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## Shifting Attitudes toward Teaching Culture within the Framework of English as an International Language

Summary

This study deals with the cultural dimensions of EIL, which are analysed based on the following domains: (a) subjects' attitudes toward teaching about specific cultures (native and non-native); and (b) subjects' attitudes toward teaching about culture in general. In essence, a view of culture based on native cultures can emerge from three different approaches: it may promote British culture only, it may focus on both the UK and the US, or it may incorporate other English native cultures. Likewise, a more international viewpoint can also be offered from three perspectives: it may refer to ESL contexts only, it may present both ESL and EFL communities – including the local culture – or it may introduce international aspects not specific to any culture. However, the analysis of data in this study indicates that the subjects' attitudes toward teaching culture do not usually correspond to just one of these perspectives; rather, teachers display a manifold set of beliefs which may at times be closer or more distant to an international approach to teaching culture.

**Key words:** English as an international language, language attitudes, cross-cultural communication, language pedagogy

## Spreminjajoči pogledi na pouk kulture v okviru angleščine kot mednarodnega jezika

Povzetek

Ta študija predstavlja kulturološke dimenzije angleščine kot mednarodnega jezika (EIL), ki jih analiziram s stališča (a) odnosov učiteljev do pouka določenih kultur (rojenih in tujih govorcev) in (b) odnosov učiteljev do pouka kulture na splošno. Dejansko izhaja pogled na kulturo, ki temelji na kulturah rojenih govorcev iz treh različnih pristopov: lahko promovira le britansko kulturo, lahko se osredinja tako na britansko kot ameriško kulturo, ali pa vključuje druge kulture rojenih govorcev angleščine. Podobno lahko tudi bolj mednarodno usmerjen pogled na kulturo razlagamo s treh vidikov: z vidika angleščine kot drugega jezika, z vidika angleščine kot drugega in tujega jezika, ki vključuje tudi lokalno kulturo, oziroma z mednarodnega vidika, ki ni specifičen za nobeno kulturo. Analiza podatkov, ki jih predstavlja ta študija, kaže na to, da odnos učiteljev do pouka kulture ne temelji na samo enem vidiku; učitelji imajo običajno različna stališča, ki so včasih bližja, včasih pa bolj oddaljena od mednarodnega pristopa k pouku kulture.

**Ključne besede:** angleščina kot mednarodni jezik, jezikovni pogledi, medkulturna komunikacija, jezikovna pedagogika.

# Shifting Attitudes toward Teaching Culture within the Framework of English as an International Language

## 1. Introduction

English as an international language (EIL) can be defined as the language used by native and non-native speakers for communication in international interactions – business, advertisements, sports, news, travel, diplomacy, entertainment. In other words, EIL aims at mutual intelligibility and appropriate language use involving nationals of different countries – non-native speakers interacting with native speakers, non-native speakers interacting with other non-native speakers, and native speakers interacting with native speakers. Essentially, the concept of EIL focuses on cross-cultural, cross-linguistic interactions (Campbell et al. 1983).

Tomlinson (2004, 5) has recently called attention to the limited participation of users of EFL in the discussion of EIL:

Ironically, so far the main proponents of teaching a variety of international English have been native speaker (or at least native speaker like) applied linguists. Not many are teachers and not many are users of English as a foreign language. They have provided expert insights into the characteristics and exponents of international English and are conducting the rigorous research that will soon provide us with very useful objective descriptions of the English used in international communication. But the danger is that an expert syllabus could be imposed on learners without any input from them and without a methodology to bring it to useful life.

Significantly, some native and non-native applied linguists and teachers have been surveying the discourse of learning and teaching EIL in EFL countries: McKay (2003) has examined the teaching of EIL in the Chilean context; Kubota (2002) and Yamaguchi (2002) have studied the effects of globalization in the learning and teaching of English in Japan; Matsuda (2002; 2003) has argued for incorporating World Englishes in ELT practices in Japan; Sifakis and Sougari (2003) have pursued a similar approach to investigate pedagogical, ethical and methodological considerations of the international status of English, particularly in the Greek context.

Moreover, Seidlhofer (2004; Jenkins et al. 2001) and Jenkins (1998; Jenkins et al. 2001), among others, have been doing linguistic research on global English in general and on Euro-English as a variety of English as a European lingua franca in particular. However, most studies which refer to English in a European country are usually concerned with one or more of the following areas: (a) Anglicisms or English expressions in European languages, e.g. in Dutch (Ridder 1995), in German (Hilgendorf 1996), and in Finnish (Hyrkestedt and Kalaja 1998); (b) the status, role and use of English, e.g. in Sweden (Davidson 1995), in Malta (Davidson 1996), in Italy (Pulcini 1997), in France (Truchot 1997), in Greece (Oikonomidis 2003), and in Finland (Taavitsainen and Pahta 2003); and (c) ELT and English teacher training, e.g. in the Netherlands (Van Essen 1997), in Macedonia (Dimova 2003) and in Germany (Hilgendorf 2005).

However, a central issue that needs to be discussed in any debate about EIL is the language users' attitudes toward the language and the current developments related to its spread and global

roles. In a presentation at the IATEFL Conference in Liverpool in 2004, Henry Widdowson stated that nowadays English as a lingua franca (ELF) is a matter of attitudes. Rather than just a linguistic issue, ELF is a pedagogical matter which involves significant changes in people's attitudes. Thus, no examination of English as a global language would be complete without a thorough analysis of teachers' attitudes toward EIL.

## 2. EIL as cross-cultural communication

Though using the term English as a global language (EGL), Gnutzmann (1999, 158) provides a definition of EIL based on the situations of language use, which can be applied to the concept of international English. For him, EGL means "English used as a medium of communication in all sorts of communication contexts and for many different purposes for instance, in written academic discourse or by a Frenchman talking to a Greek waiter ordering a pizza in an Italian restaurant in Norway". Gnutzmann states that intercultural competence refers to and implies (166):

- awareness of the culture-specific dependency of thought and behaviour;
- knowledge of general parameters according to which cultures can be distinguished (e.g. religion, role of the sexes);
- rejection of ethnocentrism: one's own system of cultural norms is not considered appropriate to be applied to the evaluation of other cultures;
- interpersonal sensitivity: the ability to understand a person in their own right;
- cognitive flexibility: openness to new ideas and beliefs;
- behavioural flexibility: the ability to change one's behaviour patterns.

One of the major concerns in the discussion of cross-cultural communication is the idea of adaptation. Baxter (1991, 67) states that "communicating internationally means actively seeking a common ground, and this entails *adapting* one's way of speaking English". He adds that "adaptation is not an easy process, requiring in the speaker a variety of communicative skills and an awareness of what is entailed in cross-cultural communication".

However, Smith (1987, 3) remarks that using English in cross-cultural contexts "does not change the interactor's cultural assumptions and expectations about what is and is not appropriate language behaviour in particular situations". As a result, Smith proposes that a negotiation of meaning should be done when involving the following senses:

- (1) *a sense of self*: factors such as race, gender, nationality, age, socioeconomic status, belief system and values, ethnic/religious/political background, etc. help define one's identity, which is not changed when one is using English (discourse patterns from the first language do not carry over entirely into the second language);
- (2) *a sense of the other*: in the use of English, one needs to know something about the discourse strategies of the prospective other (using a common linguistic medium – English – does not mean that the discourse strategies are shared);
- (3) *a sense of the relationship between the self and the other*: the degree or affiliation of distance between sender and receiver;

- (4) *a sense of the setting/social situation*: English is used differently in London, Los Angeles, Manila, Melbourne, Tokyo or Toronto, so the geographic setting and the social situation should be taken into account;
- (5) *a sense of the goal or objective*: having a clear understanding of the goal/objective is essential if we are to negotiate meaning successfully across cultures.

### 3. Teaching English as an international language

Modiano (2001a) identifies two major areas in the teaching of English as an international language (TEIL) and their scope: language varieties and culture. Modiano believes that when teachers only emphasize American and British English and cultures, students tend to perceive other varieties and cultures as less valued. Such an approach to teaching “presents English as the property of a specified faction of the native-speaker contingency” (340). In his opinion, teaching and learning English based on an international frame of reference is superior “when compared to the conventional integration-orientated practices associated with the learning of culture-specific varieties such as British English” (2001b, 162), what he calls a “nation-state centred view” (2001a, 340).

Modiano (2001b, 161–2) also states that EFL students hardly need to be aware of culture-specific language and that practitioners who support this kind of teaching are in fact pursuing a political agenda. Modiano underlines the role of culture in TEIL when he states that:

...with English, because it has lingua franca status, because there are a number of nation-states which have large populations speaking the tongue, and because the cross-cultural dimension of English among foreign-language speakers can effectively exclude the native speaker as well as the cultural distinctiveness which the native speaker represents, it is illogical to talk of the learning of English as a foreign language as an activity which is enriched through interjecting a cultural studies dimension defined as the history, society, culture, and institutions of the British. The cultural framework for English is global and as such is no longer situated in the legacy of one distinct culture.

In order to promote cultural equality, “a multiplicity of teaching practices, and a view of the language as belonging to a broad range of peoples and cultures, is the best that language instructors can do” (2001a, 340). Modiano maintains that “the ideologies which underpin globalization and the vision of cultural pluralism are more in tune with a lingua franca perspective as opposed to ELT platforms based on culture-specific varieties” (2001b, 159). In other words, EIL can ‘neutralize’ the negative impact that the spread of the language can have on the learner’s culture. Although Modiano can sometimes sound quite provocative, it is undeniable that he tries to tackle the essential issues related to learning and teaching EIL.

Several other authors have reported on significant changes to be introduced in teaching the language. If we are to accept English as an international language of communication and incorporate these characteristics into the classroom, educators in the field of English language teaching will have to take on some new responsibilities. Trifonovitch (1981) points out some aspects that need to be emphasised in the classroom. First, as speakers of English will be contacting a variety of cultures – native and non-native – teachers should not concentrate on the cultures of the native speakers. Second, it is important that the learners of EIL understand their own culture and develop an awareness toward accepting other cultures in order to understand the other’s

point of view. Also, the EIL learner should listen to as many varieties of English as possible. Finally, he/she should be able to notice and accept different styles of spoken and written English, because they exhibit the cultural background of the speaker/writer.

More recently, Gnutzmann (1999, 165) declared that “cultural topics relating to countries where English is spoken as a native language, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, have to be complemented by topics dealing with other parts of the world in order to do justice to the global use of English in classroom teaching”. Besides widening the scope of topics geographically, Gnutzmann (1999, 166) thinks that a “stronger orientation toward social, economic, scientific and technological topics with an international or global dimension would seem an appropriate measure in view of the global dimension of English”, a change which could probably happen “at the expense of target culture-specific topics”. Baxter (1991, 67) seems to share the same viewpoint when he says that “teaching materials should be drawn from all the various English-using communities, not only L1 communities, so as to introduce students to the different manners of speaking English and to build an attitudinal base of acceptance”.

In essence, the main premise of this study is that the analysis of teachers’ attitudes toward the cultural dimension of EIL is crucial to assessing how EIL is being dealt with in a country where English is used as a foreign language.

## 4. The study

### 4.1 Research question

The research question – *What are the teachers’ attitudes toward the cultural dimensions of EIL?* – was formulated based on cultural issues such as having contact with a variety of cultures (not just cultures of the English-speaking world), developing an understanding of the student’s own culture, and developing sensitivity and awareness toward understanding other cultures.

### 4.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

This study uses two methods of data collection in surveys: questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The choice of using both quantitative and qualitative methods aimed at enriching data and attempting to balance the weaknesses of any one method. Each interview lasted one hour on average and was conducted in Portuguese. Basically, they aimed at supplementing the findings of the questionnaires. It was hoped that these face-to-face interviews could provide more detailed and richer data and reliable means to validate the questionnaire data.

### 4.3 The subjects in the study

The subjects in the questionnaire (13 teacher trainers and 13 ESP teachers) and interviews (5 teacher trainers and 7 ESP teachers who had previously answered the questionnaire and had volunteered for the interview) were part of four educational institutions, two universities – University of Evora (UE) and University of Lisbon (UL) – and two polytechnic institutes

– School of Tourism and Hotel Management of Estoril (ST) and School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (SE).

## 5. Data analysis

The cultural dimensions of EIL are analysed based on the following domains: (a) subjects' attitudes toward teaching about specific cultures (native and non-native); (b) subjects' attitudes toward teaching about culture in general; and (c) probable influences on subjects' attitudes toward teaching about native and non-native cultures in English classes.

The subjects' answers are explained depending on how close they were to viewing the cultural aspects of learning English as either intrinsically oriented toward native communities – particularly the UK – or incorporating a more international perspective which takes into account native as well as non-native societies. Essentially, a view of culture based on native cultures can emerge from three different approaches: it may promote British culture only, it may focus on both the UK and the US, or it may incorporate other native cultures. Likewise, a more international viewpoint can also be offered from three perspectives: it may refer to English as a Second Language contexts only, it may present both ESL and English as a Foreign Language communities – including the local culture – or it may introduce international aspects not specific to any culture.

However, the analysis of data in this study indicates that the subjects' attitudes toward teaching culture do not usually correspond to just one of these perspectives; rather, teachers display a manifold set of beliefs which may at times be closer or more distant to an international approach to teaching culture.

On reflection, teachers clearly identified British and American cultures as the most important cultures to be incorporated into English language classes. Moreover, most subjects regarded other native cultures as essential aspects to be considered. However, what might be seen as an approach to culture which emphasizes native countries should be re-examined due to the importance subjects gave to learning about international cultural aspects not specific to any country. Nonetheless, teachers placed very little importance on learning about ESL and EFL cultures.

To sum up, even as subjects favoured British and American cultures as the most important in ELT, they also acknowledged the importance of referring to Portuguese culture and international cultural aspects not specific to any country. The subjects' attitude toward the cultural dimensions of EIL seems to combine a native culture centred angle with one that highlights a global attitude to culture.

### 5.1 Teaching about specific cultures

Teachers were asked in the questionnaire and interviews to indicate the level of importance in how they viewed learning about different cultures (British, American, other native cultures, ESL cultures, EFL cultures, Portuguese culture) and international aspects not specific to any country. In the questionnaire, teachers reacted to seven statements in a Likert-scale. Moreover, they were

also asked if they would have different approaches to teaching culture depending on the type of students they taught (teacher trainees or ESP students).

Some teachers characterized the teaching of culture as “important”, “fundamental” and “absolutely essential”. In one teacher’s opinion (SE03<sup>1</sup>) “teaching a language is transmitting cultural aspects”.

While some teachers shared the opinion that culture should be a means and not an end and that cultural aspects should be chosen according to their influence on language, one teacher had a different opinion:

UL04: *The teaching of English should touch on other cultural aspects whatever they might be even when not related to the language.*

However, two teachers believed that teaching culture is not a relevant issue in their classes:

UE04: *There’s some room for that but not much (...) there’s not enough time. At the end of the day, ESP classes focus mostly on grammar.*

UE02: *I don’t think it’s that relevant. If our aim is the international use of the language, then it’s not so important to study individual cultures of every English speaking country.*

The analysis of quantitative data shows that teachers hold an overall positive attitude toward learning/teaching about some specific cultures. First of all, the vast majority of teachers (96.1%) believe that it is *very important/important* to study about British culture. In addition, studying about American culture is seen by 92.3% of the teachers as *very important/important*. Next, 76.0% said that it is *very important/important* to learn about Portuguese culture. Learning/teaching about international cultural aspects not specific to any country is *very important/important* for 73.1% of the teachers. Most teachers (72%) also hold the view that it is *very important/important* to learn/teach about ENL countries. Remarkably, most teachers do not attach much importance to studying about ESL and EFL cultures as just 40% stated that it is *very important/important* to study about ESL countries and even fewer teachers (only 16.7%) said it is *very important/important* to learn/teach about EFL countries (see Table 1 for the overall percentages for each statement and response).

	British culture	American culture	Other ENL cultures (Canada, South Africa, Australia,...)	ESL cultures (Nigeria, India, Hong Kong,...)	EFL cultures (France, Japan, Russia,...)	International cultural aspects not specific to any country	Portuguese culture
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very important	69.2%	65.4%	28.0%	12.0%	4.2%	42.3%	32.0%
Important	26.9%	26.9%	44.0%	28.0%	12.5%	30.8%	44.0%
Neither important nor unimportant	3.8%	3.8%	24.0%	36.0%	29.2%	23.1%	20.0%
Unimportant		3.8%	4.0%	20.0%	12.5%	3.8%	
Very unimportant				4.0%	41.7%		4.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1. Overall percentages for each statement and response (teachers).

<sup>1</sup> SE = School of Education of Beja; UL = University of Lisbon; UE = University of Evora; ST = School of Tourism of Estoril

These results make it clear that in the teachers' opinion British and American cultures play a very important role in the language class:

ST02: *As we're teaching English, our references will always be the US and England.*

One teacher explained his choice for presenting British and American cultures in his teacher training classes:

UE01: *I do it with these students because I think that a lot of textbooks that they'll be using with their future students also rely a lot on information about Britain and America.*

In addition, two ESP teachers displayed a culturally centred viewpoint which emphasizes British culture only:

ST01: *It's important that we say something about British culture because if the language is seen as a bridge then there are some cultural aspects that can also be seen as a bridge so it's important that we know something about the British.*

ST03: *What I did was to make them more sensible to British history. (...) I believe it's important that we know about the origin.*

Surprisingly, two other subjects explained why they do not incorporate British or American culture in their classes, either emphasizing the international scope of English or denying a view of culture based on nationalities:

UE02: *If the aim is to learn an international language then we cannot be limited to one or two or three cultures, we'd have to study them all.*

UE03: *This doesn't exist! This is a myth! What is American culture? What state are we talking about? Are we talking about an underground New York culture or are we talking about Florida? (...) We understand people by their lifestyle not their citizenship. (...) I don't believe there's a native British culture either.*

Furthermore, one subject believed that stereotypical facts should be avoided and general cultural aspects emphasized:

UL02: *What you find in materials, like the British like tea, they eat this, that, well, that kind of thing seems to be to me stereotypical and really untrue for the most part. (...) Getting into what's happening where, when, how, why would be more relevant than having fragmented stale presentations of facts.*

Another subject valued international cultural aspects in her approach to teaching culture in ESP classes:

UE03: *Sometimes I use materials from international meetings and conferences, how the Greek, the Turkish, the Indians react when they face the same situation, their cultural behaviour.*

Some teachers underscored that, since English is not tied to any one culture, the major aspect in language learning should be cross-cultural awareness:

SE02: *I'm not really worried about issues relating to one culture in particular, native or non-native, I'm interested in issues concerning the contemporary world.*



Other teachers emphasized Portuguese culture, international cultural aspects and other native cultures. Including Portuguese culture in the English language class was viewed as an effective means for comparing and contrasting the different cultures:

SE02: *Many times it comes as a contrast. We usually depart from a foreign context, English speaking or non-English speaking, and then later on we compare and contrast it with the students' own experience in terms of Portuguese culture.*

Although some teachers stressed the need to establish links between the native English and Portuguese cultures, one native English teacher believed he would not be the right person to do so:

UE01: *Not being Portuguese, I wouldn't try to teach them their own culture.*

Moreover, in his opinion, the culture to be studied should be related to the language used in class:

UE01: *It would sound a little artificial to learn about Portuguese culture through the medium of English.*

As far as teaching native cultures other than British and American is concerned, one subject expressed his concern to relate culture and language teaching:

UE01: *From a general education perspective (...) it's good to learn about other cultures whether it be English speaking cultures or not. Obviously, if it's an English speaking culture than it's already an input into the language straight away, it's an obvious thing to use as a vehicle for language teaching.*

On the other hand, some teachers observed that they would not prepare classes specifically on native cultures:

UE02: *I don't actually value the teaching of culture as culture per se. But I'm aware that through certain materials I end up transmitting some cultural aspects from several English speaking countries. (...) But I never choose materials with that in mind.*

However, results showed that teachers do not see much relevance in presenting ESL or EFL cultures. In spite of that, one of the subjects mentioned her work in an African Studies course and the relevance of presenting ESL varieties in these classes in particular and in EFL classes in general:

UL02: *One of my courses is English for African Studies and so I'm concentrating on African types of English and the students have to understand the sociocultural reality of different African countries. (...) It's good for [EFL students] to look at Bollywood films and see how other people speak the language.*

Nevertheless, other subjects did not consider the inclusion of ESL or EFL cultures in their English classes for a number of reasons. One subject wondered if the English class should be the right one to expose students to other cultures:

SE03: *Would the English class be the most adequate for that? Perhaps all classes are responsible for it, perhaps the Portuguese language class could also include global culture. I don't see why it should be in the English class.*

Another teacher referred to limitations of time and relevance:

UL08: *We can't attempt to teach too much, [we should] concentrate on the main thing (...) I do question their importance in the Portuguese context.*

Finally, a subject believed that contacting ESL and EFL cultures are likely to happen outside school:

ST02: *If I'm told that I have to include cultural aspects from every country that uses English as a language of communication, this is a never-ending task, it's impossible! (...) I think it has to do with the student's own discovery. (...) What I might do is to say 'Listen, we're talking about these cases but don't forget that you'll be working with people from different cultures so you've got to have open minds to that. And all the rest you'll learn through hands-on experience'.*

### 5.1.1 Teaching culture in ESP or teacher training classes

Teachers were also asked if they thought studying cultural aspects depended on the students and aims of the course (ESP students or teacher trainees). Data analysis showed that nine teachers said there were no differences when teaching cultural aspects to ESP students or teacher trainees, while seventeen teachers said there were some differences depending on the group of students they had.

#### A. There are no differences in the two groups of students

Some teachers emphasized the idea that learning cultural aspects does not depend on the kind of students:

UL09: *You can't be competent in a language without knowing the culture in depth.*

UL03: *Any EFL student should develop cross-cultural communication or awareness.*

UL08: *Cultural aspects are always important as they help to understand more about the language.*

#### B. Learning culture depends on the students

Some teachers identified two major reasons for distinguishing cultural aspects depending on the students. First, different learning goals mean different content as far as culture is concerned:

UE05: *Cultural aspects should always be present though the kind of student will define the scope of their studies.*

UE06: *We should distinguish general cultural aspects which could be shared by both kinds of students and other specific means which are related to certain topic areas in different professional activities.*

Second, due to the relevance of cultural aspects to certain professions, it may be possible that teacher trainees might need greater exposure to culture:

SE01: *In some specific and technical courses these cultural aspects might be secondary.*

SE03: *Cultural aspects should be dealt with in more depth if we're talking about future teachers of English.*

UL05: *Future teachers of English should have a greater knowledge [of cultural aspects].*

## 5.2 Importance of teaching about cultures in general

The following section analyses quantitative data regarding teachers' attitudes toward teaching culture in general. Subjects showed their attitude toward learning about cultures in general by reacting to two statements in a Likert-scale: (a) it is important to know that different cultures use English differently; and (b) it is important to learn about the cultural patterns of English speaking as well as non-English speaking peoples.

96% of the teachers *strongly agree/agree* that it is important to know that different cultures use English differently and 76.9% *strongly agree/agree* that it is important to learn about the cultural patterns of English speaking as well as non-English speaking peoples (see Table 2 for the overall percentages for each statement and response).

	(a) It is important to know that different cultures use English differently		(b) It is important to learn about the cultural patterns of English speaking as well as non-English speaking peoples	
	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly agree	12	48.0	9	34.6
Agree	12	48.0	11	42.3
Neither agree nor disagree	1	4.0	6	23.1
Missing system	1	3.8		
Total	26	100.0	26	100.0

Table 2. Overall percentages for each statement and response (teachers).

All in all, subjects reacted more positively to the statement which does not mention non-native cultures. In other words, subjects distinguish an approach to dealing with non-native cultures on the whole from one which relates to particular cultures.

## 5.3 Influences on teachers' attitudes toward native and non-native cultures

This section analyses data from teachers' interviews when subjects commented on some probable influences on their attitudes toward teaching native and non-native cultures in English classes. It is believed that the analysis of the subjects' English learning experiences can help describe their present attitudes.

Teachers pointed out some possible influences on their attitudes toward native and non-native cultures (American culture, British culture, other native cultures, ESL cultures and EFL cultures) based on how these cultures were presented (a) in classes when they were learning English, (b) by their English teachers, and (c) in the materials they used to learn English.

Based on teachers' remarks, data were divided into two categories: (a) influences on their attitudes toward American and British cultures; and (b) influences on their attitudes toward other native and non-native cultures.

## A. Influences on teachers' attitudes toward American and British cultures

Although some teachers remarked that there was an emphasis on British culture, a few subjects recalled having classes or teachers who briefly presented American culture. Some subjects mentioned having studied American culture in primary school – “*because the teacher was American*” (ST01) – and at university.

## B. Influences on teachers' attitudes toward other native and non-native cultures

Few subjects referred to classes or teachers in their English language education who made extensive references to native and non-native cultures other than British and American. One subject mentioned some brief references to cultural aspects of Australia and New Zealand, while another subject observed that in some of the classes that talked about Great Britain there were some references to Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

One subject recalled a native teacher at university who used short stories written by African authors. Similarly, another subject told of the same kind of experience:

UE02: *In literature classes (...) I studied South-African writers, Canadian writers, (...) that's when I got in touch with different realities of the English speaking world. But it came from literature not language classes.*

Some teachers recalled having classes and teachers who focused on British culture and, to a lesser extent, American culture. Moreover, few remarks were made about classes or teachers who presented cultural aspects of other native and non-native cultures.

In sum, from teachers' data, subjects were more able to remember contacting with British culture and, though not as frequently, American culture. It seems to be fair to say that the subjects' educational background – learning the language or learning to teach the language – was centred on the most influential cultures in ELT, with a clear emphasis on British civilization.

## 6. Overall discussion and conclusion

This study aimed at identifying teachers' attitudes toward the cultural dimensions of EIL based on data analysed from questionnaires and interviews which considered the following features: subjects' attitudes toward learning about specific cultures (native and non-native); subjects' attitudes toward learning about culture in general; and influences on teachers' attitudes toward native and non-native cultures.

On reflection, teachers viewed learning culture in ELT very positively. However, if, on the one hand, they regarded British culture, American culture, international cultural aspects not specific to any country, and other English native cultures as important, they did not have the same opinion about ESL and EFL cultures. Most teachers regarded ESL and EFL cultures as quite unimportant. Apparently, they have not assimilated the importance of non-native cultures

although several applied linguists have observed that teaching materials should focus on native as well as non-native communities. Furthermore, when asked about teaching culture in general, that is, without naming specific cultures such as British, American, ESL or EFL, they reacted more positively toward the statement which did not refer to non-native cultures.

Moreover, they pointed out British culture as the most important culture in ELT, followed by American culture. However, teachers also referred to the importance of international cultural aspects in language classes. This may indicate that besides appreciating British and American cultures, teachers are also interested in approaching English as an international language, which seems to reinforce Gnutzmann's (1999) opinion that rather than focusing on target culture-specific topics, a stronger orientation toward international topics should be more appropriate in teaching English as an international language.

There seems to be no consensus among teachers on how to approach culture in ELT. Most of them believed that the choice of cultural materials in language classes depended on the kind of students they taught (e.g. teacher trainees or ESP students). However, about one third of the teachers affirmed that there would be no differences between their students and their approach to dealing with culture would be the same.

A fundamental aim of this study is to make space for the voices of the Expanding Circle. The EIL debate has been led by researchers in the Inner and Outer Circles. However, this does not represent the reality of English use in the world today. The future of the English language does not depend only on what happens in the native countries of the Inner Circle or in the communities of the Outer Circle where English has acquired an official status.

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