker 2012).

Web page activity 3.3

The Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis

The principle of linguistic relativity commonly known as the ‘Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis’ was one of the best-known conceptualisations of the relationship between language and thought. In essence, it was theorised that language determines and limits the way speakers perceive and think. While much debated in psychology and philosophy, the theory appeals to language teachers who can see the extension of this to ‘cultural relativism’, in which different cultures have different conceptual ‘schemata’, different ways of conceptualising and even experiencing the world.
Like linguistic relativity, the concept of schemata comes to us from psychology. ‘Schemata’ might be described as ‘cultural nuggets’ – cognitive encapsulations of our generic knowledge of how common events, scenarios or activities play out. These include abstract notions (e.g. behavioural norms) as well as lexical concepts (school, weddings, siesta). Schemata are culturally determined and, being mental representations, necessarily idiosyncratic to an extent. If we ask a group of people from different cultures to imagine a culturally ‘universal’ scenario such as a wedding, for instance, the mental images conjured up by a European or American might include a bride in a long white dress, a multi-tiered iced white wedding cake and so on. The image of a person from India might include a bride bedecked in gold and diamond jewellery, a lavish three-day long ceremony and so on. The concept of schemata illustrates how our culture moulds our understanding of the world/society in which we live and thus our expectations of actions, events and other people’sbehaviours.

Rumelhart gives this example of the playing out of a schema familiar in American (and British) culture. Asked to complete the following prompt:

‘Mary heard the ice-cream truck coming down the street. She remembered her birthday money and rushed into the house’ (Rumelhart 1977: 257)

most American and British people would add something like ‘and came running out a moment later clutching her money’ and not, for example, ‘and locked the door’, which would not fit our ‘ice cream van’ schema.

Schematic ‘mismatch’, i.e. the disruption of culturally determined expectations, even those as apparently trivial as conventions surrounding gift-giving, timekeeping or salutation, can be a source of misunderstanding, puzzlement, hurt and anger. What is often called ‘culture shock’ can therefore be explained in terms of this.
• Can you relate either or both of these concepts to anything you have experienced in the course of your language teaching or language learning?

The language–culture partnership

The ‘partnership’ between language and culture is intriguingly illustrated in this episode from *Don’t Sleep, There Are Snakes*, a book by missionary and linguist Daniel Everett, who went to live with a remote Amazonian tribe, the Pirahās, in the Brazilian jungle. In this extract, Everett has had a craving for salad, unknown in the Pirahās diet of rice, beans, fish and wild game. After a two-month wait, the missionary plane has finally brought him the makings of a salad.

That evening, I sat down to my first taste of lettuce, tomatoes, and cabbage in six months. Xahóápati walked up to watch me eat. He looked bemused.

‘Why are you eating leaves?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you have any meat?’

The Pirahās are very particular about foods and they believe, as we do to some degree, that the foods you eat determine the person you become.

‘Yes, I have a lot of canned meat,’ I assured him. ‘But I like these leaves! I have not had any for many moons.’

My Pirahā friend looked at me, then at the leaves, then back at me. ‘Pirahās don’t eat leaves,’ he informed me. ‘This is why you don’t speak our language well. We Pirahās speak our language well and we don’t eat leaves.’

He walked away, apparently thinking that he had just given me the key to learning his language. (Everett 2008: 209)
Web page activity 3.4

Quiz: what do you know about global English??

1. In Australian English, the word ‘arvo’ means
   a. ‘Half’
   b. ‘Afternoon’
   c. ‘Although’
   d. ‘Hungry’

2. ‘Ye’ (pronounced [ji:]) is
   a. An abbreviation of ‘yes’ in American English
   b. You plural (second person plural) in Irish English
   c. ‘Yes’ in text messaging
   d. An abbreviation of ‘yet’ in Indian English

3. The word ‘candy’ originally came from
   a. America
   b. India
   c. Australia
   d. Hong Kong

4. Singlish is the type of English spoken in
   a. The Sinai
   b. China
c. Singapore

d. Cyprus

5. The word ‘konpyu-ta’
a. Means *comrade* in the English of the West Indies
b. Comes from the English word *computer*, and is used in Japanese
c. Means ‘a pity’ in Indian English
d. Comes from the English word *calculator*, and is used in Russian

6. gr8 is
a. a type of American aeroplane
b. the word ‘great’ (written when texting)
c. a British sports car
d. Abbreviation of ‘go round at 8’.

7. ‘How come’ means
a. ‘How did you come?’ and originated in Africa
b. ‘Why?’ and originated in the West Indies
c. ‘How are you?’ and originated in India
d. ‘Who is coming?’ And originated in America

8. ‘Say again’ means ‘can you repeat please’ and comes from
a. American English
b. British English
c. Seaspeak (a language used at sea)
9. Potato Neck is
   a. A disease caused by eating too many potatoes
   b. A fat neck (British English)
   c. The name of a town in Maryland, USA.
   d. A toy for children

10. A quarter of 12 is
   a. Three
   b. A quarter to 12 in American English
   c. A quarter past 12 in Canadian English
   d. A quarter to 1 in South African English

**English as an international language**

If an American is mad, he is angry. If an Englishman is mad, he is crazy. To go swimming, you wear a swimsuit in Britain, a cossie in Australia, and togs in Ireland. Walking on the pavement is safe in Britain (where it means the paved area where pedestrians walk) but dangerous in North America (where it means the paved surface of a road). With all this potential for misunderstanding among native speakers of the language, it is not really surprising that English can be such a difficult language to learn. But just how widespread is the English language? How many people speak it? It is estimated that as many as one in four people worldwide speak English with some degree of competence. English is a first language for around 323 million people worldwide. English is the first language in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where it shares this status
with French. It remains a first language in islands such as St Helena and the Falklands and as far away as the Pitcairn Island in the far eastern Pacific. English is a second language in most former British colonies; in India, Sri Lanka, South Africa and most other African countries. English is a second language for more people than is any other language (around 422 million). English has some kind of special administrative status in over seventy-five countries, e.g. Nigeria, Singapore, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Hong Kong and the Philippines; the total population of countries where English is the official language is 1.6 billion, approximately one third of the population of the world. Furthermore, it is estimated that up to a billion people are currently learning English, and English remains a lingua franca worldwide. It is hardly surprising, then, that there are so many different varieties of English, so many different ‘Engishes’.

**English as a ??? language??**

Check your understanding of terms in the section above on ‘English as an International language’.

1. A *first language* means ….

2. A *second language* means ….

3. An *official language* is ….

4. If you learn a language as *a foreign language*, you probably intend to use it ….

5. A *lingua franca* is ….
Relating to languages

Is English:

your first language …?
your second language …?
a foreign language …?
the official language in your country …?
the language you use as a lingua franca …?

Which language do you speak all or most of the time?

Which language do you speak to your family?

Which language do you speak to your friends?

Which language do you speak at school/college/work?

Which language do you think in?

Which language do you dream in?

Think of someone who speaks English as a first language.
Think of someone who speaks English as a second language.
Think of someone who speaks English as a foreign language.
Think of someone who speaks English as a lingua franca.

Sites for learning about English as a world language

http://eleaston.com/world-eng.html
http://www.slideshare.net/aidenyeh/world-englishes
Web page activity 3.5

The grammar translation method

The so-called grammar translation method was devised in late eighteenth-century Germany (then Prussia) for secondary school teaching. As Howatt and Widdowson (2004) note, it was an attempt to move language learning from the scholarly activity it had been hitherto into the second-level classroom. For this entirely new endeavour, the originators of grammar translation looked to the only available models, namely the classical traditions of studying Latin and Greek, as the basis for the methodology, ‘reflect[ing] a time-honoured and scholarly view of language and language study’ (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 18). Indeed, the approach was sometimes called the ‘classical method’ for this reason, and the name ‘grammar translation’ is something of a misnomer. According to Howatt and Widdowson, it was coined by its nineteenth-century denigrators to draw attention to the features they most disliked (2004: 151), even though the method constituted more than just the teaching of grammar in isolation, and translation into and out of the L1. Grammar rules were presented, first of all, in sentence-level contexts in ‘exemplificatory sentences’ (ibid.), with accompanying word lists and translation exercises. However, ‘it was the special status accorded to the sentence at the expense of the text that attracted the most outspoken criticism’ (ibid.: 152). Syntax, as we conceive it today, was largely ignored, with a focus instead on building up sentences word for word (ibid.: 164) – what we now call a ‘bottom-up’ approach.

Where the original approach most clashes with contemporary ones was in its ignoring of the spoken word. As Howatt and Widdowson point out, this was hardly a concern to its eighteenth-century developers as foreign languages were not learned for the same purposes that they are today (such as education and tourism), the method having come out of the classical tradition of reading literature in the foreign language. The main principles of the approach can be summarised as follows (based on Larsen-Freeman 2000: 15-17):
Instruction is in the L1.

The learning of the grammar of the TL is the prime objective.

The skills focus is on reading and writing.

Translation into and from the TL from the native one is central, via such strategies as the use of cognates i.e. words in different languages that sound and/or look similar and have the same meaning, such as the English word *table* and the Italian *tavola*.

Grammar rules are taught explicitly (by the teacher).

Vocabulary and verb conjugations are memorised by rote learning.

Two of the best-known features of grammar translation as an approach emerge from this: it is teacher-centred, and it is analytical in terms of the requirement to learn grammar through explicatory rules.

We remark below on the longevity of the communicative approach. This was nothing compared to that of the grammar translation method, which has endured from the eighteenth century until today, although of course having absorbed aspects of – and superseded – many approaches along the way. In its present-day guise, the above principles give rise to the following sorts of techniques (based on Larsen-Freeman 2000: 19-20):

- translation of literary passages from the TL to the L1
- comprehension questions (fact-based, inferencing and personalising
- synonym/antonym finding
- finding cognates
- drills to practise explicitly presented grammar rules
- blank-filling exercises
- rote learning (of vocabulary, verb conjugations etc.)
- composition (at sentence and discourse level)
- summarising (the literary text being studied)
Like the other two approaches we look at here, the grammar translation method embodies its own set of values. We invite you to consider the connection between these and both the longevity of the approach and its continuing appeal and application, particularly in some areas of the world.

*Communicative language teaching*

Communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged in the early 1970s as a revolutionary concept in language pedagogy. CLT in a way ‘telescoped’ the ‘means to an end’ paradigm: communication was not only the end, the goal, of language learning, but the means itself. Let us not forget that the approaches that had preceded it had been heavily influenced by a structural view of language learning where communication was (presumably) the goal, but which assumed that language was learned through focusing on (primarily grammatical) forms. Writing at the time, Hymes noted ‘a major characteristic of modern linguistics has been that it takes structure as a primary end in itself, and tends to depreciate use’ (Hymes 1972: 56). This view was represented in the prevailing language teaching method of the 1950s, ‘grammar translation’ described above.

The roots of this paradigm shift in language teaching were in applied linguistics and SLA theory. That these influences were felt in language teaching was itself a new beginning, as hitherto the disciplines had tended to run in parallel with little cross-fertilisation. Forming the core of the communicative approach was Hymes’s notion of *communicative competence* (e.g. 1972) which combined knowledge of linguistic structure and knowledge of how to use this appropriately in actual communication. This marked a healing of the rift between *competence*, i.e. ‘tacit knowledge of language structure’ (Hymes 1972: 54), and *performance*, i.e. ‘the actual use of language in concrete situations’ (ibid.: 55), that had marked the predominant prevailing influence: Chomskian linguistics.
This new focus on language use gave rise to the earliest permutation of the communicative approach, which was involved with teaching notional categories such as expressing frequency, motion and location (Wilkins 1972, 1976). This was expanded into notional-functional syllabuses (in Wilkins’s research sponsored by the Council of Europe) with the addition of functions such as describing or requesting something, expressing opinion and so on. Finally, influenced by theories coming out of SLA research in the 1980s positing the importance of interaction (Long 1983) and of output (Swain 1985) (see Chapter 2), the now-familiar principles of the communicative approach emerged:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills. Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 172)

These principles are applied through a variety of techniques. These include, classically, group and pair work activities such as information exchange (often involving an information gap to give a genuine reason for communicating), role playing/dramatisation, discussion, problem-solving and debate. This does not mean that CLT focuses solely on speaking and interactional skills. As Thompson points out in ‘Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching’ (1996), communicative coursebooks have always integrated reading and writing skills as well.

From about the 1990s, a counter-movement at work among language teachers and learners and indeed in applied linguistics (see discussion of Schmidt’s work on the importance of ‘noticing’ in Chapter 2) drew grammar teaching back into language pedagogy. The learning of language structure through a purely inductive process had proved a failure for a generation of communicative learners, or so it was perceived (although this was partly
attributed to the inability of communicative coursebooks to stimulate genuine interaction: see Nunan 1987 and Kumaravadivelu 2006). Some of the so-called ‘post-communicative’ materials and coursebooks to rise from the ashes of ‘strong’ CLT include ‘consciousness-raising activities’ which encourage learners to infer rules of language use via a focus on language in use.

Here is an example from New Headway Intermediate Student’s Book (Soars and Soars 2003a: 86):

TEST YOUR GRAMMAR

1. All of these sentences are correct.
   
   Why is there no does in sentences 2 and 3?

1. Where does she live?
2. I know where she lives.
3. Can you tell me where she lives.

The communicative approach is nothing if not a survivor: it continues to absorb contemporary influences (such as learner autonomy and corpus linguistics) and indeed to spawn other approaches, chief among which is task-based language teaching, described below. The communicative approach was, finally, born of a Western cultural heritage, as evidenced above – how easily it sits with others is discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3).

*Task-based language teaching*
Task-based language teaching (TBLT) comes very much under the ‘communicative umbrella’ in terms of its basic precept, which identifies the process of learning a language with communicating in it. TBLT can be seen as a logical extension of CLT, taking the interaction that is at the core of CLT and putting it centre stage as ‘task’. A task is in essence a goal-oriented activity, an activity in which learners work towards the achievement of a goal while communicating in the target language. There is in this approach a degree of subterfuge in that there is an ostensible goal we give the learners (task completion) and a ‘hidden’ goal we have as teachers (prompting meaningful interaction and thus priming language for acquisition). TBLT’s first appearance as a full-blown language teaching methodology was in 1996 (with Willis’s book *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*). This proposed a three-stage framework, consisting of a pre-task, task cycle and language focus, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to topic and task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher explores the topic with the class, highlights useful words and phrases, helps students understand task instructions and prepare. Students may hear a recording of others doing a similar task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do the task, in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors from a distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students prepare to report to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or discovered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may now hear a recording of others doing a similar task and compare how they all did it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students examine and discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording. Teacher conducts practice of new words, phrases and patterns occurring in the data, either during or after the analysis.

Figure 3.3 Components of the task-based learning framework (based on Willis 1996: 38)

Task-based learning has a handsome pedigree. Its first appearance on the scene was in 1987 with the publication of Prabhu’s Second Language Pedagogy. This documented a language learning project in India which used the ‘purest’ form of task-based learning, having its emphasis solely on task completion through the TL and, unlike the above framework, involving no explicit language work. But the roots of TBLT can actually be traced to early twentieth-century educational philosophy – social constructivism (e.g. Vygotsky 1978) – which saw knowledge as ‘constructed’ by the individual within social contexts. Many of the key descriptors of social constructivism, such as ‘active engagement in processes of meaning making … knowledge developed as a consequence of [group] membership’ (Au 1998: 297), apply to TBLT. The approach has also absorbed seismic shifts towards experiential learning in the 1980s (e.g. Kolb 1984) and learner autonomy in the 1990s (e.g. Benson and Voller 1997). This influence can particularly be seen in the way that the teacher acts as monitor and advisor during task performance (only returning ‘centre-stage’ for the language debriefing session that concludes the traditional TBLT cycle). Influences on TBLT from the field of SLA (see Chapter 2) include, notably, an implicit acceptance of the teachability hypothesis (Pienemann 1984) and, as embodied in the above framework, the importance of language awareness-raising (Schmidt 1990).

Like all approaches, TBLT has evolved and diversified. For critiques of the approach, the reader is referred to Littlewood (2004) and Skehan’s review article (2003). In synthesis, though, TBLT has gone from the ‘strong version’ of its first incarnation (Prabhu 1987) through the neat structure set by Willis (1996) to its latter-day incarnation as the so-called ‘weak’ version, ‘task with a small “t”’, which proliferates in coursebooks and materials, and
where it is often used to label the ‘produce’ activities under the PPP model. This ‘weakening’ notwithstanding, the task has meanwhile been recast as the paradigm for the technological age (see Chapter 5). The synergy between task as a pedagogy and technology as a medium, in terms of genuine interaction, communication and networking, has by now been well established in works such as Thomas (2009) and Thomas and Reinders (2010).

But like its communicative cousin, TBLT, particularly in its digital application, embeds characteristics that are valued in the West, such as flat hierarchies and a sort of communicational ‘promiscuity’, but whose universal validity – together with that of the pedagogy these underlie – cannot go unquestioned.

**Web page activity 3.6**

Access the site below to find an online (.pdf) version of this paper:


While discussing the East Asian context in particular, many of the concerns expressed in the paper can be shared by teachers everywhere so it is worth reading in its entirety.

Littlewood concludes by saying: ‘There is now widespread acceptance that no single method or set of procedures will fit all teachers and learners in all contexts. Teachers can draw on the ideas and experiences of others but cannot simply adopt them as ready-made recipes: they need to trust their own voice and develop a pedagogy suited to their own specific situations.’
Consider the implications of Littlewood’s recommendations;

- for you as a teacher and materials developer
- for the materials we use, adapt and develop.