Best of ELTECS

Milestones in ELT

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

Best of ELTECS

This 1995 publication celebrates the five-year history of ELTECS (the English Language Teaching Contacts Scheme), set up in 1990 'to develop and sustain a network of ELT professionals across central and eastern Europe' following the fall of the Iron Curtain. ELTECS provided network members with an opportunity to make new contacts, co-operate, share ideas and analyse key ELT issues from the public and private sectors. The papers in this publication come from three ELTECS conferences in the 1992 to 1994 period, in Belfast, Bratislava and Manchester.

They highlight important issues about language and language teaching in four main areas of contemporary relevance in central and eastern Europe, namely language policy and planning, the role of English in the European foreign language classroom, British studies, and networking.
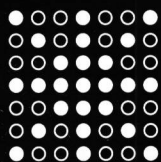
BEST *of* ELTECS

The British Council

English Language Teaching Projects in Europe
Consultancy Group, Professional Services

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'The role of English in a changing Europe: where do we go
from here?' ELTECS Conference, Belfast, 6 - 9 September 1994

'English among the other European languages'
ELTECS Conference, Bratislava, 6 - 9 December 1993

'English in the wider Europe'
ELTECS Conference, Manchester, 24 - 27 November 1992

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Foreword

Five years ago, the English Language Teaching Contacts Scheme (ELTECS) was launched. At that time, it represented just one of the ways British ELT work was being reshaped in central and eastern Europe in response to the challenges posed by the far-reaching changes in the former Eastern Bloc; what the historian, Peter Johnson, has called 'the hinge of opportunity'.

The aim of the scheme was to develop and sustain a network of ELT professionals across central and eastern Europe.
The key focus was on making new contacts and building a network. If we take a general definition of a network as a specific type of relation linking a defined set of persons, objects or events (Mitchell, 1969) called actors or nodes, then ELTECS has played a part in helping ELT professionals from central and eastern Europe to reappear on the ELT map again.

In the set of papers included here we aim to share with you some of the thoughts from actors who have helped define the ELTECS network so far. Four themes - language policy and planning, the role of English in the European foreign language classroom, British Studies and networking - contribute to our understanding of the strength of link between the actors, and the level of joint involvement in the same activities.

Such a group of themes was chosen not just because of their applicability to the internal domestic arrangements of British Council ELT activity in central and eastern Europe, but also because of their considerable use in analysing the scope and the international impact of ELTECS. While the purview of ELTECS might be limited, this may be one of its strengths rather than a weakness.

These papers raise important issues about language and language teaching. By emphasising the cross-cutting nature of subject relationships which make up the ELTECS network, they also demonstrate that trust and cooperation are the key ingredient for successful networking. Only by sharing, analysing and understanding this problem can ELTECS go forward.

As the Polish poet and aphorist Stanislaw Lec said in *Unkempt Thoughts* "you will always find some Eskimos ready to instruct the Congolese on how to cope with heatwaves". Networks are short on control and long on trust and cooperation. It is these two features which have articulated the ELTECS network.

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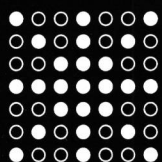
The British Council

**Best of ELTECS
Theme 1:
Language Policy and Planning**

English among the other European languages

Arthur van Essen, Vakgroep Taal en Communicate, Netherlands

1   Preamble

I regard it as a great pleasure, indeed an honour, to have been given the opportunity by the organisers of this conference to talk to you, and to develop some thoughts on the position of foreign-language education in Europe, and on the unique position of English among the other European languages.

It is a special privilege for me to be able to talk to you here today under conditions which are radically different from those prevailing, say, five years ago. Having travelled for the past 25 years in what was once called the Eastern bloc, and having talked there to colleagues in Hungary, former Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the former Soviet Union, I have almost felt the changes coming on.

And here we are today, with the Iron Curtain lifted and the barriers no longer as menacing as they used to be, talking to one another about the future of foreign-language education in our old continent in general and your countries in particular.

And now that we, visitors from Western Europe, are able to look behind the Curtain, we find a great diversity of nations, neither as monolithic, nor as uniform as we were once led to believe. Some nations are homogeneous, some have heterogeneous populations. Some are industrially developed, some are agrarian. Some are comparatively rich, some extremely poor. Some have one language and culture, others have several languages and cultures (cf. Hofstede 1993: 15).

The one thing these nations have in common is the sudden demise of Communism and the consequent decline of Russian as the *lingua franca* of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as its rapid replacement by English. This development is not wholly without danger.

Consider the situation in the European Union (EU). Some time ago, a working party set up by the European Commission, reported that: 'In all, except Anglophone countries, English dominates and is squeezing out or reducing the importance of other languages'.

As teachers of English as a foreign language, we might rub our hands in glee and conclude that the language is doing the job for us and that organising and professionalising ourselves is not really necessary.

My purpose today is to show that it would not do for us to sit back and relax; that it would be to our detriment if we did not respect the languages and cultures of others, and that we, as non-native and native teachers of

English, are pre-eminently placed to foster the kind of respect for 'diversity in language that is essential if we are to avoid an aimless slide into a European, if not global, monoculture' (cf. Francis 1988: 1).

To achieve my aim, I shall first outline the evolution of English as a foreign language (EFL) in continental Europe. An historical perspective is indispensable. As W. R. Lee pointed out the other day, the past is necessary to understand the present and read the future. In my historical outline I will demonstrate that, in many respects, there is an unbroken line of development in foreign-language teaching, both in Eastern and Western Europe, despite the interlude of 45 years. I will also glance at EFL in the private sector. Then I will look at the challenges facing us because of a uniting Europe. Finally, I will suggest how these challenges might be met.

2   Historical perspective

In most European countries EFL was introduced into the schools in the course of the nineteenth century. This does not mean that before the introduction of English as a school subject no teaching of English had been going on. On the contrary, a recent survey (Loonen 1990) shows that from 1500 to 1800 English took its place alongside French and Latin, as well as German, Dutch, Spanish and Italian (in this order of importance) as a language of communication, but that it was only in the main ports of Western Europe that English was in much demand. This lack of interest in English is partly accounted for by the fact that up to 1700 the English-speaking trading partners were quite prepared to use what was to them a foreign language. From 1700 onwards, however, the English evidently became less willing to adapt themselves, but there is no evidence to show that the alleged imbalance between the eagerness of foreigners to learn the English language and the readiness of the English to learn a language other than English was as bad as it is now (cf. Francis 1988: 1).

For people like us it is interesting to note that in the Low Dutch textbooks dating from this period commercial information and business letters were invariably included, but that there is hardly any sign of cultural or literary interest, as was the case in the French and German-speaking areas. Also, in the Low Dutch area (comprising Flanders and the Netherlands) teachers of English were both non-natives and natives who had settled in the Low Countries. By contrast, most teachers of French as a foreign language were natives. This changed when modern foreign languages became official school subjects in which the mother tongue, because of the translations from and into it, played a pivotal role. In the German-speaking countries teachers of EFL had always been predominantly non-native speakers with an academic background, who might have been to England for a year or so after graduating from university (Görlach & Schröder 1985: 228).

I have not been able to locate any historical studies reporting on the position of EFL in Southern, Eastern, and Northern Europe before 1800, but the use of English is very likely to have been limited to the main ports and

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routes. And the motivation to learn it must have been largely instrumental. Even if, after 1800, the reasons for introducing English into the modern language curriculum were also mainly practical, teaching methods were not. English was taught by the grammar-translation method in fashion at grammar schools, where the classical languages were taught. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, spoken English was regarded as of little practical use, as there were few direct contacts with Britain or the United States. After 1880 teaching objectives gradually began to change. The ensuing Reform Movement was eighty per cent continental, especially German. The call for reform was chiefly the result of the rise of Germany as a strong central European - and, indeed, colonial - power with an increasingly important position in world trade and industry. The resulting changes in teaching objectives required school leavers to write simple letters in English, to understand spoken English and to use spoken English with some fluency (Görlach & Schröder 1985: 228). The same was true of German in countries trading with Germany.

From Germany the Reform Movement soon spread to the other German-speaking countries and to Scandinavia, where Jespersen became its main protagonist. In France and England Passy and Sweet each gave an important boost to the movement. The reform did not lose its first impetus until the turn of the century, but despite the fact that in Germany so many eminent scholars lent their names to it, it did not catch on there to the extent that it did in France, where the Reform Method was introduced into the whole of education in 1902.

By 1900, not only was English taught as a spoken as well as a written medium, but more emphasis was also placed on the modernity of texts, literary and non-literary, and on the teaching of what the Germans so aptly called *Landeskunde*. As far as the teaching of the cultural side of language is concerned, teachers around the world owe a great deal to Jespersen's book *How to teach a foreign language*. This book, which is regarded by many as the bible of the reformers, defines the principal aim of reading in terms of giving 'the pupils some insight into the foreign nations' peculiarity' (Jespersen 1904: 179). Since Jespersen wrote this *cultural studies (civilisation* as the French call it), have never been completely absent from Continental coursebooks and from teacher-training programmes. But the subject always aroused some controversy, as an article in the *Independent on Sunday* (21.10.1990) made unequivocally clear. In the past the aims of cultural studies (or 'area studies') have varied from teaching just the so-called realia to promoting a better understanding between peoples (Erdmenger 1974: 89). Jespersen strongly believed in the latter aim: 'language teachers all over the world' he wrote, 'may ultimately prove more efficacious in establishing good permanent relations between the nations than Peace Congresses at the Hague' (Jespersen 1904: 180). Unfortunately, this dictum of Jespersen's was largely ignored by the profession during the cold war, except for what were regarded as either sentimental softies or official hardliners, but now this aim is coming into its own again, in the shape of peace education at grass-roots level.

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Also during the cold war, but this time only in the East, knowledge of the target culture was often interpreted as knowledge of the Soviet Union, irrespective of the language that was taught.

Staying on the same elevated plane of cultural studies, an intrinsic relationship is sometimes claimed to exist between language and national character, or between language and world view or ideology.

In the *Independent on Sunday* article mentioned above, the French minister is reported to have abused this connection for political purposes. Arguing that each language embodies a special way of grasping reality, and that which language we speak determines *tout court* everything else, and with the Anglo-American bulldozers already fully in position, he proclaimed that there is a war on, a war for Europe's soul - a fateful dispute about who we are and how we think. If Europe does not want to lose its soul, impoverish its culture, forget its history, etc., etc., it must take its plurilingualism on board. One can agree with the minister's conclusion without going along with his argument. I shall come back to this issue later on.

To return to the Reform Movement: by 1910 it had petered out. It had been criticised for its dogmatic exclusion of the use of the native language from the classroom, for its fixation on learning to *speak* the language, whereas most learners would never speak but only read or write it (Rombouts 1937: 130-31). While the value of the spoken language was not questioned, its artificial divorce from the written language was. This was alright for Berlitz courses and the like, but not for state schools with loftier aims. In France the Reform Method was abolished as radically as it had been introduced (by government decree) and a period of counter-reform ushered in. In Germany a reaction set in too, but here teachers opted for a method that combined the best qualities of the traditional methodology with those of the Reform method. Thus, German eclectics retained some phonetics and the careful distinction of letters from sounds. They also retained one of the central principles of the Reform: the use of connected texts on worthwhile topics as the starting-point of each teaching unit. In Germany, texts with all the niceties of grammar that are usually associated with the study of texts, remained the mainstay of ELT courses throughout the interwar and post-war periods. This may explain why the notion of 'structural' or 'grammatical correctness', ultimately deriving from the Classicist view of language as a garden to be tended, remained largely intact, both in Eastern and Western Europe, until well into the nineteen-seventies, when the ethnographers' notion of 'communicative competence' took over, at least in the West.

During the interwar years English certainly did not enjoy the curricular status it has today. In the Netherlands, for example, it never ranked above French and German until well into the 1960s. In some of the German *Länder*, however, English became the first foreign language as early as 1923. This was due to the gradual decline of French as an international

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language. Incidentally, French held a similarly privileged position in pre-war Poland. However, the general change-over to English in Germany did not take place until the mid-thirties (Görlach & Schröder 1985: 228).

3   The current situation

More recently English has become a compulsory subject for *all* pupils in a number of Western and Central European countries. In Scandinavia English is virtually a second language among the younger generation. Within twenty years or so the same will be true of Austria. In what was formerly the Eastern Bloc, English is currently ousting Russian from its position of privilege and in order to cope with the massive demand for English, tens of thousands of teachers of Russian are being retrained. On the other hand, there is no sign of any major increase, within the EU, in the number of students learning Italian or Spanish, while other languages, such as Danish, Dutch, Modern Greek and Portuguese are badly neglected. French still appears to be of some importance in the anglophone member-states of the EU and in Denmark, but it has lost one of its traditional strongholds, Spain, to English. In Italy it is losing ground to English too. Some people say that despite the huge budget that the French have made available for the dissemination of French and French culture, not only in Europe but throughout the world, the French are fighting a rearguard action against English and, progressively, German.

It is obvious that Europe needs English, but what about German? Judging by what is going on in Europe at the moment, it would seem that the foreign-language learning business is one of the most market-sensitive, if not lucrative, of all human activities. The *Independent on Sunday* article reports the case of Hong Kong, where all the fluent speakers of English have left, if they could, because, as 1997 approaches, English has ceased to be the language of getting on in the world. And take the case of the UK, where the traditionally dominant position of French as a foreign language is slowly but surely being whittled away by German. Whereas, before German unification, German was only moderately important in Europe, notably in those countries that border on Germany, language schools all over Europe are now reporting a dramatic growth in the number of students of German. Is this perhaps the challenge of the near future? You may recall the embarrassing remarks made by Nicholas Ridley, one of Margaret Thatcher's ministers, about Germany's role in Europe. They caused quite a furore at the time. However, in the *Independent on Sunday* article, teachers of EFL are given the assurance that there is no real cause for alarm here. I quote:

> *'The linguistic war, if it is such, is in reality about the number two position in a game which will have many losers. The EC alone has nine official languages, and 40 more, from Gaelic to Provençal to Luxemburgish.'*

The undisputed practical utility of English appears to leave little motivation for the learning of other modern foreign languages, as well in full-time

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education as in language training for economic life, and if it does, as in the case of German, the motives are equally utilitarian. This development runs counter to what Europarliamentarians have been trying to achieve ever since the first supranational institutions came into being: a diversification that would give room to at least all the major languages in the Community.

To understand what exactly is going on, we have to take a closer look at the present European EFL scene. This scene is, perhaps, best described in terms of two trends which have evolved against a backdrop of politico-economic and educational change. On the one hand, we find the view that if English is to be learnt by everybody as a vehicle for international communication, then grammatical correctness ceases to be the be-all and end-all of English language teaching (Görlach & Schröder 1985: 229). The use of English as a *lingua franca* also implies that if cultural studies are to be taught at all, the emphasis cannot be exclusively on Britain or the United States. This view was, and is, principally found in circles associated with what may be called 'comprehensive' or 'middle school' education. In this view the ability to communicate successfully depends only partially, if not marginally, on one's knowledge of the rules of grammar. More important is one's ability to integrate any of these rules into an overall pragmatic competence and to use this effectively in face-to-face interaction. It will be clear that this involves all kinds of personality factors too. The 'communicative approach', as this trend is called, is therefore content to accept incomplete grammatical competence and a limited, but up to a point effective, general proficiency in English. It has also made a point of emphasising that mutual understanding implies talking and writing to one another without fear. This approach, though it has been discredited and ridiculed in what I would call 'élitist circles', has had a profound effect on the teaching of English as a compulsory language in secondary education (both general and technical) as well as on the development of new materials. At this point I would like to quote from a contemporary German publication:

> *'Through these* [i.e. new teaching materials] *it has also strongly influenced the teaching of English in evening classes for adults. One of the central and politically most stirring arguments for the teaching of English to the less able is, in fact, that through contact with a second language these learners can develop their mental faculties in general and improve their communicative range in particular.'*
>
> (Görlach & Schröder 1985: 228)

What is true of Germany is true of many West European countries. Course design and the production of EFL materials generally is now often carried on across national boundaries. Both the Swedes and the Germans have produced many EFL coursebooks that have become popular in Holland and Belgium. There is evidence of other countries, even outside Europe, importing continental European ELT materials. Austrian ESP materials, especially for adults, are being used in such places as Malta and Turkey.

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Swedish aid programmes, for example in the African front-line states, not only operate through English but develop programmes to teach it. And so too did the Soviet Union, in India for example (Francis 1988: 2). In continental Europe, however, few EFL coursebooks have been taken over without having been adapted to the markets of the importing countries. More often than not, teams of authors from the exporting and importing countries work together on a revision. This aspect of bi- or multinationality has become a feature also of curriculum development and in-service teacher training in Europe. I need only refer to the work done by the team of scholars working under the aegis of the Council of Europe, to the international workshops that have become a regular feature of INSETT in Europe, and more recently, to the conferences and meetings taking place under the umbrella of NELLE or organised by the British Council's ELTECS Unit. The internationality of such activities and events is much to be welcomed, not only because they give us a sense of belonging to a single profession, but above all because here we have platforms where our nationality can be expressed at supranational level.

The second trend in contemporary ELT on the continent that I would like to describe is the discovery of Britain by other Europeans as just another member-state of the EU, and therefore of British English as the language of a neighbouring culture. And here I should like to quote again from the same German source:

> *'[This] idea has sprung from the current image of a united Europe in which the individual regions should keep their cultural and linguistic identity as well as they can in order to avoid the dangers of the melting-pot. A multilingual Europe can only be preserved if neighbouring languages and cultures are studied in addition to international languages. To learn English merely as an international language over a period of six to nine years is not desirable; instead British English and British culture should be taught, the one through the other, right from the beginning, as an example of another national variety of European culture and civilisation.'*

(Görlach & Schröder 1985: 230)

This approach to foreign-language education requires in-depth study over a considerable time, in a linguistic as well as in a literary and cultural sense. But even if learners are not successful as far as the language is concerned, they will, following a course constructed along these lines, hopefully lose some of their ethnocentric beliefs, through the contact with a different variety of European culture. I would add that the cause of linguistic and cultural tolerance is perhaps much better served, or at least considerably furthered, by putting into the language curriculum a special space for the discussion of language itself. The chief aim of such a special slot would be to challenge pupils to ask questions about language, questions which so many (including language teachers) take for granted. Also, by offering a classroom forum where language diversity can be discussed, the new curriculum element could seek to challenge linguistic parochialism and prejudice. 'The best weapon against prejudice', as Eric Hawkins (1987: 4) puts it, 'is open discussion and greater awareness'.

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The teaching of culture, conceived as the way of life of a people, has long been neglected. Interest in *cultural studies* reached an all-time low by the end of the nineteen-sixties. This was due partly to the lack of agreement on its aims, and partly to the euphoria over the unity of mankind, following the wave of Chomskyan universalism. It will be obvious that it makes sense to speak of differences between languages and associated cultures only if we respect the *individuality* of these languages and cultures.

Fortunately, we have recently seen a resurgence of interest in foreign-culture studies in continental Europe that seem to bring together the two approaches that I have just outlined. Thus, attempts have been made within the communicative approach to 'beef up' the culturally bare bones of the *Threshold Level*. It will be recalled that the T-Level is specified in terms of functions and notions and that the latter are implicitly thought to be identical in all western languages. In this respect the functional-notional approach represents a continuation, or rather a resumption, of 17th-century general (or 'universal') grammar. However, by conducting interviews on parallel topics in parallel settings in different languages, a Dutch researcher (Meijer 1983) was able to show that many of the concepts that are handled at the T-Level are culture-bound, in the sense that they depend for their interpretation on socially and institutionally transmitted knowledge.

The second trend in *cultural studies* derives its impetus from Germans like Piepho (1984) and Edelhoff (1984). It tries to remove the study of foreign culture from the domination of the textbook and to base it instead on the learner's own experiences in everyday situations. It is an essential ingredient of this approach that the learner does not only learn about the other people's experiences as they are presented to him/her through the mass media, but primarily about his own experiences, for there can be no understanding of what people say, why and how they say it, how people act and why they act the way they do, unless one has sufficient self-awareness (Silkeborg 1985: 77). The native language has a modest place in this approach, that is to say, the learners are allowed to use their own language in ordering their experiences before they express them in the target language, and the teacher is urged to adopt the role of intercultural interpreter and give up that of ambassador of the foreign nation. A non-native teacher of EFL is perhaps better placed to fulfil this role than a native speaker is. In any case, during the one hundred years or so that English has been taught on the Continent as a school subject alongside other foreign languages, it has been, overwhelmingly, taught by non-natives. And during all those years, foreign-language education, even at times when English was not the first foreign language taught, was an extensive and intensive testing-ground for all kinds of innovations. In this way a large body of collective experience has grown up. This may explain why continental teachers of EFL, who are used to situations where three or more foreign languages are spoken within an area of thirty miles, are not easily taken in by anything that announces itself as new but that has not been tested or tried out (Van Els *et al* 1984: 156).

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4   The challenges facing us

At this point I should like to return to another issue raised in the *Independent article*. After what I have been saying about the two trends in EFL in Europe today, it will be clear that the French minister was denying the possibility of learning a foreign language for special and limited purposes. But this is precisely the kind of English language learning that is going on all over Europe at the moment, especially in the private sector. One veteran teacher of English as a foreign language told the Independent reporter:

> *'The pupils are not taking away any culture at all. It's a different sort of English they learn, purely related to their needs - for example, the phrase 'the purpose of my presence today is to give you a brief idea of my company and the department in which I work' is about the commonest they learn.'*

This quotation shows that there is no need for continental Europeans to fear some sort of Anglo-Saxon cultural take-over. Besides, learning another language does not necessarily entail the acquisition of a different mentality or grasp of reality. Also, there is nothing to be said against learning a foreign language for limited and purely instrumental purposes. I should like to remind you what W. R. Lee said at a conference in Germany just before the Berlin Wall fell:

> *'Let people learn what languages they wish to learn, without being pressurised. Above all, let the public provision for language learning allow everywhere for as much choice and variety as can be arranged: the private sector, understandably and inevitably, has to concentrate on languages for which there is most adult fee-paying demand.'*

Since the Ministers of Education of the EU, which, in the not too distant future, may comprise your country as well, agreed on an action programme for the languages programme of the Union, they have been at pains to stress that the goals of LINGUA, as the action programme was called, was not only their concern but also that of their colleagues with responsibility for business, trade and industry. The issue of competence in a foreign language should be a matter for national government policies, within the framework provided by LINGUA. Such policies should address the advantages of and the need for a *planned* diversification of competence in a language and specify the roles played by the public and the private sectors in achieving this objective. One of the challenges presented by LINGUA is that it expects designers of teaching materials to give particular attention to the production of materials that can be used for diffusion through the broadcast media, as lessons recorded from broadcasts, together with appropriate support materials in printed form, are expected to have the right impact and flexibility to meet the varied needs of people at their places of work.

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The language difficulties facing the EU require European solutions. For this reason *transnational* initiatives are the basis of LINGUA projects as often as possible. What we should keep in mind is that collaborative projects involving two or more countries stand a much better chance of getting financial support from Brussels than solo action, especially if they are in the areas of materials development, certification and accreditation. This is understandable, as it is in Europe's interest that a system should be established for the recognition of competence in a language, covering both the definition of levels and the certification and/or accreditation of achievements in ways that are easily understood (and therefore more readily adopted) by employers. What we should also keep in mind is that English is not a top priority of LINGUA: people will pay to learn English anyway. From this point of view the British Council finds itself in a much more comfortable position than either the *Goethe Institut* or the *Alliance Française*, or, alternatively, it is much more generous than the other two institutions.

For the objectives of LINGUA to be reached, it will be vital for initiatives to arise from a collaboration between the world of work on the one hand, and the world of education and training on the other. Major projects should therefore be based on a partnership of this kind. Partners could be ministries, educational establishments, teachers' associations, employers' organisations or trade unions.

European umbrella organisations enter the picture where there is a clear need for the exchange of expertise through the development of information networks. Through their networks, such organisations could also foster a more widespread awareness of the need for proper planning procedures, including needs analysis and inspection, as well as course audits, at both national and company level. And, lastly, they could bring their collective experience and expertise to bear on transnational teacher-training initiatives, in fields where there are few training opportunities for teachers. European bodies such as NELLE (Networking English Language Learning Europe) could easily tack such initiatives on to existing teacher-training schemes of longer standing, such as INSETT.

So far, European EFL networks have been very much a north-west European affair. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the networks be expanded to Eastern and Southern Europe. In Italy and Spain, for example, people are queuing in thousands to learn English and our colleagues there are trying hard to get organised. This situation is *à fortiori* true of Central and Eastern Europe. With educational systems that cannot, at present, cope with the demand for English (and German!), it is all the more imperative for teachers of English there to hook up with a major European EFL network. It would be a very welcome shot in the arm for EFL teachers in the south and east of Europe if more international conferences, like the present one, were held in their areas. But first local ELT associations should be established and the individual teacher should take an active part in them. Do not expect too much from your Government

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or from Brussels, even if some of the European Commission's exchange programmes, like TEMPUS, may be helpful. They invariably involve a lot of red tape. Besides, they make *you* agree to *their* terms, rather than that they meet your and your students' needs.

The important thing is not just to sit back and watch how either the language or colleagues or the Government or supranational bodies are (not) doing the job for you. To vary a biblical phrase: let each individual teacher set her or his hand to the plough. For this a change in mentality is needed: from a collectivist to an individualist attitude. This might well prove the hardest part of the process of change (cf. Hofstede 1993). I would hope that this conference at least will bring about this awareness.

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English 2000: the professional issues

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May I say, before I start the paper proper, how very pleased I am to be here for this occasion. English 2000 provides all teachers of English with an opportunity, and the ELTECS project is a manifestation of British Council action in one of the major spheres of development for the next century. Bringing the two together is a valuable exercise.

In the Bratislava conference last year, Arthur Van Essen provided an exciting account of English teaching in the European context. I do not propose to repeat themes that have been so excellently rehearsed already. What I am trying to do in this paper is to broaden the discussion to global issues, to link the concerns of ELTECS with English as a world phenomenon in the past and in the future, and to raise some of the questions that recent discussion seems to be pushing us towards in thinking about the future of our roles as speakers of English, writers in English, creators of literature, teachers, curriculum developers and educationalists. These of course are the questions that lie behind the British Council's attempt, in *English 2000*, to chart the course of British ELT policy for the next decade and more.

In the early post-war years, many practitioners held the view that overseas learners of English required a language and methodology similar to that of native speakers. The English language 'belonged' to native speakers, and the teaching of the language was frequently (at least in state education) an off-shoot of the teaching of classics, with heavy emphasis on 'high quality', literary texts. Such a view was subsequently changed fundamentally by a number of shifts in perspective which lead us now to be less confident about first the nature of language, second the functions of the 'English language' and third the roles of native speakers - to mention only a few important issues.

The idea that 'English' had a destiny beyond Britain has an extensive lineage, at least as far back as Samuel Daniel in 1599:

> And who in time knowes wither we may vent
> The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores
> This gaine of our best flories shall be sent,
> T'inrich unkowing Nations with our stores?
> Which worlds in th'yet unformed Occident
> May come refin'd with th'accents that are ours.
>
> (Daniel, 1950: 96, quoted by Bailey, 1992: 97)

The following three centuries of imperial and economic expansion found English increasingly seen as a vehicle of an often insensitive triumphalist culture. In 1942 Britain was at war, but was able to commandeer the English language as part of the war effort. George Orwell (1970: 250) wrote in a book review in *Horizon*:

> *In this war we have one weapon which our enemies cannot use against us, and that is the English language. Several other languages are spoken by larger numbers of people, but there is no other that has any claim to be a world-wide lingua franca. The Japanese administrators in the Philippines, the Chinese delegates in India, the Indian nationalists in Berlin, are all obliged to do their business in English.*

Yet the confidence that the English language is a weapon of value to English people was already being undermined by the very processes Orwell referred to. Certainly, it is now true that the English language is no longer in the ownership of speakers of English as a mother-tongue, or first language. The ownership of English rests with the people who use it, whoever they are, however multilingual they are, however monolingual they are. The major advances in socio-linguistic research over the past half century indicate clearly the extent to which languages are shaped by their use. And the current competent users of English number up to seven hundred million, living in every continent (Crystal 1985), of whom less than half are native speakers.

Another widely accepted belief of fifty years ago was that the distinction between first and second languages had considerable value in the processes of curriculum development and of teaching. Now, I think, we are much less sure that the boundaries between first, second and foreign language are discrete, and certainly it is not clear exactly what it is that one is saying in talking about somebody as a second language user. The traditional distinction, in which second language users learn in a society which adopts the target language for some public functions, and foreign language users do not, is increasingly hard to maintain. For many purposes English is becoming a *lingua franca* within Europe and in other traditionally foreign language settings, while in traditional second language settings, such as West Africa and India, there is a lively debate over the relative independence from English of the regional varieties. When the Nobel Prize for Literature has been awarded to Soyinka, a Nigerian, and the British-based Booker prizes regularly go to authors whose works reflect a multilingual background and a multilingual experience, over the heads of writers who are monolingual English users, the usefulness of the hard distinction is difficult to defend. Further, even as a basis for teaching methodology, it is unwise to distinguish techniques suitable for second-language work from those for foreign language work. Indeed, the communicative movement in language teaching (Brumfit 1984: Prabhu 1987), together with associated humanistic movements (Stevick 1976), may be seen as attempts to introduce second-language-teaching assumptions into traditionally foreign-language contexts.

It thus becomes clear that concepts like second-language or first-language teaching only have relevance when associated with certain kinds of organisation in the school system. But of course it is not only the notion of a second language and the notion of English which have become

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problematic. The shift from the teacher as an instructor to the teacher a facilitator, with a corresponding increasing emphasis on learner strategies, is well documented (for language teaching by Stevick 1976, among others).

Not only has 'English' become international in the last half century, but scholarship about English has also become international: the ownership of an interest in English has become international. We are no longer a language community which is associated with a national community or even with a family of nations such as the Commonwealth aspired to be. We are an international community, and there is not a human being alive in the world who does not have some interest in the future of English - primarily because of the economic dominance of the United States.

There are substantial arguments continuing about the extent to which English may or may not be valuable in the economy of countries in different parts of the world, for (as Coulmas, 1992, demonstrates) language issues are closely bound up with economics, as well as with politics. Consequently, questions about the relationship between language policies and power pose serious arguments to which in the next century we are going, between us, to have to work out answers.

In language teaching, we have seen a series of policy movements. There has been a shift from literature to language, and a shift from language to learners. The shift from literature to language I have already briefly referred to. Many people interpreted the fairly immediate goals of language teaching as access to a literature, perhaps because the most powerful model of language teaching was the teaching of dead languages, of Latin and Greek, in nineteenth century schools. Now dead languages are very convenient of course, because the culture is defined and relatively static, and to teach a language as if it is dead perhaps prevents the people learning it from seizing it for their own purposes. Throughout the first years of this century, it was clear that there was a battle between people who wished to have syllabuses that were very strongly classical in intention, whether in Britain or overseas, and people who had experience overseas trying to fight their way through to a linguistically more sensitive, more communicatively competent and better researched base. Whether it was the earlier vocabulary movements associated with Michael West, or the development of a sense of the structure of the English language through Harold Palmer and A S Hornby (Howatt 1984, chapters 16-18), or whether it was the movement that led ultimately to a recognition of ESP in the late sixties and early seventies (Swales 1985), the tendency was to increase dependence on a specification of the nature of language in communication. All of these shifts in perspective were attempts to undermine the idea that the prime role of language teaching was literary, and hence to move towards communicative competence. It could be argued, though, that these shifts owe their intellectual bases to three very different sources. First of all, to the rise of linguistics and socio-linguistics. We are now much better informed about the nature of language. This is partly because of a movement towards recognition, especially, of the enormous variety of dialects, codes and styles, and the enormous range of ways in which these can be operated.

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We recognise that no language is a single language, a fact that is much more clearly documented now than it was, partly of course because the technology to record and store spoken language is now freely available. That is the first substantial shift. The second substantial shift is not linguistic at all, but relates to oil, and the economy associated with it. We can recognise the change in financial relationship between the industrial countries of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and the rest of the world very clearly in the symbolic as well as the actual effects of the early 1970s fight for greater payment for the oil that kept the industrial economies running. Indeed, you could argue that many of the changes and innovations in English language teaching in the 1970s owe their origin not to the creativity and wisdom and imagination of the participants in English language teaching, but to the fact that there was an international market of people who wanted English and wanted it now and (for the first time) had the means to pay for it. So somehow experts, teachers, curriculum developers, needs analysts, organisations from the countries with a strong interest in English, and publishers all responded; there was a ferment of ideas and activity in the aftermath of the oil crisis. In contrast, the 1980s have been years of consolidation, when we have been trying to make sense of, rather than advance from, that rich body of 1970s ideas. So the second major cause of change is the economic shift following the oil crisis.

The third major change of very recent years is the impact of a European philosophical tradition. In an inchoate, but nonetheless powerful shift of sensibility, a consensus has developed from the work of a succession of philosophers writing mainly in French, to some extent in German, and to some extent in English in the United States, deriving from a variety of sources including major writers such as Bakhtin and Vygotsky in the first decades of the Soviet Union, as well as from the structuralist programme of Saussure (see, among many surveys, Hawkes 1977; Wuthnow *et al.* 1984). Hence a post-modernist set of philosophical ideas denies many of the widely accepted assumptions that underlay our attitudes to language and language teaching, just as much as towards science and other forms of knowledge. Foucault particularly has been very influential on people looking at classroom language and asking questions like 'Who is empowering whom?', 'In whose interest is the language being used?', 'If language is knowledge, and knowledge is power, who should decide what languages are taught and how?', 'In whose service is the concept of native speaker?', 'In whose service is the concept of teacher?' (see Cameron *et al.* 1992; Fairclough 1989). This is not the place to develop this point in detail, but the view that language is substantially a matter of power relations has had a major impact on contemporary applied linguistic thinking. The claim made is not so much that there is no knowledge, but that recognised knowledge is a more or less straightforward reflection of the exercise of power. In spite of the political risks implicit in this position (for a vulgar interpretation leads to politicians happily accepting the view that as they have the power

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they also have all necessary knowledge), it is nonetheless a doctrine which in the 1970s and 1980s has undermined popular acceptance of what were regarded as certainties - including some of the certainties about English language teaching that we had inherited. It is, for example, a particularly happy argument in addressing the privileged status of the 'native speaker' in language teaching (Rampton 1990; Davies 1991).

I do not myself believe that knowledge is *merely* power, but I do believe that language use, and knowledge about language (including linguistics) has a specifiable relationship to power (see Joseph & Taylor 1990); hence debates about the future of English, in any part of the world, are arguments in part about the potential for power of the use of English. Consequently the questions of who owns English become very important because, once one acknowledges the diversity of purposes and ideologies and political and social roles that English can perform, the stated principles underlying the introduction of English into our schools and colleges and universities require much fuller democratic discussion than when they were previously accepted as given. Hence the spirit of the times leads towards emancipation and empowerment in the use of English, with moves away from literature (with its emphasis on a tradition, and a controllable curriculum) towards speech to which everyone has access, with effective oracy as a substitute for effective literacy. There is a shift away from English as part of an education that inducts you into a humanistic tradition, to an education that facilitates your communication for whatever purpose you want with whomever you want: a shift therefore towards a notion of communicative competence where communication is defined by the capacity of individuals of different culture to interact. Hence the relationship between the language and the cultures becomes something to be argued about.

However, while we have to acknowledge that languages are used as symbols in cultural argument, we cannot accept a complete identification of language and culture. Language codes are always capable of variable meaning; if they were not, we would be unable to construct new messages out of existing codes. So the meanings which constitute our cultures cannot be exclusively identified with the language which expresses them. Indeed, the fact that translation can be achieved, however partially, indicates that culture can transcend language. At the same time, it is very interesting to note that debates of a generation ago in ex-colonial countries are in some ways only now becoming significant in current discussion in Europe and in Britain (see discussions of emerging language policy in Mitchell 1991).

These themes are difficult to treat separately because the relationship between the individual and the community is immensely complex. If I could illustrate from a fairly recent work of fiction, Julian Barnes (1980: pp. 105-6) in his novel *Metroland* writes about the experience of becoming multilingual, and one of the points he makes is that:

> ... *the better I got at talking, gesturing and immersion, the more inner resistance built up to the whole process. I read about a*

> *Californian experiment on Japanese-born GI brides... In Japanese, these women were submissive, supportive creatures, in English, they were independent, frank and much more outward-looking.*

Now this process of subjective schizophrenia, of developing multi-personality options, is of course a process that is not exclusively linguistic. It is a feature of education, and not just of education in an international context, but of education at all. Any cultural movement that takes you away from the security of your local base towards a national or international or a pan-world set of concerns, is threatening as well as stimulating. It may be exciting but it may also be frightening, and it will almost certainly be destabilising if it is effective. What I think is clear is that English in the next fifty years will be strongly in the forefront of a process of destabilisation which every other technological force is pushing us unavoidably towards. This is unavoidable because this destabilisation, a process of becoming bicultural, or multicultural, of being bilingual or multilingual, is imposed on us by television, by the jet-plane, by the fact that you can be in Eastern Europe this morning and here in Belfast this afternoon; by the fact that if something happens in Beijing, or in Los Angeles, people throughout the world can see it reported and decide on how they are going to respond or not as governments, as individuals, as people; by the fact that there is constant commentary about academic ideas going on in a number of world languages, including English; by the fact that we are constantly arguing about what language we are going to use and where.

Yet the process is not actually as simple and automatic as I have implied, because of course, even if we acknowledge the power of these changes, we also create structures that control and guide them. There are specifically created mechanisms through which the practice of English teaching is developed. The British Council is one of the major agencies of such guidance. It is easy to be suspicious of such controlling devices, particularly when they are funded by governments. But here again a historical perspective may be helpful. Reading a writer of the 1940s like George Orwell, you become very aware of the push towards a welfare state socialism in response to the 1930s fascist movements. At that time, education was seen as a right to be offered to everybody, and language education came along with it. But soon education was seen in the context of a cold war confrontation, with aid money tending to go to the places where you needed to preserve influence. Again, there was a shift away from this model of welfare state, cold-war based, exported education to a concern for north-south relations and whether economic factors were actually contributing to or detracting from the successful development of states largely within the southern block. And education, of course, operated within these broad sets of ideas. International funding depended on what were the oppositional forces that you perceived.

Now you may feel this concentrates too much on non-language teaching factors, but the point I am really building up to is that *English 2000* has to be seen as part of a plan for English teaching which will actually be subject

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to factors we cannot define or predict. Yet we have to produce the best available planning on the evidence we have; if we do not we shall be at the mercy of the whims of the powerful - who do not, seen historically, have a good record for justice or culture.

Let me therefore give you one or two possible scenarios that might be good or might be bad, but which may well affect us profoundly. Let me start with an example that is a long way from either Ireland or Europe - South Africa.

Supposing for example, South Africa works out well in the next thirty years - an immense, complex, very difficult achievement, but not an impossible one. If South Africa develops peacefully, there is in that country an infrastructure and a body of talent to attract major investment. Such changes in southern Africa will have impacts throughout the whole of the rest of Africa that we cannot predict at all. But we can be sure that English teaching will play a substantial role in the peaceful development of southern Africa. If there is an economic boom, and a harnessing of creative energy there, the comparative neglect of Africa that is a sad feature of current British government policy could be counter-acted by local initiatives. What impact such a change will have on British and European practice cannot be predicted, but if it happened, we can be sure that there *would* be substantial side effects.

What happens in Europe may of course have an even more major impact. There are people who believe that English is dying in Europe and that German will take over its international role. Some view this with great pleasure, some view this as a challenge. People have different views about it, and of course we cannot tell what is actually going to happen. De facto, English is a very widely used language in the European community. That may imply that English becomes increasingly the major means of external contact for the community, but it may also happen, of course, that other languages become more important as power relations within the Community change.

Again, if you look at the challenges of the next few years, it is clear outside Europe, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese are going to be immensely important international languages, not just because of the numbers of speakers, but because in Australia or New Zealand, Chinese and Japanese are the languages that they are looking at most seriously. Thus the impact of the economy in the Pacific basin on the future of English could be very important. The knock-on effect to English of a major rise in Japanese as a foreign language or in Chinese as a foreign language, either of which could become a far eastern *lingua franca,* could be very considerable. How we shall respond to that, we cannot predict, but it is clearly a possibility that we have to be ready to anticipate. I do not believe that in the European context the influence of Chinese or Japanese is going to be the prime concern, but I may be wrong, and it will undoubtedly have some, as yet unpredictable, impact on language discussion.

Much more important, we can confidently expect, will be attitudes to schooling, access to publishing, the question of who controls the publishing, who invests in the publishing, where the markets for publishing are, who produces the materials, how local the materials can be, where the teacher supply comes from, how much teachers are paid in relation to equivalently-educated professionals in other spheres, and where we develop the research and the understanding we need. All of these are features in which there will be shifts in the global view, just as much as there will be shifts in the local view.

On the basis of general educated commentary, I would predict that in the next century we shall not see as much confidence in processes of schooling, internationally, as we had in the last. But what I cannot predict is how education will respond to that diminution of confidence. It is already apparent that assumptions about the value of compulsory education are breaking down; whether this will lead to major changes in policy or not cannot be predicted, for individual parents and families will have prime influence on the views of politicians, and the intensity and nature of their views are not predictable. Nonetheless, one of the scarcely commented on features of the shift of power in Eastern Europe at the moment is that it follows fifty, sixty, seventy years of strong moralistic, political, egalitarian indoctrination in schools. If there is ethnic conflict in some areas, it is not because schools have failed to combat that possibility. People may therefore conclude that formal education has not been as effective at one of the things that it was expected to do when it started. There may even be the view, arising out of similar conflicts, that multilingualism, the shift towards a combination of local languages and world languages, is not as effective an educational goal as it previously was thought to be.

People coming together in the European Community have tended to come together via the major languages. But one of the effects of coming together is a revival of many of the so-called minority languages in various countries. What is not yet clear is whether the tendency of the early 1990s in Europe, which is that more and more small countries with a single dominant language are emerging (Slovenia, Latvia, the Czech Republic, for example), is a tendency which will continue in Europe, or indeed be imitated outside Europe.

All of these are of course very broad issues, but they serve to show how there is much in the future which we cannot predict, but which may have substantial impact on our language-teaching policy in the next decades.

The other major area I want to refer to is the communication revolution. English is seen by many as the means by which we shall all have access to information technology. Certainly, as a metaphor, it has been immensely powerful in our field.

In linguistics, it was the quiet undercurrent of the whole Chomskian revolution. Behind that was the question: If you looked at language as if

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it was programmable, what would it look like? And many of the defects, as well as many of the strengths of that linguistic revolution, since 1957, have been defects and strengths associated with that metaphor. But of course that metaphor also reflects a real change in technology. There is easy knowledge transfer now in quantities and at speeds unimaginable in the past; there is real communication, not just through television, but real communication of massive databases. In principle, anywhere in the world, we can be connected to databases that are traditionally preserved in Paris or in Oxford or in Washington. Information availability is there for the stealing, as well as there for the borrowing, as well as there for the buying. And in-built into this technology are threats to freedom as well as opportunities for creating freedom. It may or may not lead (I suspect myself that it may not) to massively improved ways to assist language learning by means of IT, but it will inevitably enable us to exploit the knowledge associated with our language teaching much more effectively because knowledge in itself is much more freely available both potentially and actually.

The communications revolution may well be the technological change that underlies the next fifty years. But the unpredictable social and political events will lead to attitudes that we cannot at this moment predict. Who would have predicted the significance, fifty years ago, of several of the major themes that underlie much international discussion now? Who could have predicted AIDS, for example? Who could have predicted the oil crisis in quite the form in which it came? Who could have predicted the collapse of the eastern empires in quite the form in which that happened?

The interaction between technological change, the change in general attitudes and our personal involvement is going to be what determines where we go as individuals and as members of professional groups. So what therefore can we do? It seems to me that we can only make ourselves available. Nobody can plan in detail for the kind of chaotic future that internationally entwined economies necessarily cause for themselves. Nobody can say 'I know what will happen in the year 2010'. (We do not even know whether it is going to be called the year twenty-ten or two thousand and ten or what, let alone what is going to happen.) In that year, we cannot say exactly where we expect to be. But we can equip ourselves with structures that will enable us to be responsive. Wherever we are, there will always be a demand for some international languages, there will always be a demand for some trans-group languages and we can create structures so that we are able to respond in informed and responsible ways to new events, where we use the content of the kinds of papers that in this conference and elsewhere we produce, where we empathise, where we respond and understand and sympathise and feel for the learners in whose service much of the work that we do has to be placed.

We need structures for analysis too, through research, through clarifying and theorising practices, even if this is not actually directly in the service of the learners; we analyse in order to reach fuller understanding of the

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processes. We can organise to create the conditions in which we can do these things and we can publicise the things that we have done.

Now, of course, it is very easy to say that this is what we have to do. This conference is, however, a clear illustration of us doing it. We are exploring and defining these themes together through the agency of the British Council.

In addition, we can plan. Other sessions will look specifically at details of *English 2000.* But also, through the mechanism, again, of organisations like the British Council, we are able to think about a global strategy, through which overseas and British professionals alike can establish the most effective means of developing, improving, and guiding international communication through the major current international language. As I have tried to indicate in this survey of recent and future concerns, there can be few more important tasks in the world today.

Note: This is a substantially reworked paper which draws upon arguments and examples in an earlier paper presented at a conference to celebrate fifty years of the British Council's ELT work in Nigeria, Ibadan, December 1993.

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English language learning in Europe: issues, tasks and problems

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1 Languages to connect

> Working against an ancient myth: languages divide.
> Closeness and distance as parameters for language learning: geographically, linguistically, ideologically, in culture, in politics, in history, in everyday life (food, clothing, accommodation, tastes, lifestyles, *et al*); in one's own society, in foreign societies...

We only have an hour for a very complicated topic. The topic is 'Trends and tasks in in-service teacher education in the nineties', and we are looking for some kind of orientation frame. I do not think I can give that orientation *ex cathedra*, from the rostrum: we must look for it ourselves and do this co-operatively. But what I can and must do, is initiate you into the discourse process and remind you of one or two of the findings over the last 10-15 years, which a lot of the people here are sharing.

Thus, in my first part I will explain what we have learnt about the communicative approach to language teaching and learning, and then apply this to in-service teacher education and training, and specify some of the tasks as I see them and which a lot of us have already put into practice.

Working against an ancient myth: languages divide

Let me begin with the ancient story of the tower of Babel as we find it in Genesis:

> *'And the whole earth was one of language and one of speech.'*

But then people began building a city and a tower and wanted to reach God. But god didn't want that; instead of sending them an earthquake, which would have been normal in Mesopotamia, the Lord gave them languages. Languages, as we learn from the old myth, were there to divide. People were given identities in very small groups, but they could not work together any more. Languages to divide: the old myth is still very powerful in our own societies, in Europe and elsewhere. We can see it in former Yugoslavia at this very moment.

Yet we are working against the old myth because we do not want languages to divide people but to *connect* them.

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Closeness and distance as parameters for language learning

This is why we are looking for an active pedagogy. We are looking for education and action. We want to educate people because we wish them to be close, not distant. Thus, the first parameter of language teaching and language learning is that of closeness and distance. Let me explain. Being close or distant is very often, primarily a matter of *geography* because we are living apart. We have got to travel and go across borders, for we are divided *nationally*. Going across borders we are required to present passports and go through customs.

We are divided in terms of *culture* and our *histories* are different. And yet history can be very close at hand. It is only three years ago since the border around where I live was opened up. No doubt we Germans have always been very close in *language*, despite variations between words in the East and West, but we were very close in history too. However, we were very far apart in *politics*. Our cultural heritage was very much the same: you know that if you have coffee or *Kaffeetrinken* in a German household in either Leipzig or Kassel at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon it will be exactly the same. On the other hand, as is well known, in *ideology* we were very much apart.

When my friend and his family moved from Lancaster (England) to Sydney (Australia), which is very far away, they did not have much of a problem with their children in school because they found a school system more or less the same, or very similar. If you move house in Germany, say between Hamburg and Bavaria, you will really be at a loss.

Closeness and distance are, indeed, the parameters of all foreign language encounters, including foreign language learning and teaching. And this applies not only to foreign societies but also to our own relations and societies. It goes for men and women, for the young and the old, for radicals and liberals, for the poor and the rich. The educational objective is to bridge the gaps in our societies and with foreign societies, i.e. to reach more familiarity and to make people familiar with things and one another.

This is why crossing borders and building bridges is the motto of all language learning and teaching.

2.   The evolution of the communicative approach

The functional/notional basis.
Concepts of communicative language teaching and learning:
The concept of need:
- learner needs
- societal needs.
The concept of autonomy.
The concept of authenticity:
- authenticity of language and text

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- of *"Landeskunde'* (area/background information) and of learner.

The concept of inter-(cross-) cultural learning:

- Understanding as negotiation of meaning: from the familiar to the unfamiliar
- Understanding as an intercultural activity: interpreting and expressing
- Own and other people's experiences:
- Intercultural learning as connecting *"Landeskunde'* activities
- Looking for things same (similar) or different, and building relations.

The concept of (re)discovering experience, creativity and imagination:

- *'Lernen mit Herz, Kopf und Hand'* (Heinrich Pestalozzi) (learning with heart, head and hand)
- Experiential learning and task development
- New approaches to literature
- The incredible growth of creative methodology: games, activities, stimulation, creative writing, learner poetry.

Developing guidelines, curricula, materials and methods.

The functional/notional basis

What we are concerned with is far more than just national boundaries, customs officers and the economies. We are concerned with people – their heads, their minds, and their hearts – human beings who meet and join. And this is where the message of the evolution of communicative language learning comes in. The communicative approach, if you remember, is setting out to make sure that language is used rather than just talked about: in grammatical terms or in translation, and in dealing with literature. The initial functional/notional approach was making us aware of the using of language, of 'how to do things with words', according to the title of the famous book by J. L. Austin.

But this was only the basis and the beginning of the communicative approach. In many instances it did not actually reach far enough. There has been a lot of criticism of people who just exchanged labels. In the old system it used to be *weil-Sätze* – now, under the notional/functional approach, it became 'giving reason'. In many cases, the functional/notional approach, in a rather vulgar way, was used to re-label items and strategies of the old grammar/translation method. But the communicative approach is much more.

The concept of need: learner needs and societal needs

First of all there is the concept of need. Communicative needs can be defined at two levels. We can see them at an objective, or externally imposed, level. Societies have needs: there is, in fact, a need for languages

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in Europe. This is what in German comes under the term *Bedarf*. The role and the task of education in and out of schools are defined by the societies, by parliaments and governments in our democratic communities. The requirements of society are manifold. There is a requirement for knowledge, for information and for communicative competence.

On the other level there is the communicative need of the learner as an individual. This internally felt need is the subjective side. The basic subjective need of all mankind, of course, is curiosity. It is a driving force for all teaching and learning. It is the learning interest people have, it is the entertainment interest and the interpersonal contact need. It is the exchange of ideas need: people want to be in touch with people and they want to go across borders. So they do in the summer on 'InterRail' or other European tickets, in large crowds, including young people from the East, from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. There are personal interests and the need to share the body of knowledge and culture and there is the need to realize oneself.

All this is well known from educational philosophy. In the terms of the communicative approach to language learning, we are maintaining that the communicative needs as internally felt needs must be taken very seriously. We must not define need only at the societal level but bring the two into a balance.

Needs can be satisfied and accounted for. But at the same time they can be awakened and stimulated. This is what education has got to do and where language teaching, in bridging gaps, must play an important part, i.e. make people aware of other people and their languages and create or initiate a need.

The concept of autonomy

The second factor to be taken into consideration, which is closely linked with the first, is the concept of learner autonomy. We believe, not only from language teaching but from general educational philosophy and psychology, that the learner who is the focal point and the centre of the learning is a better learner. We find that autonomy is not only a political and ideological issue in our democratic societies, but also a right and a developing factor in the individual learner's personality.

The concept of authenticity: authenticity of language and text, of *Landeskunde* and of learner

The third concept is that of authenticity, not only in the sense of authentic data and language documents taken from outside the foreign country's railway station or the supplements of the newspapers. Authenticity has a much wider range. I am referring here to authenticity of relation: I am somebody, you are somebody. You are using language in everyday life, so am I, and we have got to come together. Authenticity of relation means that we are real people dealing with real things, not fake and simulation

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all the time. The implications should be clear: we have got actually to bring people together so that they can experience that the need is true and authenticity is a real issue. We are all different and the same at the same time.

Therefore, authenticity of language and text is essential. We want the real texts and genuine stories and not the write-ups of generations of textbooks writers. We wish to hear and read of real people using real language, for this is the better way to learn languages.

But we also need relational authenticity. We want people to be really encountering and to be meeting as real people. This is a very wide and demanding concept. It is a task for generations and we have only just begun. In fact, we are still focusing too much on the western, northern and southern parts, but we must reach and connect the larger Europe.

However, the task is not only a single European programme but a world education issue because we all live in an interdependent world. Thus, the framework is not just Europe but Europe in the One World. We are aware that many people in the wide world feel threatened by Europe, by *die Festung Europa (fortress Europe)*, as it is put in German. We have got to make sure that authenticity of relation through languages is not only serving the purposes of our little neighbourhoods but the world-wide purposes of humankind.

The concept of inter-(cross-)cultural learning

The next concept is to be dealt with in greater detail: the notion of intercultural or cross-cultural learning. Let me say right at the beginning that I am not particularly interested in any kind of terminology debate here. There are, of course, a number of meaningful, different terms: international, crossnational, transnational, intercultural, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and others.

What I am looking for is how we can link up people with people from different cultures through their languages. Let me quickly explain what I mean. Some of you will have seen this diagram before.

Concepts   What lies beyond   Language

the learner

unfamiliar   familiar
strange   OTHER   recognizable
CULTURES

Comprehending   Understanding

INTERPRETING AND EXPRESSING

Uttering   Transmitting

             The Learner   Talents
Interests   with her/his   Aptitudes
Knowledge   Needs
Experience   Socio-cultural
Learning potential   background
CULTURE
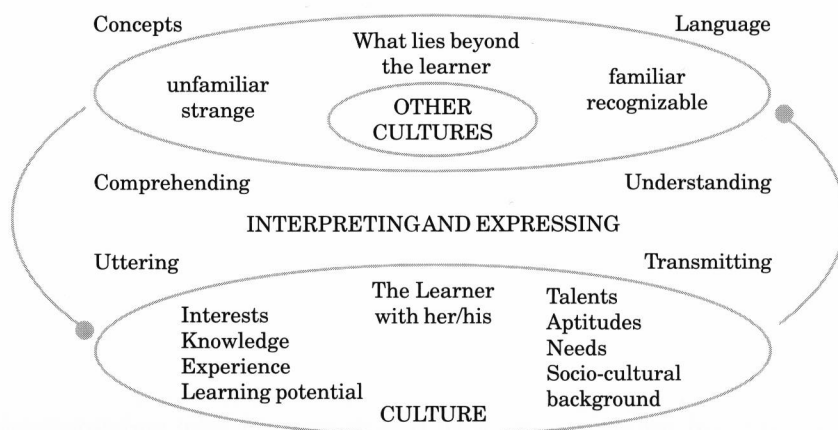
Let us take a look at the learner. She is never an unknown person, an empty vessel or tabula rasa. The learner always has interests and knowledge and comes along with experience. She has talents, even though some schoolteachers do not believe in them. She has aptitudes and needs, she comes from a socio-cultural background. She is a member of her culture, her parent and peer cultures, indeed she has several cultures. She has a great learning potential and she will learn lots of things in her lifetime but not necessarily in school. Perhaps she will learn languages outside the school. She carries along with her a huge wealth of experience, knowledge, attitude and skill.

What lies beyond her is other people's experience and cultures. She gets in touch with them through language in concepts. Language and some concepts may be quite familiar and recognizable. For example, this morning I was so pleased to be able to understand the Dutch Secretary of State when he opened this conference because, in my family, there is a sort of latent understanding of the Dutch language, which we learned when my parents lived here before the war. I recognised a lot and identified familiar items. However, a great number of things will be quite unfamiliar and very strange or exotically alien. Some of the things may be 'false friends', so we seem to understand but do not. What do we mean here by 'culture' or 'education'? What does 'bread' mean to you? Coming back from another country, I love to go to the bread shop and get a proper, real piece of German bread with crust on!

Lots of things seem to be the same. Lots of things are different. In our international Coca-Cola societies, of course, many things are becoming more uniform. Yet cultures are defined by being different from others. It is their nature. Encountering another culture means that the learner is moving towards the unknown and unfamiliar. But there is always also a movement from the unknown towards the learner. Very often, this is what school actually does, in most cases through text as a carrier.

In school and education, we are trying to make this a kind of balanced circle of access. We want our learners to be curious and learn from their own culture in order to come to grips with other cultures through acts of communicative competence unlocking language and concepts. The activity is one of comprehending and understanding which, in fact, is the negotiation of meaning and interpreting. The German term for it is perhaps a little more accurate: *Deutung* (interpreting), as in *Deutungsprozesse. Man deutet die andere Wirklichkeit, von der eigenen Wirlichkeit und Wahrnehmung aus* (interpreting other people's realities setting off from one's own reality and perception). Thus the process of interpreting and of making sense is one of the two sides.

The other side is uttering and expressing, using language for communication. Our education model, in fact, turns out to be a communication model concerning the activities and skills of comprehending and using language productively in speech and in writing. Through acts of understanding and of uttering/transmitting the learner gets in touch with other cultures.

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In German, this process is called *Aneignung* (appropriation), the verb is *sich etwas aneignen* or *sich zu eigen machen* (to appropriate, to familiarize, to become familiar with) and indeed, it is just another term for learning. The English term 'communicating' may be regarded as a little vague and I prefer to use the term *Verständigung* or 'negotiation of meaning' of *Auseinandersetzun*. Consequently, 'communication' or 'communicating' has three parts: *Verstehen* which is understanding and comprehending, *sich verständlich machen,*, to make oneself understood, and *sich verständigen*, to communicate. All three are included in *Verständigung: Vom Eigenem zum Fremden zum Eigenem zurück*, from my own familiar basis to the other foreign one, and back again. Intercultural communication is the essence of all learning and teaching of foreign languages.

Incidentally, this is where *Landeskunde (cultural studies)* comes in. We are dealing with relations, perceptions and interpretations not just 'facts'. The knowledge of English Gothic cathedrals may be fine if you are a student or lover of Gothic cathedrals but cannot be, *a priori*, an unalterable part of a *Landeskunde* curriculum. In the communicative approach, *Landeskunde* is seen as a negotiable world. Why are things and people the way they are? Why am I the way I am? How can we connect? What happens, what changes will have to take place? *Landeskunde* is just another term for intercultural interpretation and relations. This is making all the difference to what we teach and how we teach. And it affects the teacher.

The concept of (re)discovering experience, creativity and imagination

After having been a little more explicit on the notion of intercultural learning as the basis of all foreign language tuition, let me just name the other two elements in my survey of the evolution of the communicative approach. One has come into mind more recently. I am speaking of the rediscovery of experiential learning and of creativity and imagination. At present, we are witnessing a revolution of classroom methodology and the growth of creative methods, of teaching literature through the learner and from the learner: creative writing, *konkrete Poesie*. We are, in fact, redefining the aims and objectives of literary teaching and it is fascinating to observe what is going on. *Lernen mit Herz, Kopf und Hand* seems to be a general motto reviving Heinrich Pestalozzi's concept of 'learning with heart, hand and mind'.

We are rediscovering this through experience and activity learning; the method is learning by doing and action research. Handing out the thesauruses of knowledge to the young crowds does not equip young people any more. We must get away from instructional learning philosophies.

The recent growth of creative methodology is incredible, taking into account all the new games, activities, simulations, story telling, etc. It must be

said that this is especially apparent in English Language Teaching. But there is a lot of transfer going on and, indeed, creative methodologies are available for other languages as well, e.g. for German and for French as foreign languages. There is a powerful movement which aims at taking the learner seriously and, at the same time, include fun and entertainment in language teaching. In our generation, to most of us, language learning was no fun at all. There is a lot to learn.

Developing guidelines, curricula, materials and methods

The final element in my survey is the notion that all or a great deal of this has found its way into official curricula and guidelines in many countries in Europe already. The task is now to familiarize teachers and learners with it, but not in top-down processes of 'giving'. If you approach teachers in the old instructional style, you can foretell what will happen: they will take it and leave it, like the colleague who said to me, the other day, not in an unfriendly way:

> 'You see, I have seen many things come and go. There was the grammar/translation method, there was the audio-visual approach, there was the transformational grammar approach, there was the Piepho-communicative approach. I have tried them all out but they did not really result in anything better. Now I have arrived at believing in my own method and style. You cannot impress me with the latest modernisms.'

The communicative approach is not a dogma or *une méthode*. It is, in fact, requesting teachers to take the learner seriously. It is an education move, a philosophy rather than a method. But it is true to say that a lot of it has found its way into official documents in various countries, supported by two decades of Council of Europe professional co-operation. The work is there, we can use and develop it further.

3   Teacher development and growth

> Teacher development: a lifelong process of growth.
> Teacher qualities: attitudes, knowledge and skills.
> Personal and professional development - institutional guidance and support.
> Inter-(cross-)cultural requirements: learning about oneself and others.
> Teacher qualifications for inter-(cross-)cultural foreign language teaching (see list on page 33).

Talking about teacher development and growth, then, is not starting from scratch. We are on solid ground, a great treasure of experience in Europe is available. This is why it is so exciting to start acts of co-operation. We are uniting as people who are knowledgeable and want to share the knowledge and the experience.

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Yet when I come to talk about teacher development, I'm afraid I must show you one of my best-loved lesson texts from an English coursebook:

> *'Good morning, everybody. Listen to me please. I am your teacher. You are my pupils. I teach you every day. Yes, this is what I do. I teach you English. Every day you learn English from me. You come here, you sit down at your desks, you listen to me and you speak English to me. You all learn English. You all like the English language. This pupil learns English. That pupil learns English. Those pupils learn English. Everybody learns English. Everybody likes English. English is a beautiful language.'*
>
> *Please notice:*
>
> | I
you
we
they | speak
learn
teach | English |
> |---|---|---|
> | he
she | speaks
learns
teaches | Portuguese |

It was taken from a book somewhere in the world. It could be from Bavaria or Hesse or indeed Portugal, no matter. We aren't teaching in this way any more and perhaps nobody is. But some of us, how many (?), were taught in this way. I'm afraid it is not a caricature but quite a realistic picture in some countries, including my own. It is, of course, the old image of teaching: the teacher sharing out goodies, language in our case, to the kids - a word and grammar exercise handled by the teacher as an instructor. If you are getting behind the grammar of the language you will be able to speak it and even like it eventually and experience the beauty of it. A miracle, it would seem. The teacher is creating the pupils in his own image. Who knows, perhaps they will become language teachers later?

We are talking about a most powerful tradition reflecting what can be called *die lateinische Gefangenshaft des modernen Fremdsprachenunterrichtes* (the Latin imprisonment of modern foreign language teaching) that we all in Europe carry along with us. We must certainly do something about it when we come to deal with teacher development as a lifelong process of growth.

Talking constructively and positively of teachers, I believe they have qualities, in fact, you can define the qualities in what I call the 'diamond', as in the following diagram:

Personal development   Institutional guidance and support

ATTITUDES
KNOWLEDGE
SKILLS

personal   professional

Experience of teachers   Needs of learners   Knowledge and practice systems
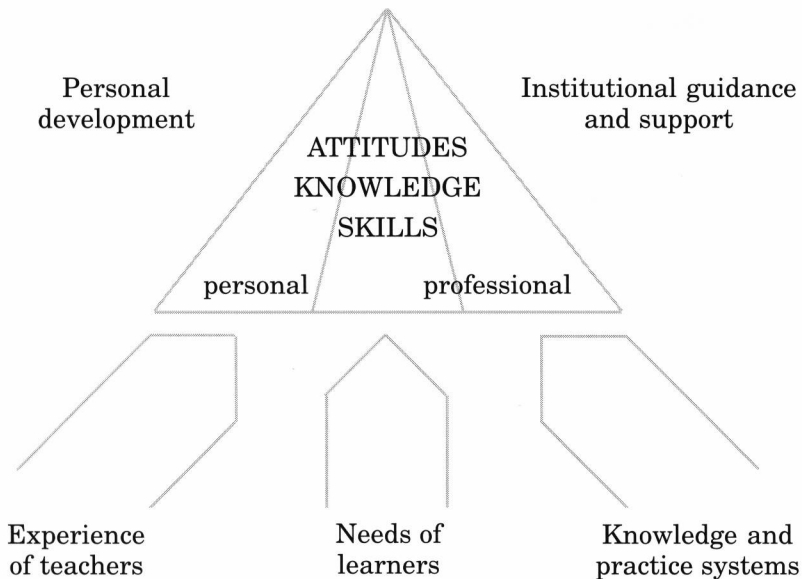
The diamond embraces attitudes, knowledge and skills in a lifelong process of growth. Attitudes seem to be coming first. If we do not have a love of children and a love of people, we cannot teach. If we do not want to teach, there is no chance. If we are not curious, if we do not want to know about other people and about ourselves, handling communicative classrooms will be difficult. Yet attitudes cannot be engineered; they can be acquired but not taught.

Knowledge, on the other hand, can be taught, and a lot must be done about it in order to transmit knowledge in a way which is suitable to people so that they can actually grasp what is necessary for language learners. Likewise, the appropriate skills can be trained or acquired through practise and experience exchange. In doing so, we must observe that there is always a personal and a general side. The personal side of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills concerns the teacher as an individual. You cannot double her up, she is a unique personality. She has her attitudes, her knowledge, her skills and her development is personal development. In fact, in German, this is what is meant by *Bildung*. The term 'education' seems to be the nearest we can find in English.

Most, if not all of us here are looking at teacher preparation from the other, the institutional and professional side. In our institutions and agencies – national, regional and international – it is our task to support and sometimes initiate and guide processes of personal teacher development in the growth of their attitudes, knowledge and skills.

But this may be regarded as a very idealistic and single-sided picture, and we must be aware of very forceful influence systems, the most powerful of them being the experience of the teachers. What do they bring along? **35**

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What are their practical, personal, professional, systematic pieces of experience which have to be taken into account? The diamond does not exist on its own.

The next stream of influence is the need of learners, viz. the objective and the subjective needs and learner autonomy. This throws a light on the diamond, the attitudes required of teachers, the appropriate knowledge and skills. How can the needs of the learners be taken into consideration? How can they be made the focal point?

The third influential factors are the knowledge as it develops and the practice systems. There is always new knowledge which is constantly coming out of and flowing into our educational systems. Knowledge is administered and made into learning objectives, targets and curricula. Universities, governments, school boards, the inspectorates, examination systems, regulations and recommendations deal with all this, observed and influenced by societal participatory bodies which are, in fact, also influencing the system of the professional qualifications of the teachers concerning their attitudes, knowledge and skills. Thus, defining teacher education and training objectives is a very comprehensive task geared to the overall quality of interculturalness:

> A teacher preparing for intercultural language teaching should be able:
>
> • to learn about her/himself, her/his beliefs, motivations, background, history, social environment, culture and intentions. It is experience-based learning which primarily deals with his (her) *own* experiences, what is there and what can be gained;
>
> • to learn about others, their beliefs, motivations, background, history, social environment, culture and intentions. It is the other people's experiences which the learner has got to come to grips with so that the process of perceiving other people's experiences opens up a new level of experience-making.

For some years, in my department and in international groups, we have discussed a catalogue of attitudes, knowledge and skills which I am offering to this conference, too:

Qualifications for inter-(cross-)cultural teaching

(i)   Attitudes

1   Teachers who are meant to educate learners towards international and intercultural learning must be international and intercultural learners themselves.

2   Teachers should be prepared to consider how others see them and be curious about themselves and others.

3   Teachers should be prepared to experiment and negotiate in order to achieve understanding on both sides.

4   Teachers should be prepared to share meanings, experience and emotions with both people from other countries and their own students in the classroom.

5   Teachers should be prepared to take an active part in the search for the modern language contribution to international understanding and peace-making at home and abroad.

6   Teachers should aim to adopt the role and function of a social and intercultural interpreter, not an ambassador.

(ii) Knowledge

1   Teachers should have and seek knowledge about the socio-cultural environment and background of the target language community(ies) or country(ies).

2   Teachers should have and seek knowledge about their own country and community and how others see them.

3   Teachers' knowledge should be active knowledge ready to apply and interpret and to make accessible to the learning situations and styles of their students.

4   Teachers should know how language works in communication and how it is used successfully for understanding. They should know about the shortcomings of language and foreign language users and how misunderstandings can be avoided.

(iii) Skills

1   Teachers should have and develop further appropriate communication skills in the foreign language suitable for negotiation both in the classroom and in international communication situations at home and abroad.

2   Teachers should have and develop further text skills, i.e. the ability to deal with authentic data in all media (print, audio, audio-visual) and in face-to-face interaction.

3   Teachers should have and develop further the necessary skills to connect the student experience with ideas, things and objects outside their direct reach and to create learning environments which lend themselves to experience learning, negotiation and experiment.
(Edelhoff in Baumgratz/Stephan 1987: 76f.)

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4   Teacher education and training (teacher preparation and in-service): initiating and guiding cross-cultural learning

> Living language links, materials and cross-cultural activities: creating and supporting links across borders.
> Methods for cross-cultural teaching and learning in classrooms and abroad:
> • Reviewing textbooks critically (to begin with)
> • Creating links of all kinds:
> -   Direct encounter *'contacts sans voyages'*
> -   Their life in our country
> -   Exchanges, twinnings, correspondence (individuals and groups)
> -   Electronic mail and fax
> -   Exploration tasks, e.g. the *Frankfurt Airport Project, English Round the Corner, Contacts across borders*
> -   Staff connections, internationally mixed teaching teams.

Intercultural objectives and experiential learning feed the curriculum for both teachers and learners. The link is through attitudes, knowledge and skills. The vehicle is intercultural experience and activity, the doing and the trying out of things. The role of INSETT is to accompany, initiate, guide and support the growth processes of individuals and groups.

INSETT is commonly understood as everything assisting a teacher's work in and out of the classroom. Most teachers in our countries were trained in some way to be foreign language teachers, but very few were educated to be intercultural learners and communicative classroom teachers. For many the training phase is a long time ago and the university study or college were following the parameters of nineteenth-century philology. The new orientations require new qualities. Thus, in many cases INSETT actually is teacher preparation - for teachers who are on the job already.

In some cases and some countries, like Germany, INSETT is organised as the third, lifelong phase of a three-phase teacher education scheme, with an initial stage at university, a preparatory stage at college or seminar, and an institutionalised third phase organised and supported by professional agencies at school, regional and national level. However teacher education is organised, the overall aim of intercultural learning requires us to consider teachers, pupils and classrooms with a special focus on the teacher as a learner.

Working for communicative and intercultural classrooms and INSETT over the years, we have found that creating and supporting links across borders, *living language links* as I should like to call them, have been a most powerful driving force. They can be *'contacts avec voyages'* or *'contacts sans voyages'*, encounters with or without direct contact. In fact, the *'sans voyages'* has

proved to be a basic mode because we cannot transport multitudes of people around the world all the time. Indeed, we have got to think of both and make language links through materials and cross-cultural activities in the classroom, thus preparing for direct relationships.

Intercultural activities may be cooking a Spanish Omelette or French *'crêpe bretonne'*, organising a German Day, a carnival or an *Oktoberfest*, and preparing a cooked English breakfast at a German school or *Frankfurter Würstchen* at an English school. These are all right as starting points but they can only be a beginning, an *entreé*. The cross-cultural activity proper is using text and real data in the light of intercultural learning. What do we learn about ourselves? What do we learn about others? How do we establish a relationship through these pieces of foreign language?

Methods for intercultural teaching and learning are mainly in classrooms. Establishing and maintaining *'contacts sans voyages'* consists of penfriends' letters, class correspondences, video letters, tape-slide shows, faxes, electronic mail, joint newspaper projects and so on. 'Everybody likes to receive a parcel', says Barry Jones in his early paper on 'making contact' (1984: 1). Teachers in Hesse derived their *cross-channel swap shops* from this exchanging and writing about anything interesting between school classes abroad: real things, favourite foods, recipes, self-made newspapers and brochures, video clips and thematic packages on their schools and environments, the times of the year, festivals and young people's interests and concern areas. The new media like fax and E-mail are opening up new possibilities and more immediate feedback. It is through the experience of direct and authentic encounter that textbook chapters and texts will be perceived in a different manner. They are no longer the one and only source of information and teachers and students are learning to look at them critically.

Of course, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as the saying goes. There is nothing like a real visit and direct encounter. I am talking here of all the group and school visits, tandems, partnerships, twinnings and the exploratory and research work young people are conducting abroad solving real tasks and looking behind the scenes. It is not only the shiny sights they are seeing but also the side alleys, perceiving the sounds and the smells, the signs and the colours, looking for the typical and the unexpected, the familiar and the exotica and sharing everyday life with real people for a short period of time. Educationally speaking we are proposing to follow an holistic approach, or in German *erlebte Landeskunde*.

Let me add a word of warning here. Many of us have experienced and led exchanges and visits, and we know that it is not good enough simply to put two parties of foreign people together, close the door and let them get on with each other. We have learnt from Franco-German co-operation exchange work which takes place every year that if there is no active pedagogy, people will not constructively learn but will, in fact, corroborate

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their prejudices. It is not enough to simply send young people around a little foreign town with a questionnaire designed by adults to tick off so-called items of interest. In the afternoon they can go to the tennis court and swimming pool. Later at night they are all flocking to the local disco.

An active exchange pedagogy will work out tasks (not exercises), i.e. exploratory assignments for national and internationally mixed groups that enable the visitors to look behind the scenes and get in touch with real people, real things and real issues.

Exploration has become a strong innovation technique in many European countries and international working groups. I am referring to all the projects where teachers and learners are exploring language environments, both at home and abroad. If you take a multinational and multicultural city like Frankfurt on the river Main it buzzes with languages. There is English round the corner, there is Italian in the street. You can actually see and speak to people in foreign languages without moving more than 200 yards. Perhaps you have heard of the *Keukenhof* project, '*Sag es mit Blumen*', where Dutch youngsters are trying out their German by interviewing the visiting crowds from the Ruhr district coaches who are marvelling at the beautiful tulips.

A prototype of this has been the *Frankfurt Airport Project* which was first developed in 1985 and repeated many times. Young school children from the local comprehensive are preparing for a day at the International Airport putting questions and cue cards together, training the language of asking, learning the vocabulary of travel, daily life and hobbies and role-playing interview situations. Then they go off and try it all out, recording their interviews with a travelling salesman from Japan, a nurse from the United States, a Norwegian flying pilot and, by sheer accident, the Mayor of Nairobi. Later, back in the classroom, they work on their interviews, transcribe some of their own audio texts, prepare pictures, posters and captions, produce their own personal project books and report on their findings in the (foreign) English language.

This experiential project approach has many variants researching international '*recontre*' places round the corner. Learners are actually using the language they are learning in school outside the classrooms. Getting away from the stale old textbooks makes all the difference to learners and teachers.

The real thing is always better: *Deutsch um die Ecke*, English round the corner, Italian abroad and Finnish in Paris: we are stepping outside our normal routines, trying out the little foreign language we have acquired, as early possible. Tasks are there to really explore things and find a personal solution, getting away from the old model of language teaching where questions are asked and nobody is really interested in the answer.

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5   Tasks, working forums and agency support

> Experiential tasks.
> Multi-national, cross-cultural learning workshops:
> *   The exploratory *"outing"* course type, tandeming, multinational courses
> *   *English at Work* and teacher feedback.
> Networking
> *   European co-operation programmes
> *   Principles and rules.

Experiential learning, researching environments at home and abroad and being interculturally active require an active foreign language teaching strategy, and teachers must be offered opportunities to experience this type of learning themselves. At this point I should like to refer back to teacher education as development and growth. Teachers must be helped to develop further, not only for their own sake but for the sake of developing communicative interculturally active classrooms.

We want this to happen at informal and at institutional level. Ideally, the informal and the institutional go together. There is a lot of talk in Europe about the superiority of in-school in-service teacher education and development. This is very important indeed if classrooms and teaching practices are considered properly. One form of operation, however, should not be placed against the other. Teachers must have on offer a whole range of complementary INSETT events. We should have regional meetings, workshops and conferences as well as residential ones at regional, national and, indeed, international level, like this splendid meeting.

Actually, with our internationalness in mind, going places is one of the prerequisites. Yes, professionally, we must travel more and use our weekends, I'm afraid, because we have teaching and office jobs to do Monday to Friday. Going abroad is not just sightseeing but working together solving experiential tasks. Some models of this are already available, a lot more will have to be developed. INSETT methods development is only beginning to evolve. It deals with adult professional learning and should receive European attention. It is in this area that the possibilities and tasks of the LINGUA project may specially lie. This process should be building on and joining the know-how of Europeans and be supported by materials development.

It is essential that these tasks are multinational and not mono- or binational only. Experiential teacher courses like the one I mentioned before, which experiences multi-language situations in the streets of Frankfurt will have to be multinationally recruited and staffed. In a workshop of this kind *Sichtwechsel* (changing of views) is the leading philosophy. Danes and French teachers in England, Poles and Dutch people in Germany, Swedes and Hungarians in Holland: Triangular relationships promise more growth in intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills.

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Let me, by way of example, mention the HILF *'outing'* course type through which, in a very short period of time, 12 days in fact, we are initiating teachers to do street research and use journalistic methods, working like radio or television reporters and editors in England. Their small project groups report back to the daily evening plenaries and, on the last days of the course (and indeed in follow-up home events) put together thematic dossiers and do concrete lesson planning. Teachers, in small working groups (preferably internationally mixed), whose routines are those of textbook work and frontal classroom interaction find themselves as experiential learners in intercultural learning situations.

Let me give you a little of the teacher feedback from the diaries which teachers do on these courses. They are personal diaries and we are using only those which are given to us, the course team, for INSETT evaluation and information purposes, like this one:

A woman teacher (aged 44) writes:

> *That was much better today, little walking and much talking. I came across a well-known phenomenon. Like Bill, who was already well above 60 when I met him this man today aged somewhere between 60 and 65 had a subtle kind of humour and something which may be called wisdom, at least he seemed to me to be wiser than others, wiser than many German elderly people. Maybe it has something to do with war experiences because he stressed so much the necessity to meet and to get to know people of different countries to reduce or do away with prejudices to realize that they are not more peculiar than one's neighbour, actually that they are people like 'you and me' no reason to look down upon them to despise or hate them. It seemed as if there was a strong wish to live together with others in harmony, a good idea I think. When I think of so many Germans who are so quickly ready to label people either strangers, foreigners or just people of a different age! Of course you'll find such attitudes over here too, but it's good to meet somebody like him. At least there are some people who think about 'international' relationships.*

Or another colleague (about the same age) who reacts to the project approach:

> *I haven't been writing since Monday so I guess project work is rather exhausting. It was rather difficult to do it 'the other way round' i.e. to do a case study and see where it leads to. Normally you start with the topic and work from the general to the particular filling in a couple of examples to show or clarify what the theoretical ideas mean. But it was worth the effort to try to avoid the usual way. And actually this is the same way as I teach.'*

A third teacher (a woman aged 42) writes about emotional contacts:

> *Sometimes I succeed in establishing some kind of emotional contact with them, it is not just project work or role play, but encountering people - which is also what students are interested in in Germany; most of them have had enough of Landeskunde topics, at least the Oberstufe pupils, they are interested in the human, private aspects of life, in details, personalities, visual-aesthetic impressions. We talked to and recorded a street artist, and Mike and Jon the guitarists - they are quite professional musicians, better musicians than the trio, and fine personalities.'*

from 'Participant Diaries. The Bath Outing 1989', ed. J. Roberts, Bell School, Bath/HLF(ms)

These teachers, like many others on these courses, were fully prepared to invest in their relational and attitudinal professional learning, not just the factual feedback entries. We certainly cannot (and must not) engineer attitudinal changes. But we can create opportunities for the teachers to learn independently and develop.

It stands to reason that all this requires a lot of organising and background work. I am certain that there are lots of places of excellence in Europe but hitherto they are more or less unconnected. What we ought to arrive at is networks. Let me then, in closing, introduce you to what I think networks are all about, and offer a number of points for discussion.

Networks for teacher development

1   Networks are functional and purpose-oriented.
       The purpose must be clearly stated and shared by all concerned.

2   Networks are non-hierarchical.

3   Network members are autonomous.
       They determine the amount of interest and their factual contribution according to their own purposes and rules.

4   There is no fixed order in roles or proceedings.

5   Members may initiate or run projects and offer participation in the network.

6   The network is an open form of co-operation.
       It can be joined by new members and/or draw on sub-systems or other networks.

7   Networks do not 'belong' to any one member.

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8   Networks must be specially sponsored, resourced and serviced.

9   Networks are non-competitive.
       All members have something special to contribute. It is everybody's
       conviction that if one unites one's efforts one can achieve more.

10   Networks are based on personal links.
       It is professionals in their institutions who co-operate rather than
       anonymous institutions themselves.

11   Basic attitudes are trust, open-mindedness and a sense of concrete
       co-operation.

12   To build and service networks takes awareness, time, energy and
       money, and sometimes a good deal of lobbying in one's own
       institution.

13   If a project is successful, it has many parents and casts a rewarding
       light both on individuals and on the institutions.

It seems that networks built on these premises can help us to tackle the
task of internationally oriented in-service teacher education and training.

Managing change: from vision to implementation

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Introduction

Whether in commerce or education, the need for successfully managing change has become one of the major features of this era. Even without our conscious intervention, change occurs around us all the time. At worst, we find ourselves struggling to cope with those changes over which we have had no control. At best, however, we attempt to pre-empt such unwilled change by identifying a need for change and making planned interventions to bring the change about. In this discussion of change, I will be considering this second type of change, which is sometimes termed *innovation* to distinguish it from the kind of change that occurs without the conscious intervention of those adopting or being affected by it.

During the past decade, one of the most significant changes to occur in both the commercial and educational sectors has been the emphasis on Quality Assurance under the influence of the Total Quality Management (Drummond 1992) movements, the origins of which can be traced to the work of Edward Deming in the 1950s, whose philosophy is founded upon three basic precepts:

- Customer orientation
- Continuous improvement
- Quality is determined by the system.

Briefly, quality management in its contemporary form can be summed up as follows:

> ✓ Recognition that customers' needs and organisational goals are inseparable.
>
> ✓ Continuous satisfaction of both internal and external customers' requirements.
>
> ✓ Getting it right first time, every time, on time.
>
> ✓ Philosophy of continuous improvement.
>
> ✓ Processes and systems which:
> - promote excellence
> - prevent error
> - align every aspect to customers' needs.
>
> ✓ Commitment from the top all through the organisation.

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The implementation of quality management in an organisation is itself an instance of innovation, while the emphasis on continuous improvement implies a state of continuous change.

The implementation of change often depends on vision on the part of management. Briefly, vision answers the question: 'What would I like the future to hold for this organisation?' Leaders who have a clear response to this question, and who are able to listen to the responses of others, serve everyone within the organisation, while clarity from the top allows everyone at every level to be more creative and productive (O'Connor 1993: 3).

Fullan, in the revised edition of *The new meaning of Educational Change* (Fullan 1991) emphasizes the significance of vision formation in initiating and sustaining educational change, citing Bennis and Nanus, who make it clear that vision formulation is a dynamic interactive process:

> *All of the leaders to whom we spoke seemed to have been masters at selecting, synthesizing, and articulating an appropriate vision of the future... If there is a spark of genius in the leadership function at all, it must lie in this transcending ability, a kind of magic, to assemble - out of all the variety of images, signals, forecasts and alternatives - a clearly articulated vision of the future that is at once single, easily understood, clearly desirable, and energizing.*
> (Bennis and Nanus 1985: 101)

However, while it is widely agreed that vision is crucial, Fullan notes that:

> *The practice or vision-building is not well understood. It is a highly sophisticated dynamic process, which few organisations can sustain.*
> (Fullan 1991: 83)

In fact, successful change depends on more than vision from top, as Fullan is not alone in acknowledging. O'Connor points out that although responsibility for creating organisation-wide change may rest on the shoulders of one individual, the implementation of change depends on effective team work. Furthermore, the success of any change depends on whether the people involved are willing to alter their behaviour in order to achieve an organisational priority. Thus, the successful management of change is a complex business, involving individual as well as social and organisational factors.

1   Reasons for change

What is interesting and is of prime importance in understanding and managing change is why and how innovation takes place. Since the focus of this conference is educational rather than commercial, let us consider some of the insights from the writings on educational change.

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In her paper on why teachers change, Kathy Bailey (1992) cites a set of 'guiding principles' offered by Brindley and Hood (1990) based on curricula innovations in Australia. They clearly see political as well as individual and professional factors as being influential in stimulating and promoting change in the public education sector.

1   For a change to get under way, there has to be an educational need on a political agenda.

2   Rational argument alone will not bring about change.

3   Individuals need to experience the change personally.

4   The intention of the proponents of curriculum change will frequently be misunderstood.

5   The social and political climate in which the change takes place will significantly affect the extent of implementation.

6   Curriculum implementation requires adequate support and co-ordination.

7   Successful change requires a positive professional atmosphere.

8   Change has to be supported by ongoing professional development.

9   Innovations need local advocates.

Brindley and Hood (1990: 247) conclude that:

> ...bringing about any kind of educational change is an extremely long, complex and difficult business...

a point which is confirmed time and time again in the writing on educational change.

2   Attributes of changes

In the change and innovation literature, a number of attributes of innovations have been suggested as correlating with the rate and success of diffusion (Kelly 1980):

•   feasibility (the match between institutional resources and the innovation)

•   acceptability (the match between institutional philosophy and innovation)

•   relevance (the match between perceived student needs and the innovation).

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3.   A 'zone of innovation'

Fredericka Stoller (1992) set out to test these and other attributes of successful innovation in language teaching by surveying innovations in selected higher education intensive English programmes in the USA. She used a self-administered survey with informants from 60 such programmes, and she conducted case study interviews with a sub-set of intensive English programme staff from those programmes which were perceived to be extremely innovative, but which were also demographically distinct. Based on these surveys, she analysed the perceived attributes, and grouped them together as three factors:

Factor 1:   Balance divergence of power
Factor 2:   Dissatisfaction factor
Factor 3:   Viability factor.

The balanced divergence factor combined six characteristics:

* explicitness

* difficulty/complexity

* compatibility with past practices

* visibility

* flexibility

* originality.

She concludes that while explicitness and visibility are important in stimulating favourable attitudes towards an innovation, an excess of either can hamper innovative efforts and she suggests that innovations that are too visible can threaten individuals within the system who are satisfied with things as they are.

She also finds that difficulty/complexity are similarly perceived. If an innovation is seen as being too simple, the innovation may be regarded as not different enough from current practice. Consequently, innovative efforts will not be seen as worthwhile, confirming Fullan (1991: 63) citing Clark, Lotton and Astuto (1984: 56) who found that 'simple changes are the ones school systems are least likely to adopt and implement successfully', largely because they are not perceived to be worth the effort. Stoller also found that difficulty as such was not seen to be the problem as far as her informants were concerned, but she notes that this was in part related to the context in which they worked, since the organisations concerned had a problem-solving orientation and, in Fullan's terms, had the *readiness* (i.e. the practical and conceptual capacity) to initiate, develop or adopt a given innovation.

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In the innovation literature, it is suggested that there are six perceived attributes, which Stoller has listed under Factor 1. These are either positively or negatively related to adoption rate. Based on the analysis of her data, Stoller believes that adoption rates depend on what she calls a perceived 'middle range' of factors. This means that:

> *...when these six attributes are 'sufficiently' present and fall within a perceived zone of innovation, adoption rates are likely to increase. Conversely, their perceived absence or excess can be detrimental to adoption rates because they can lead to unfavourable attitudes towards the innovation and subsequently undermine potential support for the innovation.*

<div align="right">(Stoller 1992: 188)</div>

As to flexibility, she noted that a certain amount of flexibility is required to motivate individuals to accept an innovation, but that if the innovation is seen as being too flexible, it may be rejected. She concludes that 'because some degree of difficulty and complexity is inevitable in the development and implementation of an innovation, some degree of flexibility is required to ensure the ability to overcome unpredicted obstacles' (Stoller 1992: 148).

When it comes to judging an innovation, perceived compatibility with existing practices is usually cited as being important. Stoller, however, found that perceived compatibility can have adverse effects on the implementation of innovations in the IEP context. Innovations which are too similar to what is already being done may not even be perceived as being innovations, and support for an innovation may be jeopardised if it is perceived as being either too compatible or not compatible enough with current practice. Likewise, an innovation must be seen to be sufficiently original, so that it is novel, but not so original as to lie outside acceptable norms, conventions and expectations of the context in which it is to be introduced.

Her second combination of attributes, the dissatisfaction factor, combined dissatisfaction with and improvement over past practices. While her respondents perceived these two attributes as hindering implementation least of all, they also saw them as facilitating the implementation of an innovation to a large extent. Indeed, Stoller feels that the greater the perceived dissatisfaction with current practices, the more likely an innovation will be favourably supported (cf. Bailey 1992 and Nunan 1989).

Her third factor combines practicality, feasibility and usefulness, her respondents tending to make little distinction between the three. All three attributes were seen to have a strong facilitating effect on the implementation of specific innovations.

Turning to variables within the institution itself, Stoller's findings were notable in the light of the importance that Fullan (1991) gives to support from administrators, school principles and teachers. Stoller found that administrator and faculty interest and involvement were perceived to play an important role in the implementation of innovations, whereas the availability of financial resources and student interest and involvement were given much lower importance.

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According to Stoller, there is a three-stage process leading to favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards an innovation, commencing with an internally initiated dissatisfaction factor: innovative ideas will emerge from the recognition of dissatisfaction with current practice; Stage 2 involves a viability factor whereby innovative ideas are supported by individuals both within and outside the organisation if the innovation is perceived as useful, feasible and practical; in Stage 3, a balanced divergence factor is invoked whereby the innovation will earn the support of outsiders if it is being perceived to fall within the 'zone of innovation'. In other words, it is perceived as being neither excessively divergent from nor too similar to current practices.

4   A context-independent framework for innovation

Numa Markee (1993 a & b), another researcher working within an American university-based intensive English programme, has derived ten principles of innovation from his case study of innovative ESL curriculum work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne. He takes the view that:

> *...while making change happen will always be an inexact science at best, I believe that change agents who bear these principles in mind will be more likely to achieve their goals in the long run than those who do not.*

Principle 1:   Innovation is a complex phenomenon.

Principle 2:   It always takes longer to make changes happen than originally anticipated.

Principle 3:   Good communication among participants is a key to successful innovation.

Principle 4:   The likelihood that change agents' proposals will be misunderstood is high.

Principle 5:   The successful implementation of innovations is based on an eight-step process:

- Identify a problem

- Devise a potential solution

- Inform adopters
-
  Consult with users to clarify any misunderstandings and to solicit feedback and suggestions for improvement

- Modify the proposed solution in the light of the feedback received from teachers

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- Arrange for whatever training/develop whatever new supporting resources are necessary

- Implement the solution on a trial basis

- Evaluate the solution when enough experience has been gained and redesign if necessary.

Principle 6: Innovation is an inherently messy, unpredictable business

Principle 7: It is important for implementers to have a stake in the innovations which they are expected to implement. Teachers are much more likely to commit themselves to using an innovation if:

- they have a clear idea of what it is

- they believe that it addresses a real need

- they believe that the costs of innovating (for example, in terms of time, energy, commitment to learning new skills, etc.) will be outweighed by the advantages that will accrue to them as a result of adopting the innovation (for example, a sense of greater professionalism, increased recognition and job satisfaction, etc.).

Principle 8: It is important for change agents to work through opinion leaders who can influence their peers.

Principle 9: In order to promote innovation, it is important for change agents to encourage experimentation by teachers.

Principle 10: Innovation involves a mix of professional and administrative change.

5   System-wide change

Stoller confined her study to the characteristics of an innovation within specialised teaching institutions. Fullan (1991) shifts the setting of educational change to a broader stage. He begins by noting the importance of having and communicating a vision of the envisaged change, and then he goes on to list three sets of interactive factors affecting implementation:

A   *Characteristics of change*

1   Need
2   Clarity
3   Complexity
4   Quality/practicality

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B   *Local characteristics*

5   District
6   Community
7   Principal
8   Teacher

C   *External factors*

9. Government and other agencies.

Clarity about goals and means is, as Fullan notes, a perennial problem in the change process:

> *Even when there is agreement that some kind of change is needed, as when the teachers want to improve some area of the curriculum or improve the school as a whole, the adopted change may not be at all clear about what teachers should do differently.*
> (Fullan 1991)

He notes that proposals for change may be deliberately unclear. This may be especially the case where there is a fragile agreement among interested parties. The result can be what he calls *false clarity* which occurs:

> *...when change is interpreted in an oversimplified way; that is, the proposed change has more to it than people perceive or realize.*
> (Fullan 1991)

He points out that whereas very simple and insignificant changes can be very clear, difficult and more worthwhile ones may not be amenable to easy clarification.

> *Complex changes are defined by the difficulty and extent of change required of the individuals responsible for implementation. Such changes require a sophisticated array of activities, structures, diagnoses, teaching strategies, and philosophical understanding if effective implementation is to be achieved.*
> (Fullan 1991: 71)

But because complex changes call for more to be attempted, more may be accomplished even if the ultimate goals are not achieved. However, such changes take a greater toll when there is failure, so Fullan suggests breaking complex changes into components which can be implemented in an incremental manner.

On the issue of quality, Fullan observes that quality may be compromised, especially in ambitious, politically driven projects, simply because:

> *...the time line between the initiation decision and start-up is typically too short to attend to matters of quality.*
> (Fullan 1991: 72)

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Since, in his view, 'deeper meaning and solid change must be born over time', quality invariably suffers when time is short.

Both Stoller and Fullan focus on aspects of change *process*. Indeed, Fullan's main concern is with how innovations are implemented, while his overview of the change process emphasises complexity and the length of time taken to implement and institutionalise change - from three to five years for even moderately complex changes, while major restructuring efforts can take five to ten years. Above all, he emphasises that change is a *process*, not an event:

> *...a lesson learned the hard way by those who put all their energies into developing an innovation or passing a piece of legislation without thinking through what would have to happen beyond that point.*

(Fullan 1991: 40)

6   Managing change

Here is a summary of procedures intended to reduce implementational problems. They are adapted from Carnall (1991), who addresses himself to a business rather than educational readership. What is clear from both the business and educational discussions of change management is that, regardless of context, the change process is fundamentally the same.

6.1   Readiness for change

6.1.1 To deal with resistance to change:

- Keep everyone informed by making information available; explaining plans clearly; allowing access to the people responsible for the innovation for questions and clarification.

- Ensure that the innovation is sold realistically by making a practical case for change; explain the innovation in terms which teachers and students will see as relevant and acceptable; show how change fits the curriculum needs and plans of the school and the education system; spend time and effort on presentations.

- Prepare carefully by spending time with people and groups, building trust, understanding and support.

- Involve people by getting feedback on proposals.

- Start small and successfully by piloting a receptive group of people in schools or colleges with a successful track record; implement changes in clear phases.

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- Plan for success by starting with changes that can give a quick and positive pay-off; publicise early success; provide positive feedback to those involved in success.

6.1.2 To clarify the effects of change

- Clarify benefits of changes by emphasising benefits to those involved and to the school or college.

- Emphasise where the change draws on or makes use of existing knowledge and skills.

- Minimise surprises by specifying all assumptions about the change; focus on outcomes; identify potential problems.

- Communicate plans by being specific in terms familiar to teachers; communicate periodically and through various media (bulletins, notices, meetings, hand-outs, newsletters, visits); ask for feedback; do not suppress negative views but listen to them carefully and deal with them openly.

6.1.3 To identify *ownership* of innovation

- Plan for visible outcomes from change.

- Clarify teachers' views by exploring their concerns about the changes and examining impact on the day-to-day routines.

- Specify who wants change and why; explain the longer term advantages; identify common benefits; present the potential of change.

6.1.4 To ensure support from the school hierarchy

- Build a power base by becoming the expert in the problems involved; understand the concerns of the principal and departmental heads; develop information and formal support; develop skill in communicating with the principal, heads of department and other key decision-makers.

- Develop clear objectives and plans by establishing a clear timetable; set up review processes to be supportive, involving senior staff; focus meetings on specific outcomes and specific problems.

6.1.5 To create acceptance of changes

- Identify the relevance of the change to plans by reviewing plans and specifying how the change fits; incorporate changes into on-going development.

- Implement changes using flexible and adaptable people, who are familiar with some or all of the change; recognise why people support change (career, rewards, politics).

- Do not oversell the innovation. Be clear about conflicts with present practices; encourage discussion of these conflicts.

6.1.6 To build an effective team to implement innovation

- Ensure that teams have clear and agreed goals.

- Involve all members of the team in ways they see as relevant and using their own skills and expertise.

- Be prepared to face and deal with conflict.

- Encourage constructive feedback.

6.2   Managing innovation

6.2.1 To clarify plans for change

- Assign one person to be accountable overall for the innovation and ensure clear accountability at all levels.

- Define goals carefully by checking feasibility with people involved, experts, other schools or colleges; use measurable goals where possible but always keep broader goals and outcomes in mind.

- Define specific goals by defining small, clear steps, identifying and publicising critical milestones; assign firm deadlines.

- Translate plans into action by publishing plans; build in rewards for performance; give regular feedback.

6.2.2 To build new systems and practices into the organisation

- Plan the rate of change carefully by piloting to learn from experience; implement for success, small steps and specific milestones, allow *more* time.

- Enlist firm support; ensure that new procedures are well understood.

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6.2.3 To provide training and support

- Clarify objectives of training; use existing skills and knowledge; depend on people as part of implementation; use suggestions as part of the training.

- Allow people to learn at their own pace; provide opportunities for hands-on experience (e.g. visit another school or college in which the same change has been implemented and have people observe or make use of the change); make training relevant to their work.

- Use different learning approaches; respect and use people's experience; allow people to solve problems, and utilise their solutions.

- Incorporate feedback into training programmes.

6.2.4 To build commitment to change

- Plan change to bring benefits by using it to increase personal control over the top (and accountability); enhance teachers' jobs and status; ensure quick, visible benefits; provide incentives for people to go for change.

- Involve teachers and students by asking for suggestions; specify milestones and ask for feedback; publicise ways in which suggestions and feedback are utilised.

6.2.5 To provide feedback to those involved

- Make sure that results are well documented, accessible, quickly available, positively described, relevant; ensure achievement of milestones is recognised.

- Arrange wide recognition of success of people involved throughout the school or college or district; specify how change has helped the school or college to achieve its goals.

6.2.6 To manage the stress induced by innovation

- Plan innovation to control the impact on people; look for ways of controlling pressure.

- Allow more resources and time where the changes are novel.

- Adopt a rapid implementation plan where people have been consulted and agree to change (i.e. strike while the iron is hot, capitalise on commitment and enthusiasm).

- Empathise – constantly reinforce innovation – communicate and listen.

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7 Conclusion

What will become clear is that change is concerned with people, not things. As Fullan says:

> *...it is what people develop in their minds and actions that counts. People do not learn or accomplish complex changes by being told or shown what to do. Deeper meaning and solid change must be born over time. With particular changes, especially complex ones, one must struggle through ambivalence before one is sure that the new vision is workable or right (or unworkable and wrong). Good change is hard work; on the other hand, engaging in a bad change or avoiding needed change may be even harder on us.*

<div align="right">(Fuller 1991: 73)</div>

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Do methodologists educate or intimidate teachers?

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As both a methodologist and a teacher of English as a second language, I fully accept Widdowson's (1990) statement that 'it is important to recognize that language teaching is a theoretical as well as a practical activity, that effective teaching materials and classroom procedures depend on principles deriving from an understanding of what language is and how it is used.' My faith in theory is such that, deep inside me, I have always believed that somewhere in the great outside world beyond my classroom there are theoreticians and methodologists who understand exactly how languages are learned and consequently how they should best be taught. If only I could track them down, they would solve all my problems in the foreign language classroom. In my attempts to discover the Holy Grail of language learning and teaching I often go to conferences and seminars, read journals and buy some of the endless stream of new EFL books that constantly flows into bookshops. In the course of my search I have heard or read the following statements, all made by well-known methodologists or textbook writers. If I were to ask you to say whether you agree or disagree with their statements, how would you answer?

1   You cannot be a good teacher if you do not love your students.
2   Grammar cannot be taught; it can only be acquired.
3   Rules given by teachers don't help language learners.
4   You don't learn a language by talking about it; you learn by using it.
5   There aren't strict rules underlying grammar.
6   You don't learn a language by speaking, you learn by listening.
7   Grammar is given most emphasis in those countries which have the most authoritarian political systems.
8   Learner-centred activities are more effective learning devices than teacher-centred activities.

It may be that you share my view that it is very difficult to give a simple yes/no answer to most of these statements, yet each one was presented by the 'expert' in question as an incontrovertible fact: not to accept the statement was to be out of touch with modern language teaching, not to be one of the enlightened in-crowd. It may also be that as you read these statements, you feel slightly intimidated by the subtle way in which they force you to declare your interests, in much the same way that extremist politicians or fundamentalist religious leaders throw down the gauntlet to their audiences. This feeling of intimidation that I have sometimes felt when confronted with certain aspects of methodology, both ancient and modern, has led me to re-think my attitude to the role played by methodology and has, I must admit, slightly clouded the rose-coloured spectacles through which I had tended to view the world of theory. Today I

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should like to share with you some of the reasons why I believe methodologists sometimes intimidate rather than educate teachers and, at the same time, fail to address the problems that teachers may face.

Theories or part-theories?

Most methodologists support their claims for a certain approach by employing expressions such as 'firm theoretical basis', 'scientific', 'research findings have proved that ...', ' there is overwhelming evidence to show that ...', etc., all of which might serve both to reassure or to intimidate the classroom teacher.

In his provocative article on the communicative approach, Michael Swan (1990) makes the following statement: 'Teachers do not always appreciate how much new approaches owe to speculation and theory, and how little they are based on proven facts.' In his state-of-the-art article on grammar rules and reference grammars, René Dirven (1990) goes even further: '...a major assignment for foreign language pedagogy is experimental research into adequate forms of rule presentation. It is astonishing that so little research has been carried out in this area.' Both of these statements stress the fact that theories and approaches are often simply a set of beliefs, in some cases supported by empirical research and/or practical experience, but not a total view of learning. Certainly in my own area of special interest - theoretical and pedagogical grammar - there is surprisingly little coherent theory available that can be incorporated into language teaching. As Dirven says, this is remarkable since we might feel intuitively that, of all areas of language teaching, grammar is the one in which theoreticians have most to offer.

Whilst I would certainly not challenge the importance of theory and research, I believe that the interface between theory and application is given far too little attention. A less dogmatic approach would lead both to greater theoretical flexibility and to increased acceptance of theory by the practising teacher.

Pendulum effect

It is in the nature of modern methodology, as with any theoretical area, that there is a constant drive towards innovation. Today this drive is spurred on by the money that can be made by producing glossy textbooks now that foreign language learning has become big business, and by the international reputations that can be gained almost at the stroke of a pen in the modern world of mass communication. As a result, in an attempt to claim novelty, there is a constant swing away from already existing theories of learning or classroom practices. This pendulum effect and the resulting polarisation of approaches can lead to an over-simplified and one-sided view of language learning and is confusing in the extreme for the classroom teacher.

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Methodology in a cultural context

Those of us who teach in Central Europe have perhaps experienced the feeling when listening to a presentation given by methodologists from Britain or the United States that he or she is talking in a different language - both in a literal and figurative sense - particularly when it comes to an area such as the teaching of grammar. It is important to remember that, to a certain extent at least, methodological impulses spring from educational traditions, cultural norms, attitudes and trends within a particular society, and that these vary from country to country. In Britain, for example, there has been a total rejection of overt grammar teaching in first-language teaching in schools, and this trend was mirrored in second-language teaching in the 1980s. This development, however, did not take place in most central European countries, where the term 'grammar' as such does not carry the negative overtones that native speakers of English tend to associate with the word. However 'methodologically correct' we may feel a certain approach to be, we should at the same time think of the cultural context in which teaching takes place: like good wine, methodology does not always travel well.

Methodology: education without intimidation?

Despite the wary tone of my comments, I believe very strongly in the importance of theory; my own teaching was revolutionised in the late 1970s by the theories and practices that became available to me under the general heading of the 'communicative approach'. Yet not all theory will necessarily lead to an improvement in our teaching. Moreover, it is easy to be overwhelmed by both old and new approaches, particularly as we are hardly in a position to challenge the theoretical basis or research which is said to underlie them. As Peter Medgyes says in his article on teachers' reactions to the communicative approach:

> *Only a fool would dare denounce the axiomatic truths it disseminates: humanism, care and share, equality, ingenuity, relaxation, empathy, self-actualisation, and the rest. Who would admit in public, or even to themselves, that these impeccable principles are mere slogans?*

> (Medgyes 1990)

It is important that we should not allow ourselves to be intimidated by methodologists: while keeping an open mind to their methods, we should also be (positively) critical. Intimidation, as opposed to education, takes place particularly when part theories are passed on to the teacher as dogma, by methodologists who often bear a remarkable resemblance to door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesmen. Some of their 'sales techniques' that I think we should be aware of are:

- claiming exclusiveness or novelty for their own method to the rejection of all others. A fine book such as Howatt's *History of English Language Teaching* (1984), makes it clear how little of modern approaches is entirely new;

- trivialising foreign language learning.

Language Policy and Planning

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Language Policy and Planning

In his play *The Real Thing* (1982), Tom Stoppard bemoans the fact that nowadays philosophy has been reduced to what can be written on the front of a T-shirt, a phenomenon that can often be observed in modern language teaching. The use of sweet-sounding slogans in FLT (naturalistic, whole-brain learning, learner-centred) often substitutes a more serious debate on the important issues that underlie these terms, and at the same time devalues any useful insights that they might hold.

Keeping in touch with and being open-minded towards modern methodology is an important part of every teacher's professional development. This broadens our perspectives, gives us a wider range of techniques and helps our understanding of language, of teaching and of our learners. My 'survival kit' for ensuring that methodology is an educating rather than intimidating influence is as follows:

- I will be open to, but critical towards, both old and new methodology

- I will begin with my aims and my learners' aims and will then apply different approaches to see which best fulfil these aims

- I will be critical of myself but also confident in myself

- I won't be afraid to admit I was wrong - I will see this as part of my personal learning process.

Professionalism means understanding as much as possible about language, the learner and teaching, having a variety of approaches at one's disposal and choosing what works best for teacher and student. As a guiding quotation when confronted by theories and methodological approaches, we might cite Plato: 'Genius lies in the ability not to take things for granted'.

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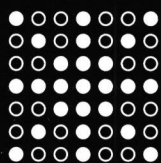
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**Best of ELTECS
Theme 2:
ELT in the European Foreign
Language Classroom**

Motivation and language learning

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In what follows, I shall want to refer from time to time to my own first-hand experience of education in the former eastern block. Geographically-speaking it has been in two main areas: East Germany and Hungary. Having conducted substantial research on West German education, I have a long-standing interest in Germany, and was naturally keen to visit and work in East Germany as soon as a suitable opportunity arose. I therefore spent a month under the aegis of the German Academic Exchange Service as a guest lecturer in Erfurt, East Germany, where I was involved in a programme for re-training teachers of Russian to become teachers of English. I had 150 students (145 women and only 5 men!) to whom I gave lectures in methodology. They were mature people with family responsibilities and it took considerable sacrifice and self-discipline for them to complete their course successfully. Despite the fact that they were foreigners, they were required to study English grammar textbooks of a complexity which would have left most of my native-English-speaking students floundering; they often told me how different the 'communicative' methodology was from what they had been used to. I was impressed by how hard they worked, how much was demanded of them and what high standards many of them reached.

My other major experience of an East European country has been in Hungary. Here I regularly have the responsibility of supervising students from my own university who are on teaching practice for their Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language. In Hungary, I have been struck by the fine quality of the schools. Whether they be vocational, commercial or grammar schools, they seem well-maintained and have an aesthetic quality which would put some British schools to shame. It is clear to me that this quality is not something which has developed recently. The schools were obviously well-maintained and developed under the old socialist regime. Educationally, the Hungarians are accustomed to stretching their able pupils and working them hard. The demands are considerable, and high standards of English are attained in the universities and teacher training colleges as well as in the schools.

Of course, Eastern European countries vary in their characteristics, but we are reminded by Wolfgang Mitter (1992) that many of them share elements of a common educational heritage which can be traced back to the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. It is said that long before the events of 1989, visitors to a Hungarian *gimnazium* would immediately have recognised an ethos common to the *Gymnasien* of Germany and Austria. What many Eastern European countries have in common is a certain rigour and solidity manifested in a desire to 'get it right' both in languages and in other subjects (see Janowski 1992). Indeed, a Polish

colleague of mine who lectures in the English department of the University of Ulster once confided to me that his greatest shock on taking up his new appointment was the fact that his students wrote and spoke English - their native tongue - so *ungrammatically*.

Pupils' motivation in the 'New Democracies'

So much for personal background. Now let us consider the complex issue of motivation in relation to language learning. The Canadian scholar, Robert Gardner (1985), defines motivation in relation to language learning as a combination of desire to achieve the goal of language learning, plus effort to do so, plus generally favourable attitudes towards the object of study. He believes the nature of language acquisition to be such that attitudes are implicated in achievement to a greater extent than is true for other subject areas. He perceives attitudes as encompassing three elements: a belief structure, emotional reactions and a disposition to behave in a certain manner.

Motivation and attitudes depend on what we value, and our values are influenced by the political climate of our society. A change in political values emanating from the government eventually makes itself felt much lower down at the level of pedagogy, textbooks, individual teacher, pupil and parent. In recent years, enormous changes have taken place throughout Eastern Europe: belief in a command economy has been replaced by belief in market forces, and emphasis on collectivism has given way to a sometimes strident individualism. There is everywhere a yearning for prosperity and comfort, for consumer goods and travel. We must consider how this change of values at macro level impacts on pupil and teacher at micro level; how it affects the pupil's motivation to learn and the teacher's motivation to teach.

First of all the pupil: under the old dispensation, Russian was the dominant language. It was intended to foster a positive image of the Soviet Union and to create a bond among the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Some of the pupils who took to the language learned to like it for its own sake. Excellence in Russian set them on the road to a good education and a certain degree of privileged treatment. For others, the study of Russian often had an element of compulsion about it. Like compulsory Irish in the Republic of Ireland, compulsion in Eastern Europe frequently defeated its own ends by de-motivating instead of motivating language learners. When that element of force was removed, they either stayed away from their Russian classes or chose to study other languages instead.

Russian has now given way to other modern continental languages like English, French and German. Individuals have more opportunity to travel, more contact with foreigners and more access to international electronic and print media. We must ask what are the implications of these developments from the point of view of the pupil. Some find that their attitudes are greatly transformed for the better. They can see a use for

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their languages in the new Europe in tourism, industry, commerce or education. The removal of compulsion combined with the perception of potential utility leads to an increased extrinsic motivation. The language has the potential to mediate rewards, albeit differently from the way that Russian did.

Are these stimuli to increased motivation entirely positive or do they harbour dangers? One danger, of which pupils are not entirely unaware, lies in the tension between resurgent nationalism and the ever rising tide of English. Under socialism, internationalism was valued; since the emergence of the 'New Europe', there has been a re-assertion of national values and with it a realisation of the role played by the national language in promoting group solidarity. It has sometimes seemed to me that in Hungary, for example, a country with an unusual and inaccessible language, some Hungarian people are deliberately resistant to Western foreigners' arrogant assumption that Hungarians 'must' speak English or French or German. Hungarians realise that if they do not speak their own language, no-one else will, and it will therefore die. National pride and sub-conscious fear of language loss may militate against motivation to acquire another tongue. With the acquisition of a *lingua franca*, English, and its concomitants, Coca-Cola, computers and Macdonald's, comes a certain diminution of regional and national distinctiveness. Some pupils sense a need to be vigilant against the blandishments of Anglo-American cultural imperialism and may experience cognitive dissonance in their motivational syndrome. In terms of Robert Gardner's model, they may desire to learn English and may even make the effort to do so, but without the positive attitudes towards the object of study that Gardner postulated as necessary for success.

The Teacher's motivation

And what of the teacher's motivation to teach? This must of necessity be connected with national traditions of education. Such traditions vary, of course, so let me single out the former German Democratic Republic as an example. It would be wrong to assume that communicative competence and functions were unknown there, despite what I implied in my preliminary remarks. Klapper (1992) in an article for the journal *Comparative Education* points out that by 1952, the Politburo had begun to call for a drive to develop pupils' oral skills; by 1966-71, syllabuses emphasised the need to be able to conduct conversations on everyday topics. By the late 1960s, *Kenntnisse* (knowledge about language) were to be subordinated to *Fertigkeiten* (skills). By 1967, the oral examination was upgraded (this at a time when the Republic of Ireland did not have an oral exam in modern continental languages!). By 1980, there was an emphasis on functions and on silent reading: the ability to read FL texts for meaning without recourse to translation was emphasised (ibid. p. 238).

All this time there was, however, a tension between the communicative and the cognitive approach. The experts in the GDR emphasised cognition,

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the ability to rationalise the structure of the FL. They promoted a certain rigour of approach. In syllabus descriptions, there was a strong impression of the grammatical taking precedence over the functional. The academy of pedagogical sciences tended to promote a methodology which was more attuned to Russian than to other languages; syllabuses for French and English were produced on the basis of analogy with syllabuses for Russian, but the complex morphology of Russian made this analogy unfortunate and led to an under-exploitation of the communicative potential of English and French. Eventually the domination of Russian led to methodological sterility and dogmatic uniformity (ibid. p.245): lesson plans had to be produced according to a rigid model, and developments in English tended to be blocked by the leading state experts, who were Russianists. Theories of L2 language acquisition that were based on analogies with L1 acquisition were spurned (ibid. p. 239) and the direct method was rejected as an imitative mechanical approach that failed to develop pupils' ability to *think* about the language. The 'communicative' approach was thus differently construed in East and West.

Can Eastern Europe learn from Western Europe about motivation?

What methodology can we in the West advocate to feed teachers' motivation to teach and stimulate their pupils to learn? Communicative competence has now become the mainstream orthodoxy in the West. The Council of Europe stood godfather to this infant which seemed to have the potential to rectify many of the faults of traditional methodology. Some of those faults were as follows:

*   Learners felt that they did not necessarily need the whole grammar of a language in order to communicate. Those who followed courses proceeding incrementally from the grammatically simple to the complex became impatient at having to study for several years before they knew enough language to satisfy their survival needs in the target language;

*   A grammatically-determined sequence of materials was not necessarily related to what the learner needed or wanted to achieve through the medium of language;

*   The grammar-based courses were sometimes cold, unappealing and difficult. At their worst they were not conducive to a democratic classroom climate because they elevated the teacher to a position of all-knowing authority and thrust the student into a subordinate powerless role.

In producing materials for the Council of Europe, Wilkins (1976) and his colleagues Trim (1975), Van Ek and Alexander (1975) and Richterich (1972) devised strategies for syllabus design intended to teach language use as well as its grammatical elements. Meaning was taken as primary and as deriving from the whole situation in which language was used.

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Attempts were made to predict the situations in which learners would probably find themselves and to teach the language necessary to cope with those situations. Attention was paid to social roles and registers. Although this approach to syllabus design was intended primarily for adults, it began to influence school curricula in many West European countries, not just in the United Kingdom.

Soon it become obvious that the new syllabus design was not methodologically neutral. Its emphasis on real-life needs, situations and topics led to the simulation of everyday reality in the classrooms, to the introduction of *Realien* and the use of authentic print and audio materials drawn from the speech community of the target language. There was an intense desire to involve more students in language learning (formerly reserved for the more able pupils), and to make it less forbidding and austere, more accessible and attractive. There was a move away from the authoritarian language classroom and a drive to empower rather than dis-empower pupils - in short, to make language learning more democratic. This led teachers to put the main stress on meaning rather than form, on fluency rather than accuracy. Syllabuses became overwhelmingly skills-based rather than cognitively-based. Examinations in the United Kingdom were transformed. A typical example of the principles on which they are now based is the statement which heads the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council GCSE Syllabus in German for 1995:

> *The basic principle is that the tasks set in the examination will be as far as possible, authentic and valuable outside the classroom. The material presented to candidates will be carefully selected authentic German. ...The tasks will not be irrelevant to the use or the understanding of the language.*
>
> (para 6.2)

The spirit behind the examination was to motivate pupils in a way which would enable them to show what they could do rather than to expose their weaknesses. It also aimed *inter alia:*

> *To provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation.*
>
> *To encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations.* (ibid. para 2)

The new-style examinations are enlightened, well-intentioned and usually well-designed. They have, however, begun to reveal some negative characteristics. Whereas previously the children learned off paradigms and word lists by heart, they now rote-learn 'communicative' dialogues - a new form of servitude. The Council of Europe work on syllabus design was originally aimed at adults rather than schoolchildren and therefore devoted much attention to satisfying perceived needs in relation to adult employment and life in a foreign speech community. The fact is, however,

that most children in the foreign language classroom satisfy their primary needs through their mother tongue and, unlike adults, do not actually *have* primary needs which have to be handled through the medium of a foreign language. The assumption of the existence of such needs and the ensuing emphasis on functions, notions, situations and roles originally had a motivational goal, but became in their way just as artificial as some of the grammar and translation work which went on before the 'communicative revolution'.

Accompanying this movement for change in syllabus design was a shift in the prevailing attitude to error in language learning. Research on first language acquisition among children had shown that errors were in fact an exploration of the structure of language and an attempt to formulate hypotheses about how it worked (e.g. Brown and Bellugi 1972). The work of scholars such as Pit Corder (1967; 1971; 1981) and Felix (1981) purported to show that a similar process was at work in second language learning. As a result of these trends, error came to be regarded as something to be tolerated rather than excoriated and in public certificate examinations, assessment criteria allowed (and still do allow) for a modicum of error even at the 'Higher' as opposed to 'Basic' level:

> *Communication has been achieved even if there is some linguistic inaccuracy in the message. A native speaker would have to make a minimum effort to understand the message.*
> (NISEAC, 1994, para. 6.4.2)

Such tolerance of error probably has a positive motivational effect, especially on weaker students, but many people believe that in the United Kingdom it has now gone too far, and consider that lack of grammatical rigour has undermined a whole generation, be they students of English-as-mother-tongue or of modern continental languages. In an article published in *German Teacher,* Richard Sheppard (1993) asks: '[How] can we expect British nationals to understand (let alone speak and write) the complex commercial, technical, bureaucratic and legal German which they will encounter in the new Europe if their grasp of the basics is unsound?' He complains that '[One] types oneself as a 'reactionary', not to say a 'fascist', if one believes that a grasp of formal English grammar can actually help people acquire foreign languages more rapidly, more securely and to a more sophisticated level'.

One might have expected Sheppard to be insulated from harsh reality since he teaches at Magdalen College, Oxford, an ancient and prestigious college with able students. However, Sheppard formed the distinct impression that active syntactic competence had become less important to his students than it used to be. He set out to explore whether there was in fact any real basis for such an impression and to this end posed written questions to seven 'A' (Advanced) Level Examination Boards about the position of formal syntax in their syllabuses and papers. His investigation showed that active syntactical proficiency has a low value in the Boards'

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examinations, and that it is possible to make a lot of fairly basic errors and still get a high mark. He also quotes the results of a written test administered by a provincial university to a student who had been awarded a *distinction* in German at the end of his first BTEC year; the candidate's answers reveal that he is quite unable to translate correctly sentences as simple as 'Please shut the window'.

Sheppard is not alone in his impression that 'communicative competence' has been bought at the expense of declining grammatical standards. In an article in the *Sunday Times* (29.5.94), entitled 'Languages hit the grammar gap', Derek McCulloch, lecturer in German in the University of Surrey, complained that:

> [Too] many of our best young linguists who go on to study languages at university lack the basic knowledge of grammar essential to a further meaningful study of the subject.

This article elicited dozens of sympathetic letters from members of the British public, so it is fair to assume that it touched a nerve.

McCulloch based his assertions partly on his experience of almost 20 years' teaching in higher education and partly on an experiment (McCulloch 1994a) which he conducted in 1994 with 40 first-year students at the University of Surrey. He replicated the BTEC test items originally quoted by Sheppard (op. cit.) and made his own students, (all of whom had passed Advanced Level German), translate them. Errors such as the following occurred:

Cue: We had to wait 20 minutes for the bus.

> *Wir hatten seit zwanzig Minuten für das Autobus zu erwarten.*

> *Wir mussten 20 minuten auf dem Bus gewartet.*

Cue: The train she came on was late.

> *Der Zug, den sie ankommt hat, war spät.*

> *Den Zug, des sie gefahren ist, spat war.*

McCulloch concludes that if a 'C' at A-level represents the average A-level performance, then the average A-level German student will manage to translate correctly and idiomatically less than 25% of the relatively unsophisticated utterances required by the BTEC German test. Elsewhere (1994b), he discusses schools' approach to German:

> *Grammar, we are told, is discussed informally as problems arise but not with any rigour if communication is not at risk. The subjunctive is played down as something halfway between an*

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unnecessary complication and a total irrelevance, and passive sentences bring such insecurity that few students know how best to convey such utterances as 'I've been given a new dictionary' or 'She was helped by her parents' because they do not know the basic relationships between accusative/direct object and dative/indirect object.

In the *Sunday Times* article, McCulloch complains that grammatical inaccuracy is not, as one would expect of a communicative approach, balanced by discernible communicative skills. On the contrary, his students showed an alarming ignorance of everyday vocabulary, and were *insouciant* about their pronunciation on the grounds the 'School never worried'. They could not handle everyday verbs such as 'to give', 'to help', 'to meet' or 'to belong' and did not know items of vocabulary such as 'a blind man', 'coins', 'guests', 'cities', 'wine', 'beer', 'girl-friends', 'married to' and 'interest', which caused problems to over half the group.

The best of both worlds

New political values inevitably bring new approaches to education but these must be adopted with caution so that they do not result in loss of existing strengths. At its best, the Western 'communicative classroom' is an attractive environment, permeated with life, warmth and high student motivation. At its worst, it is casual and slovenly, characterised by low standards and a *laissez-faire atmosphere*. If the 'New Democracies' of Eastern Europe have anything to learn from the West, the trick must be to get the balance right and not to accept methodological innovations in a facile manner without reflecting on their potential shortcomings. Three maxims are worth bearing in mind:

- If grammar deteriorates beyond a certain level, the communication which it seeks to mediate is jeopardised;

- A 'democratic' classroom climate should not imply wholesale disregard of students' errors;

- A communicative methodology in language teaching should not necessarily imply weakness in grammar.

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ELT materials selection and evaluation: the Polish case

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Introduction

During the past few years Polad has been undergoing essential political and economic changes which influence the Polish system of education.

English language has always been popular in Poland but since the early 1990s, it has become an indispensable component of individual education. It is due to an enormous social pressure that school authorities were stimulated to start the reforms, and first of all, to establish new institutions educating future teachers of English.

The state sector is not able to satisfy the needs of the young and adult population of learners. The sudden growth of private sector, mainly private language schools, created a new market situation and a shortage of ELT materials appropriate for different age groups and levels.

The Ministry of National Education in co-operation with the committee of experts in ELT has not only initiated and approved essential changes in English language syllabus, but also encouraged teachers and local educational authorities to design programmes and syllabuses relevant to local and individual needs.

Thus we can observe a fascinating, though sometimes painful, process of a new educational phenomenon: creating original, modern and pedagogically valuable curricula, changing completely the teaching and learning environment.

All these changes in primary, secondary and tertiary education create a favourable atmosphere for adopting various ELT materials not available on the Polish market in previous years.

New developments in the Polish system of education and ELT materials

Since Russian is no longer a compulsory school subject learners, teachers and parents are free to choose a foreign language to be taught in school.

State primary schools usually introduce the first foreign language in the fifth grade (age 11), but there is a very strong tendency to introduce it much earlier, even in the first grade (at the age of 7).

Local Community schools (partly private, with a monthly fee) are usually obliged by parents to start a proper foreign language course from the very

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beginning (the first grade). Private schools with a very high fee usually introduce individual, so called 'Author's Programmes', meaning that it is the teacher running the subject who designs the syllabus, sometimes very original, depending on the class profile (science oriented or humanities oriented).

Parental input and decision taking in co-operation with schools is a completely new phenomenon. It is not always easy and beneficial, but all new ideas are born in pain and have to undergo the process of trial, negotiation and positive argumentation.

However, there is still a large group of learners in small towns and villages (around 50-60%) which starts learning English in the secondary school, at the age of 15.

The so called 'extended' programme of English (6 hours per week) becomes the most desirable option in secondary schools but it almost always depends on the availability of qualified English teachers and the financial situation of schools in the area.

Summarising, the following types of foreign language syllabuses can be specified:

- a regular programme (2-3 hours per week)

- extended programme (6 hours per week)

- individual foreign language profile classes, mainly in private schools (8-10 hours per week)

- two secondary schools (in Warsaw and in Gdansk) nominated to run an International Baccalaureate programme

- private language schools teaching business English (banking, management, secretarial skills etc.).

This variety is a result of the freedom and flexible policy of educational institutions, open to new ideas.

It is also a result of the social pressure to make our education modern and reflect recent changes on the European scene. We can observe a positive snobbism among young learners to know 2-3 foreign languages, which also imposes certain changes in the educational policy.

Are British ELT materials relevant to the needs of Polish students and teachers?

As a teacher trainer and advisor in pre-service and in-service system, I have permanent contact with schools, universities and training centres which gives me the possibility of getting feedback from different groups of

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users of teaching materials. There is a general feeling of relief after all those years when nothing was officially available on the Polish market. Teachers, parents and learners are generally very positive in their feelings about the use of British teaching materials. Why?

- British ELT materials offer numerous titles for different age groups and levels.

- They provide teachers with the knowledge of new methods and approaches and, what is also very important, new pedagogical ideas (learner centred approach).

- ELT materials become a vehicle for introducing and implementing new teaching and learning styles. They change 'teacher-student relationships'.

- Coursebooks contain highly valued, universal knowledge and components/texts on different cultures, customs and traditions, scientific discoveries, social problems, etc.

Any criticism or reservation expressed?

Yes. Some teachers, educators, Polish authors of ELT materials express their doubts whether British materials are really appropriate for the Polish system of education and for Polish learners – large, monolingual classes, problems with understanding instructions by absolute beginners, new syllabuses, etc. In autumn 1993 a conference was organised by a National In-Service Training Centre. The participants of the conference were teachers, teacher trainers and publishers, both Polish and foreign.

A basic issue was discussed during the conference. 'Polish or foreign ELT materials?' A very lively discussion lasted for a few hours. Polish authors stated that our own materials are still valuable and cannot be underestimated because generations of learners had been taught on them, achieving high standards of English. They pointed out that teachers often choose course books without previous deeper analysis and reflection on the needs and abilities of their learners. British materials are designed mainly for multilingual classes and the objectives they want to achieve are not appropriate for Polish classes. Besides, all these materials are very expensive as compared to Polish ones.

Teachers' opinions were divided. Some said that only foreign materials with all necessary components enable teachers to run effective and interesting courses. Others said that they use foreign materials because parents and students insist on modern coursebooks: it becomes a matter of prestige rather than real needs.

Teacher trainers reported that many unqualified, primary and secondary teachers are not prepared to choose materials. Many schools introduced

coursebooks absolutely inappropriate for young learners, causing great confusion, didactic problems and financial losses on the parents' side.

My perception of this issue is that, first of all, unqualified teachers should participate in training sessions at the beginning of the school year. They should be prepared and trained properly, but it is also the publishers' responsibility to inform teachers and school directors about all titles available, which age groups and levels they are written for. Systematic training becomes a vital issue for about 2,000 unqualified teachers working in primary and secondary schools all over Poland.

Most teachers and educational authorities are very positive about the variety of ELT materials in Poland. It enables designing and running of modern and intensive foreign language courses. It is the only way to satisfy the needs of so many and such different types of schools and individual learners.

Materials evaluation and the Polish system of pre-service and in-service training

Course book selection and evaluation has already become an integral part of the curriculum in Teacher Training Colleges. Pre-service students have regular seminars on teaching materials, they are given guidelines on how to choose the right course book, and teacher-shunning methodology classes encourage students to study materials available in the College library and to share their opinions with other students.

As a consultant and teacher trainer for Longman, I realise how important proper methodological instruction and support is, especially in the areas of Poland where there is no local teacher trainer.

Longman has been present in the Polish market for many years, but it is since 1991 that as a publisher it is also committed to organising series of training sessions in co-operation with local education boards.

Longman has employed Regional Methodology Consultants who have regular 'surgery' hours in local book shops, and are in charge of organising proper workshops and presentations (methodological, not commercial).

Since 1992, we have also initiated organising weekly residential symposiums for 50 English teachers from all over Poland. In September 1994 the Third Teacher Training Symposium was organised for primary teachers, holders of FCE. This event has always been organised in co-operation with local In-Service Training Centres, as teachers have to be delegated to leave schools for one week. Local training centres send applications to our Warsaw office, as they know best who needs training.

Teachers are well informed about Longman titles in many ways (leaflets, exhibitions, workshops). Teachers are also encouraged to write to our office in case of any doubts or problems.

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How do experienced, qualified teachers choose teaching materials? What criteria do they use?

A group of secondary teachers from Warsaw pointed out the following areas:

- well written, based on new trends in methodology

- exploiting authentic, not artificial, classroom language

- relevant to the requirements of and recommended by the Ministry of National Education

- containing elements of universal knowledge, history, culture, etc. apart from English language

- enabling intensive grammar practice with a variety of tasks (exam oriented)

- accepted by parents as far as the price is concerned

- accepted by learners themselves. It may seem a bit extravagant or too far going, but some teachers asked the learners to express their views: a final decision was taken after a brainstorming session during which students gave their reasons why they liked some titles more than others.

Variety of ELT materials - a positive or a negative phenomenon?

Is it good or bad that in one school two or three different coursebooks are being used? Will learners benefit from it or will it create chaos and de-stabilise the English language curriculum at national and local level? It is probably too early to draw conclusions, but again, perhaps it will stimulate teachers to co-operate and exchange views? ELT materials are not only teaching and learning tools. They represent and advocate various approaches towards students as learners. It is due to different tasks which require pair and group work, brainstorming, different interaction patterns that we observe a fascinating process of changing traditional, sometimes conservative teaching style into a modern, challenging intellectual process. Students are also made responsible for their progress or failure; they become more mature and more demanding - which is a new and surprising phenomenon again.

What is happening in the area of foreign language teaching influences, if not imposes, changes in other school subjects as well. Of course, it is not a large scale process but it is meaningful, and I hope it will affect the teaching environment in a positive way in the future. Foreign language teachers are considered an avant-garde group in our educational system. New ideas introduced by them may affect further changes within the next few years.

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Are there any areas where ELT materials are not satisfactory or perhaps do not exist?

I would like to tackle this problem, hoping that this conference is the best opportunity and this group of teachers and educators is the most appropriate forum to appeal to. I do hope this eminent, international forum of specialists and the British Council as an institution are the most influential bodies to initiate the discussion and to start the procedures in the following area.

In Poland, and I am sure in many other east and central European countries, there are *no materials for the blind and visually impaired* learners. How many blind learners are there in all these countries? How large and what are the needs in this very special area? According to the President of the Polish Union for the Blind there are about 80,000 disabled registered in Poland. About 15%-20% are completely blind. They need books in Braille or a special, enlarged print.

These materials will be very expensive if we think in terms of single copies. What is the scale of this problem in Europe? Has it been researched? Do we have adequate numbers? If there are no materials available in Poland, I am sure the situation is the same in other central and east European countries. Publishers might respond to our appeal if we give them a more accurate report and information about the number of blind learners who need materials in English language.

There are about 3,000 primary, secondary and tertiary learners in Poland. They often call the Longman office in Warsaw, but unfortunately I cannot help them at the moment. Longman as a publisher could probably plan the publication of such materials if they knew the numbers of the potential group of such customers in this part of Europe. Learning English is not only popular among the blind but it becomes a vital issue: it means new job opportunities, new educational perspectives, especially in countries with a high unemployment rate.

I hope that you, experienced teachers and educators can constitute influential lobbies in your countries and on various occasions, during conferences will advocate for further development in this area.

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Are coursebooks taxing enough?

Hanna Kryszewska, University of Gdansk, Poland

In the teaching-learning process we can distinguish three parties that are involved: the learner, the teacher and the coursebook. It is very important to consider how each of the three parties can contribute to the process and the learner's motivation, which is a very important factor, if not the key factor in the process. The teacher can contribute to the learner's motivation, so can the coursebook and finally the learner himself or his fellow colleagues can affect it.

I would like to concentrate on the person of the learner and coursebooks as factors affecting motivation and the learning-teaching process, neglecting the person of the teacher. On a number of occasions I have asked teachers to do a questionnaire originally aimed at their learners, a questionnaire designed to develop learners' independence and awareness of the learning process. The results are always the same. Teachers are well or reasonably well informed about the learners' preferences and learning styles as far as the classroom is concerned, but are ignorant of what goes on back at the learners' homes as far as individual learning is concerned, ways of revising material, using the language and practising, and finally the type of material and topics their learners reach for, if they do so. The question is that if teachers are not aware of their learners in this respect, how can they cater for the learners' needs? Someone might say it is not the teacher's responsibility how the learners learn and study at home, what they do with the acquired language. The fact is that if the learners have certain needs which have been left uncatered for and not taken care of, the gap may lead to frustration in a given sphere of language learning and contribute to a decrease in the learners' motivation, something that affects the classroom, too. On the other hand, the teacher's knowledge of the learners' interests and learning can be turned into an advantage, the teacher will cater for the learners' needs and therefore improve the intensity of learning and increase motivation.

Another blind spot on the map of the teachers' knowledge about their learners is the learner as a human being, his/her interests and content preferences. In the choice of materials and topics teachers tend to trust the coursebook writers and editors, hoping that they know best what is good for the learners. It is justified to question this trust. The authors of a coursebook do not know our individual learner and the given group of learners living in specific social, economic, cultural circumstances, a group of learners with individual faces and names and of a certain age creating a unique classroom atmosphere. A coursebook is aimed more at an 'Everyman' in the medieval understanding of the concept - one human being representing mankind with all its virtues and vices - in our classroom situation with their preferences, interests, problems or lack of problems. A group of intermediate learners of the language of academic background differs from a similar group of learners, or technical workers.

Good materials tax the language, i.e. are aimed at the learner, and tax the intellect, i.e. are aimed at the human being. The right combination of the two creates a motivating atmosphere in the classroom. A learner, especially an adult one, feels vulnerable and is apprehensive because of their poor command of the language. If the content of the coursebook is patronising, the morale of the learners suffers. 'Do I have to sink that low just because I don't know the language?', they seem to think, and they rightly question that.

To learn the language a learner does not have to talk about and encounter:

- known and obvious topics, what I would call cliché topics like 'The Loch Ness Monster';

- culturally irrelevant topics: 'English Christmas' discussed with Muslim learners, or 'How to use a phonecard' in a country where telecommunication is not well developed, let alone the phone-card system;

- uninteresting or dated material, for example about the Royal Family, a pop-star or a celebrity, a computer programme or network;

- oversimplified materials which offend the general knowledge of the learners, like diagrams 'How an earthquake or volcanic eruption occurs';

- only generally and universally approved topics, accepted by the publisher and educational authorities, avoiding so-called coursebook taboos.

Many more examples of such materials can be given. One problem is that the materials are demotivating, the other is that the learners, when they want to speak about content relevant to them, have to bridge the language and content gap themselves. It is the gap between the content and language taught and the language, content and meaning they want to express. Filling or rather bridging the gap is very difficult for a learner to do on his or her own and may be frustrating.

This problem is very relevant to our learners and our teaching situation in eastern and central Europe. We are flooded with western coursebooks with their western content. This material will not help our learners to talk about their local monster, Christmas as celebrated in their own countries, cultures or religions, how to operate a phone locally and how to get a connection, discuss a local celebrity or politician, talk about natural phenomena as they know them to be, discuss topics like abortion, alcoholism, racism or religion. And it is such topics that our learners are likely to discuss in a real life situation in English, sharing their national experience with an international audience. Our learners want to preserve their own cultural identity in the foreign language and often refuse to

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parrot a cosmopolitan culture. This view was expressed in an extreme way by one learner who refused to polish up and perfect his quite acceptable English pronunciation. 'I don't want to sound like an educated RP user of English, like a native speaker. I want to sound like a Pole who speaks good English'.

The problem of our learners' identity is something that we need to bear in mind. If the learners can remain themselves in a foreign language, when they can take their wealth of knowledge into the foreign language with them and learn to express it, their motivation will not be destroyed, and on the contrary will be increased and reinforced. It has to be remembered that even a child is an expert on a topic we may be ignorant on, e.g. climbing jungle gyms or skipping on a rope. This will most likely be a topic area she or he may want to explore with their peers in a foreign language. The same applies to adults, and it is our task as teachers to bring out the areas in the lesson, explore them and help our learners' motivation.

This dissatisfaction with the content of coursebooks has led to a trend in which learners are given greater control over the content of the lesson. We can see on the market resource books like *Learner-based teaching* (Campbell and Kryszewska, Oxford University Press) and *Lessons from the Learner* (Deller, Longman Pilgrims) where the authors recognised the need for the learners to contribute to the content, the shape and the tone of the lesson. More often coursebooks try to provide frames for the learners to fill in their own contents.

The main feature of learner-based teaching is that in the various activities learners provide the information input and the content, are responsible for the quality of material, all with full integration of the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. The activities explore the groups' wealth of general knowledge, individual expertise which can be shared with the rest of the class and the common cultural consciousness, something no international coursebook can do.

In a coursebook situation it is the coursebook that provides the language input. Successful learners are people who in class can manipulate the coursebook input well, and the teacher has no information how the learners will succeed in real life when they have to produce their own output filled with their own content. Giving directions in London is not the same as giving directions in Sofia: the sights are different, the orientation points, etc. No international coursebook can address such issues unless prepared for a given nationality, e.g. *The Pilgrims Language Course* by Saxon Menne, aimed at Spanish teenagers.

In learner-based teaching the teacher provides the main theme and the framework of the lesson. The learner's own language output is produced with help from the teacher and colleagues. So, for example, the learners plan a text, then they write it, then others read it for some reason, e.g. to correct it, or to write questions, which in turn somebody answers.

There may be a great many possible frames. The main principle, however, is the same. The learners express their own content and maintain their identity, something that needs to be remembered, treasured and cherished in the times of United Europe, cosmopolitan values and the Coca-Cola and MacDonald's culture.

The role of the learner in Learner-Based Teaching

Colin Campbell, British Council, Tallinn

In this paper I would like to consider what the role of the learner is in Learner-Based Teaching and to illustrate characteristic features of that role by walking through different activities used in Learner-Based Teaching. But first a brief definition of what I understand by LBT.

The main principle of this approach is that classroom activities can be done using information that learners themselves bring to the classroom. The activities used are essentially frames which the learners fill in with their own ideas, knowledge, opinions. Once filled in, these frames provide the basis for further language work which can have a grammar, lexical or skill focus, for example, reviewing the article system, building up vocabulary connected with physique and character, writing biographies and so on.

What are the characteristics of the learner's role in LBT? The learners do the following:

- select topics

- provide content for activities

- recycle language items

- identify problem areas

- teach/test each other.

Let me flesh out this skeleton by looking at some activities. But before I do that I would like to stress that this approach need not be an exclusive approach to teaching. Teachers can choose to use this approach to a greater or lesser extent, or of course, not at all. The characteristics of the approach, however, remain the same.

Selecting topics

The following activity is called *What would you like to know?* and allows learners to choose topics they want to write about and talk about. It allows for an individualisation of choice. It is an activity which can be used at different times during a course and as such can provide a learner-driven element of the syllabus.

The activity works like this. Individual learners choose a topic they want to write about. They each write their topic at the top of a piece of paper and the papers circulate. As learners receive each new piece of paper, they write a question about the topic. The papers circulate until everyone has written a question on every piece of paper. The papers return to their

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owners who then write a paragraph in which they answer all the questions. They have to decide how best to organise the information into paragraphs addressing different topics retrieved from the questions. The completed texts are displayed and learners can check if their questions have indeed been answered.

During the writing stage the learners use dictionaries and the teacher as resources to find the vocabulary they need to talk or write about their chosen topics.

Providing content for activities

All teachers are familiar with the town map in textbooks that is used to practise giving directions. An LBT approach to this, I think, may be an interesting metaphor for LBT generally.

Instead of using a printed map of a town which the learners may not even know, the learners as a group recreate on the board the areas surrounding their own school. As they recreate this they have an opportunity to review vocabulary connected with their immediate and familiar surroundings and also to learn new vocabulary. But the new vocabulary is given when they already have a strong mental image of the places. For example, the learners know there is an *Apteka* on the corner, they have a clear image of what it looks like, probably inside and outside, and when they are given the English word used to name this place, it may mean the word is more likely to be remembered.

When they have built up the map, which is a representation of a familiar, three-dimensional world, they can use it to practise the language of directions, with the teacher first giving models related to the map. As learners practise the language they have clear images of where they are and where they are going. They can even check the directions by bringing in additional information that is not on the map but is in their mental image of the area.

The matching of the language to the images they have of the place may mean that the language is better remembered. It is also perhaps more relevant to how most students will use English, giving directions around their own town. Generally in LBT we are allowing learners to use language to talk about their own world, not only the material or physical world but the world of their knowledge, experience and imagination.

Recycling language items

Many of the activities in LBT have as their starting point the learner looking back over their notebooks and deciding what lexical items they want to practise again. The approach encourages learner recycling and selection of vocabulary which they decide is important for them to learn. Let me illustrate this with an activity called *Taboo* which was adapted from an American game.

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In the LBT version, the learners first review their notes and select five recently-encountered words they wish to recycle. They then work in groups of four explaining, if necessary, what their selected words mean. As a group they then choose ten of the words and write each one at the top of a piece of paper about the size of a playing card. For each word they think of five other words which are related to the word at the top and print these in a column on the card. When they have finished the game, language activity begins.

Groups exchange cards so that no group will play with their own cards. They play the game in fours with two teams of two. The first person picks up a card without showing it to the partner. They have to get the word at the top of the card across to their partner but they cannot say that word, nor can they use *any* of the words on the card. All the words are taboo. They cannot use mime, or drawings or available objects. They can describe, explain, exemplify or say anything they can to try to get the word across. The partner can assist by suggesting words until they guess the right one. There is a time limit for each word and each pair takes turns picking up different cards. The language focus of the activity is to practise paraphrasing, getting around gaps in the learner's vocabulary, essentially practising communicative strategies.

The activity does illustrate a general feature of LBT. The frame is the procedure for the activity I have outlined above. The learners first fill in this frame by choosing their own words, the words they wish to review. The preparation of the cards is done by the learners rather than by the teacher before the class. The learners are thus getting double practice. First they actively review vocabulary and think of associations for those words which may help them to remember the words. Secondly, they practise useful communicative strategies. The same frame used with different groups will result in very different cards according to the level and interest of the students. One set of cards prepared by a teacher could not be used as widely as this empty frame.

Identifying problem areas/peer teaching - peer testing

The learner is not only encouraged to select vocabulary appropriate to their needs, but also to recognise what areas of the language give them problems by again reviewing their own notes and their own written work. They are encouraged to identify these areas and talk to other learners about the problems. The increased responsibility they are given is preparation for their continuing independent language study when they finish their school courses.

Here is one example of an activity which encourages them to review vocabulary and identify their own problem areas. It is a learner-generated cloze test. Learners first review their notes and written work and identify two grammar items they have problems with, for example, *such a or suggest + -ing or are used to + -ing versus used to do,* and so on. They also choose

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five recently-learnt words which they wish to review. They then work in groups of three or four and explain their lexical items and the grammar problems they have. At this stage learners can help each other to clarify problems. As a group they write a text incorporating ten of their total number of lexical items. They also include examples of some or all of the grammar items they talked about earlier. Once they have completed the text they rewrite it, leaving one-word blanks. They can omit words from their original lexical lists and elements of the grammatical items. They also prepare keys for the test. Tests circulate among the groups, and learners do them and check their answers. By identifying and talking about their own grammar problems learners may be able to sort out the problems.

Conclusion

The learner's role in this approach involves taking more responsibility for what they learn, whether by selecting topics or vocabulary they wish to practise. It also asks the learner to take a more active role in diagnosing problem areas in their English and to co-operate with other learners in peer teaching and, indeed, peer testing. The role the learner has may make for effective learning within the classroom and may also prepare the learners for independent learning outside and beyond the classroom.

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Issues in self-access

Susan Sheerin, Bell School, Cambridge, UK

1   What is self-access?

Self-access refers to a way - or ways - of organising learning materials so that learners can use them independently by means of:

- open, easy (physical) access

- integral feedback and support within the materials

- materials packaged so that one item can be attempted in one sitting (not too long) or, alternatively, pathways through published books

- appropriate support and guidance for learners from teachers or advisers.

Examples of activities which students can engage in through self-access materials include:

- grammar

- exercises on particular structures

- discovery tasks: working out rules from examples of usage

- vocabulary

    – game-like activities such as crosswords

    – presentation of vocabulary connected with a particular topic (e.g. via a text)

- listening

    – dictation

    – listening to a talk and taking notes

    – listening to a short story while reading the text

- speaking

    – pronunciation work

    – communication activities in pairs.

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Although self-access materials can be kept in a cupboard in a classroom or made portable for several classes in a box or on a trolley, they are usually located in a self-access centre with technological equipment such as cassette players, video players, computers, etc.

There are different kind of self-access centres:

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        Stand-alone centres              Attached to a teaching
         (not attached to a                   instituation
       teaching instituation)



   Income          Funded          Integrated       Independent
 generating       resource        with classes      of classes
                 centre, e.g.
                 for teachers
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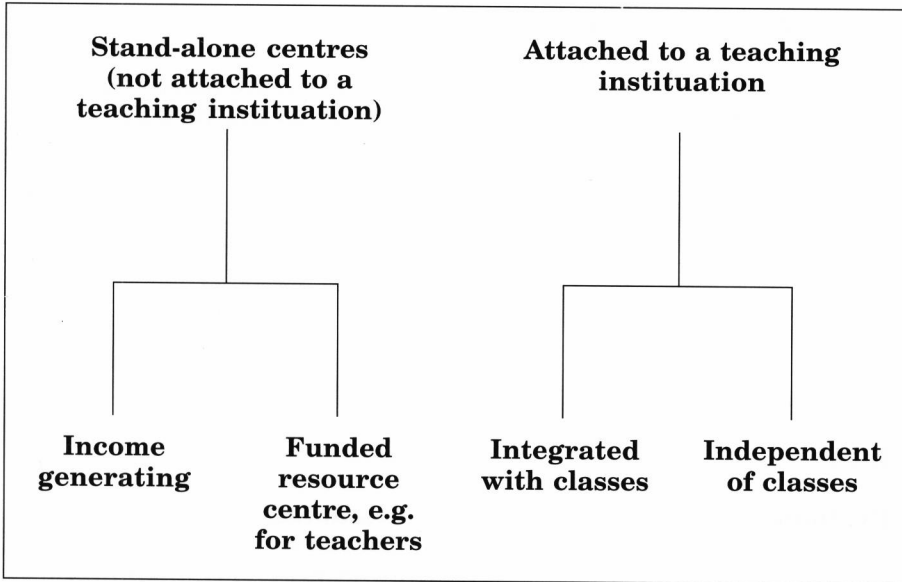
2   What are the benefits of self-access centres?

Here are just some of the advantages of a self-access centre from a learner's point of view:

1   Students can use the centre and work at times which suit them. This is especially useful for those whose circumstances make it difficult to attend classes at fixed times.

2   Maximum use is made of the material, and this is particularly necessary in situations where materials and resources are scarce.

3   Self-access learning increases the amount of exposure to the target language over and above available class time. This is very beneficial in situations where class time is limited and insufficient for adequate progress.

4   Teachers can use self-access materials to help learners create an individualised programme using materials appropriate to them as individuals.

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There are, of course, many practical issues which lie outside the scope of this brief overview but which need careful consideration if the full benefits of a self-access centre are to be realised. These issues include: use of floor space (layout, etc.); furniture and fittings; technological equipment; classification and retrieval of materials; packaging, labelling and display of materials; staffing.

3 Self-access and independent learning

Self-access has arisen out of the learner independence movement, which questioned traditional, teacher-centred approaches to teaching and learning, where:

The teacher...	The learner...
Knows about language and language learning	Is **ignorant** or has **misconceptions**
Sets objectives, **selects** materials etc.	**Accepts** and/or **criticizes**
Intiates ideas, talks	**Reacts**
Evaluates performance	Is **evaluated**
Takes responsibility for students' learning	**Doesn't take responsibility**

The problems with the status quo are seen as the following:

1   There is the same diet for all, regardless of individual differences

2   There is a hidden curriculum, namely that learners need to be taught - otherwise they cannot learn

3   The status quo situation outlined above tends to lead to lack of involvement by students in their own learning, which in turn leads to low self-investment and low motivation

4   Language use is restricted in a teacher-centred classroom because learners react and do not initiate

5   Learners can't use the target language outside the classroom.

A need was felt for new roles for teachers and learners where learners would have more choice, more attention would be paid to them as individuals with differing needs, and they would become more involved in the learning decisions which affect them and so take more responsibility for their own learning. Self-access centres do not guarantee such an ideal, but they are

one very practical means of increasing choice, individualisation and independence.

The new roles for teachers involve them in becoming less paternal/maternal and less directive, while acting more in the role of adviser, consultant and resource manager. Learners on the other hand need to be less passive, more participative and, crucially, to accept responsibility for their own learning. It should be said, however, that taking on new roles is never easy and teachers and learners need support in this enterprise.

4   Support for learners

Learner autonomy cannot be achieved by simply leaving learners to their own devices. Learners need guidance:

1   to appreciate the possibilities - what is available? where? how?

2   to analyse their own needs and set personal objectives

3   to plan a learning programme and select appropriate activities and materials

4   to evaluate their own progress meaningfully

5   to provide encouragement, support and motivation - human contact!

Learner training and learner development in all the above areas are fundamental to the success of independent learning.

5   Evaluation

When we consider evaluation of self-access, we need to consider what or who is being evaluated by whom and for what purpose. The criteria for success will vary accordingly.

Students can be evaluated in terms of their language improvement and/or their development as efficient learners. They can evaluate themselves by assessing to what extent they have achieved their personal objectives or they can be evaluated by some external agent, that is to say by the teacher or by some public examination.

The self-access centre can be evaluated in terms of its quality (of materials, facilities, service, etc.) and/or the quantity (of materials, equipment, users, etc.) and/or its cost effectiveness. It can be evaluated by students (the users), staff and the management or funding organisation. Ideally, the purpose of evaluation should be to effect constant improvement and development.

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6   Summary

This paper has attempted to offer a brief overview of some the issues involved in self-access centres and self-access learning. There is much more that could be said on every aspect and those that wish to pursue specific topics are referred to in the references.

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Trends in European language testing

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Introduction

There has been more than one survey of the directions being taken by language testing in the 1990s (Skehan 1991, Alderson 1991) but these have tended to deal with the internal mechanics and applications of tests. This paper will attempt to chronicle current trends in European language examinations, i.e. publicly-available qualifications, mainly in the non-school sector, in the light of political developments in recent years, such as the development of the Single Market and the velvet revolution in central and eastern Europe. There is always a danger in trying to gaze into the future - one's crystal balls may not be crystal!

1   European practice

It must be said at the outset that there is no centralised European 'system' of foreign-language examinations governed from Brussels, Strasbourg or anywhere else. There are, however, a number of features which may be seen to be emerging as European norms:

- there is, in most countries, a growing non-school sector providing public examinations which are available to both adults and children, usually without the requirement that they should have previously undertaken an approved language course;

- these examinations are usually designed and conducted separately from school examinations such as the 'mature' or equivalent school-leaving examinations, although in some cases the two types of examination may originate from the same institution;

- school examinations are usually local, regional or national. There are few internationally-available school examinations - the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge's International General Certificate in Secondary Education (IGCSE) are notable exceptions;

- non-school examinations, on the other hand, are usually available internationally, sometimes on a worldwide basis;

- non-school examinations are usually public rather than internal institutional qualifications.

2   Importance of foreign languages

The importance of foreign languages is now fully acknowledged across the new Europe. In schools, more and younger students are learning foreign languages, and outside schools the need for foreign languages for reasons

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of mobility, trade, tourism and employment is well recognised. The increase has come in the larger languages, notably English, German and Spanish, but surveys have also revealed a marked regional increase in 'minor' languages such as Dutch, or non-European languages such as Japanese.

3   Importance of foreign-language qualifications

The increasing demand for foreign-language qualifications reflects this increasing mobility, both in advance (foreign language training is being expanded in schools and universities) and in retrospect (as adults seek to upgrade their language skills). In most cases, the non-school qualifications tend to originate in the countries where a language is native.

4   Mutual recognition

There is a trend towards mutual recognition of all European qualifications. This movement started with Convention 15 of the Council of Europe in the early 1950s and has been reinforced by subsequent agreements and legislation. However, it has to be acknowledged that legal precedent has not always been converted into practice, largely because of unfamiliarity with qualifications.

5   Control of foreign-language qualifications

While school examinations may be controlled by governments through ministries or inspectors, there is very little control over foreign-language qualifications in the non-school sector (the examinations of the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board – PLAB – of the General Medical Council in Britain are a notable exception). This means that the systems for school and non-school examinations are largely separate and learners of school age are generally not permitted to substitute a non-school qualification for their school-leaving examination. However, more mature or overseas students are generally permitted to present alternative examinations for university entrance, although this often remains a matter for the admissions tutor.

6   Independence of foreign-language qualifications

The lack of government control means that foreign-language examinations are offered by a range of independent examining boards:

- Universities, such as the English language examinations of the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or the graded tests produced by the European consortium in a range of languages. It should be stressed these are *not* examinations intended for the university's own students and would not normally be available to them.

- Chambers of Commerce, such as the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry or the Franco-British Chamber of Commerce.

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- Cultural organisations such as the Goethe Institute.

- Institutions concerned solely with testing, such as CITO in the Netherlands or the Education Testing Service in the USA.

7 Educational objectives

Largely as a result of the pioneering work of the Council of Europe, language testing in Europe is mostly seen as a process of educational assessment rather than mere measurement. It is the communicative objectives of language teaching and the washback effect of testing which have increasingly come to set the agenda for language examinations, rather than an imperative of statistical reliability and a denial of any washback effect (let alone the possibility that multiple choice questions and the omission of tests of speaking and writing might have a damaging pedagogical influence).

8 European co-operation in foreign-language examinations

The expense, range of languages and the need for compatible standards and practices has led to an increase in European co-operation. This co-operation has taken three principle forms:

- an amalgamation of boards to form larger ones better able to undertake new developments and cross-language initiatives

- new associations working towards common standards and codes of practice, such as the Association of British ESOL Examining Boards (ABEEB) and the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

- initiatives across several languages, such as the range of examinations offered by the European Consortium or the International Certificate Conference (ICC).

9 Standards and codes of practice

Although there is no centralised control of foreign language examinations, there have been moves towards the introduction of agreed codes of practice by major associations of boards such as ALTE and ABEEB. These codes range from fairness in preparing examinations that do not discriminate on grounds other than language, to the development of common practice in areas such as standardisation, reliability, examiner training, comparability, and security. These codes of practice are available to the public and also covers areas of public information such as the publication of syllabuses, literature on examination administration, and interpretation of results.

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- right of access to information for users

- standardisation in question setting and pre-testing

- standardisation in marketing/training of markers

- standardisation from series to series

- interpretation of results

- appeals procedures

- confidentiality and security

- administration - fees, schedules, procedures, etc

CODES OF PRACTICE

10   Frameworks of levels

One result of the increasing co-operation in foreign language examinations in Europe has been a movement towards agreed and defined frameworks and levels. These are basically ladders with agreed numbers of rungs, and with the level of each rung defined in terms of language proficiency. This trend towards defined levels began with the Council of Europe's *Threshold* and *Waystage levels,* which define learning output. The application to language examinations started with the English-Speaking Union's nine-level *Framework* (Carrol and West 1989). Similar and, perhaps, compatible frameworks have been developed by the European Consortium for Graded Tests (six levels) and the Association of Language Testers in Europe (five levels).

11   Areas of growth and contraction

In recent years there seem to have been three notable areas of growth and contraction in foreign-language examinations.

ESU	ALTE	EC
9	5	6
8	4	5
7	3	4
6	2	3
5	1	2
4		1
3		
2		
1		

ESU: English-Speaking Union
ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe
EC: European Consortium

FRAMEWORK OF LEVELS
(approximate comparison)

ELT in the European Foreign Language Classroom

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- Despite their apparent attraction, examinations in languages for specific purposes have proved costly to develop and limited in their appeal. The reasons are partly to be found in definition (how to make Language for Specific Purposes – LSP – examination sufficiently specific without reducing the market), and partly in application (many large organisations prefer to accept a general language qualification and offer their own LSP courses).

- There has been a decline in the number of examinations that include translation or bilingual elements. The reasons are both pedagogic (translation is no longer widely used as a method of teaching languages) and partly commercial (bilingual examinations inevitably have a limited market).

- The largest growth area in the past five years has been in examinations for young learners, many of whom attend foreign language classes outside of school hours. Examinations set standards and motivate both learners and parents.

## 12   Technology and foreign-language qualifications

Computers are still not widely used in the actual conduct of language examinations, but they are increasingly used in the preparation (item selection and paper construction), trialing (pre-testing and item banking), administration (entry and record sheets), and marking (optical-mark readers) of examinations. We may also note the wider application of technology in tests of listening through the use of language laboratories, radio and video equipment.

Conclusions

There seems to be every reason to expect the demand for foreign-language examinations to continue to increase as Europe becomes more integrated. As this happens we may note two features which characterise other aspects of European integration: a striving for common standards and practices, and time-consuming disagreements as the standards of different bodies seem to conflict with emerging European ones.

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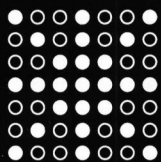
The British Council

**Best of ELTECS
Theme 3:
British Studies**

Current trends in British Studies

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Area studies about Britain are not new; in 1948, for example, the British Council held a successful British Studies event in Australia. However, recent developments in the field suggest that from the late 1980s British Studies has entered a new phase of increased activity. It is one which marks a transition from traditional cognitive modes of study to those which offer a more active role for the learner.

Until the end of the last decade, Britain and the British Council had never fully developed area studies. Perhaps this was due to a British reticence about bringing the secrets of our national life and culture to the world's attention. Such reserve certainly did not seem to afflict the US, Canada, Japan or France, who had all been maturing area studies of their own. Whatever the reason, it was a request from Chinese universities for advice on British Studies which got us and our partners in British Universities thinking about the subject. The result was a number of projects which are beginning to bear fruit in China today. At the same time, social and political changes in Europe and in Britain itself were having a decisive influence on British Studies.

In western Europe, the movement towards greater political and economic union made the mutual understanding of national and regional cultures an imperative. This process was catalysed by such factors as the mobility of students and business people, and the growth of real-time communication across Europe by satellite, computer and fax. Meanwhile, after 1989, those same governments were responding to the profound changes in eastern and central Europe with offers to assist in educational and social reform. A major part of Britain's aid came through the British Council in the form of support for English language teaching: teacher education programmes, resource centres and a number of posts for consultants and lecturers. Some of these teachers and advisers working with counterparts in the region were British Studies specialists. Thus, in response to an urgent need to modernise views of western European societies, a pool of British Studies expertise and resources developed in tandem with English language teaching. And from joint ventures in many countries have come new materials, textbooks and audio-visual resources, which the British Council has published, either itself or in partnership with others.

The interweaving of these two strands, mainstream ELT and the study of British culture, signalled a rapprochement between the teaching of language and the investigation of cultures. It chimed with new thinking about language teaching throughout Europe which sought to restore a cultural dimension to the learning process. Too often this had been subordinated to the promotion of English as a tool for international communication.

The increased fascination with Britain stems partially from a perception of it as a much more diverse entity in a state of accelerating change: a role amplified on the world stage through the echo-chamber of the English language. Moreover, if Britain is changing, then perhaps a new way of studying it is appropriate; a method which can account for change, look at how new social identities are being generated, and take these dynamic cultural processes as its object of study rather than attempt to distil the cultural essence of Britain. Below, I have adapted the scheme which an Austrian commentator, Werner Delanoy, has used to represent this shift from traditional fact-based studies of British Life and Institutions to a New British Studies with its emphasis on the experience of the learner within a comparative perspective.

Civilisation-type studies	New British Studies
Fact-based	*Experiential*
moving from state to state	exploring dynamics of culture
objective	subjective
separable from language learning	language-in-culture
culture in 'essence'	culture as signifying practice
native speaker	intercultural mediator

Adapted from *Cultural learning in the FL-classroom: from Landeskunde to New Cultural Studies* by W Delanoy *in ELT News* 22, Feb 1994. British Council and Teachers of English in Austria.

So we could say that Britain's identity seems to differ depending on how it is studied. On the one hand, it is solidly present as a geopolitical entity; it can be measured by the facts and statistics which are indispensable for its interpretation. On the other hand, when you seek to define its national characteristics, you find a number of accounts which differ according to their regional, ethnic, gender or socio-economic origins. At this end of the spectrum of study, 'Britain' seems hardly to exist at all. Instead, an active production of meaning becomes the object of study and the search for a single *representative* statement is replaced by an examination of a number of different *representations*.

To these two complementary approaches the student outside Britain automatically adds another dimension, and it is the most important. By explicitly or implicitly comparing Britain with another culture, that of the student's own country, British Studies becomes a genuinely inter-cultural activity.

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Four into one might go

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Abstract

The challenge to the dominance of English culture within these islands has tended to assert the uniqueness of each national culture at the expense of overlooking the relationships between them. More recently there has been a tendency to examine these relationships while trying to maintain a respect for cultural specificities. This development should not lead to the homogenisation of the four (or more) cultures involved, but rather to a sense of their mutual indebtedness, allowing us to think afresh about each of them.

Northern Ireland provides an interesting, even fraught, location from which to consider the issue of British Studies. In Northern Ireland the idea of British Studies is inextricably linked not merely with cultural unionism, but also with political Unionism. The two forms of unionism are themselves linked, but not inseparably. At one level cultural unionism, like any cultural politics, serves as an ideological reinforcement of political unionism. At another level, however, cultural unionism is merely an acknowledgement that because of political history, geographical proximity, and a (to a large extent) shared language, the cultures of these islands are subject to an interweaving of influences. If this means that there can be no 'pure' Irishness (or for that matter 'pure' Englishness, Scottishness or Welshness) it does raise something that can usefully be called British culture. When Roddy Doyle's *Family* was recently shown on both RTE and BBC it could be viewed in at least two ways. Firstly, it could be seen as a modern Irish television drama which acknowledged the specifics of contemporary urban Ireland, largely through its portrayal of the breakdown of a particular idea of the family in the absence of the Catholicism which had initially given rise to and sustained it. Secondly, as a BBC drama in the tradition of *Play for Today* and Alan Bleasdale's *Boys from the Blackstuff* it could be seen as engaging with issues affecting the lives of working-class urban families throughout these islands. It is possible, in other words, to view the cultural production of these islands as having a dual existence: one in which the specifics of locale are emphasised; and another in which what is important is what is said in general terms about living in a largely English-speaking society offshore from mainland Europe. All of which is to say that the dynamics of culture may be affected, but are not necessarily constrained, by national boundaries. It does, however, leave open the question as to whether British Studies should be involved in the study of this kind of duality, or whether there is an object of study for British Studies which could be viewed as a singular entity.

In this context Northern Ireland can be seen both as a barrier between (at least) two cultures - the Southern Irish and the British - and as a place where those same two cultures overlap to produce something specific.

In either case it is certainly true that in Northern Ireland the issues underlying the idea of 'British Studies' have an urgency that is not necessarily felt in, say, the English Home Counties, though that is not to say that the culture of the English Home Counties stands in no need of such urgent study. Here in Northern Ireland there are those for whom the advent of British Studies would be seen as a welcome reinforcement of the Union, while there are others for whom British Studies would necessarily be suspect for the same reasons. In this context we must ask whether it is possible to develop a British Studies which allows for the interrogation of such issues rather than a British Studies which is predicated on the begging of these questions. Given that the audience for British Studies stretches far beyond these islands, such issues must be made central since they are precisely the aspects of a potential British Studies which would allow students in other countries, notably in eastern Europe, to develop analogies with their own cultural circumstances and to develop forms of analysis capable of dealing with the relationships between culture and power, and the ways in which culture changes through time and under the pressure of politics.

Northern Ireland is not unique in this regard, either in historical terms or in contemporary perspective: Robert Crawford, for example, has written perceptively and convincingly on the origins of the academic discipline of 'English Literature' in the cultural brokerage which constituted much Scottish literary and cultural activity after the 1707 Act of Union. In the contemporary period, Scotland must look to events in Northern Ireland with a keen interest for what they might have to say about political and cultural developments there. England and Wales also provide their own perspectives on the development of British Studies, and it must be emphasised that the English perspective is only one among others, despite the long-standing sense that it is the dominant one.

English literature and culture has and continues to exercise dominance within these islands, now attempting to subsume, now to marginalise, the other cultures involved; one has only to remark that the usual title for literature departments in these islands is 'English' to understand this. Irish, Scottish and Welsh literary cultures have been seen for a long time, from this perspective, as provincial cultures dependent on this central dominant culture. Thus, the dominant models of cultural interaction within the islands are of the metropolitan versus the provincial, or of the central versus the peripheral variety. This is despite the evidence that the rise of what is now recognisable as English Studies is ineradicably 'provincial' or 'peripheral'. It was in 1762 that the Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres was established at Edinburgh University and while University College, London began instruction in English Language and Literature in the 1820s and King's College, London established a Chair in English and History in the 1830s, that decade saw the establishment of similar chairs in the Universities of Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, and the Queen's Colleges at Belfast, Cork and Galway, while it was in Manchester in the 1850s that a Chair of English Language and Literature separated English from History. Oxford and Cambridge lagged well behind in these developments.

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Not unnaturally this unwarranted (except by its political power) metropolitan English dominance has been challenged by other cultures. This challenge has tended towards the consideration of national cultures (especially but not peculiarly evident in Ireland) and has therefore asserted the uniqueness of each culture at the cost of overlooking the relationships between them. However, this need to assert cultural specificity is understandable given that the too easy assumption that anything of worth could be taken as English had to be challenged. A residual suspicion remains that British Studies is really no more than a continuation by other means of this metropolitan cultural carpetbagging.

Notwithstanding this justifiable suspicion, there are elements of the cultures of these islands which must be understood not only by reference to their local genesis but to their intercultural existence. Think about Yeats on Spenser and Shakespeare; or about Heaney making the English lyric eat stuff it has never eaten before. Think also about an R S Thomas writing in English despite his Welsh nationalism, or think of ways in which Somhairle MacGill-Eain might be properly considered within the mainstream of a putative British culture. In this regard the work of Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill can stand as exemplary. Writing in Irish and revivifying that as a poetic language, she reaches a larger audience through a process of negotiation and collaboration with other writers that is both too complex and too elegant to be called translation. Her volume *Pharaoh's Daughter* therefore functions not simply as a translation of her work but rather as an anthology which bears her impress as writer, and carries also the results of this negotiation and collaboration; intertext rather than text. Her work, because it involves the move from one language to another, makes visible the intercultural and intertextual negotiation (witting or not) of all work produced in these islands. Heaney read in England is identical to but not the same as Heaney read in Northern Ireland; Martin Amis read in London is different from Martin Amis read in the Highland or Caernarvon. British Studies, as I understand it, would therefore function not as a covert reassertion of an unwarranted metropolitan English cultural dominance but rather as a space in which these interactions and the attendant issues of the relationship between power and culture could be examined. It would function then as an acknowledgement of inter-relationships while still respecting the specifics of locale.

British Studies might also be the space in which several writers could at last find a solid footing. I am thinking of those writers who, at the moment, fall into the gaps between cultures; from an Irish perspective we can refer to Elizabeth Bown, Louis MacNeice, William Trevor, and Maurice Leitch, all of whom have had at best unstable reputations because they have seemed not to belong wholly to any one culture.

The development of a British Studies, I would want to argue, should not tend to the homogenisation of the four (or more) cultures involved, but rather to a more developed sense of their mutual indebtedness and to the ways in which a sense of this mutual indebtedness allows us to think afresh

about each of these cultures. Some recent work has begun to carry out this project. I am thinking of the work of Robert Crawford, Linda Colley, John Wilson Foster, Roy Foster, Hugh Kearney, and Edna Longley, who in their different ways, and often for very different reasons, examine these inter-relationships while trying to maintain a respect for cultural specificities.

If there has been a necessary 'nationalisation' of cultures in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and if this has led to an attenuated sense of each of those cultures in excluding interconnections, then the case of English culture is much more grievously affected by this situation than other cases. English culture, for so long assured of its dominance not by any cultural attributes but by its association with the metropolitan centres of power and distribution, has lacked any real sense of introspection, any ability to consider its own conditions of production, with the consequence that 'Englishness' has been defined in a narrow and apparently unconscious way. The emaciated and febrile 'Englishness' that has emerged from this process has so little to do with what many regard as the mainsprings of culture in contemporary England that the redefinitions necessary to the successful development of British Studies can only be of benefit to 'Englishness' by allowing it to see that it is one culture among others, that it too has to consider its inter-relationships with other cultures. Just as importantly, if it can no longer plunder other cultures in the name of a Britain which, as Christopher Harvie has pointed out, was an elite construction designed to hold together the potentially fissile cultures within it, it will have to begin to think properly about its own specifics.

English, then, should be challenged even more than the other cultures by the rise of British Studies. There is a need to reinforce rather than protest about metropolitan 'double-think'; to reinforce it, that is, until it reaches a level of awareness similar to that enforced on those of us who, living happily at the centre of our own universes, are continually told that we are actually living on the periphery of someone else's. Such experience forces 'double-think' as, in the end, a healthy way of coping with cultural experience; a way not of being torn between two cultures, but rather as having in one's possession two cultures. Putting that another way: I feel at home with Yeats or Joyce, but don't mind visiting Shakespeare or Wordsworth. British Studies should allow us all such a double possession.

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Cultural aspects in foreign language teaching

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The question of culture learning within or in connection with foreign language is being widely discussed at the present time. I would like to look at this question in the context of FLT at schools. As a teacher trainer involved in preparing teachers of English for their work in language classrooms, at all types of schools and at all levels, I would like to tie theory to practice. And for me, theoretical considerations on the place of cultural studies within foreign language learning have to apply to teaching-learning situations which involve pupils, of all ages, being taught general English language courses by non-native teachers of English. It is vital to keep this in mind if we want our theories to have an impact, to change and to improve English language learning.

Let me briefly outline the situation in Germany: every German pupil receives at least some instruction in a foreign language while he or she is at school. For most children the first and most important - and sometimes the only - foreign language is English, which some encounter as early as Class 3 in primary school and others may study for a lengthy period of nine to eleven years. At present, the vast majority of all pupils begin with English as their first foreign language at the age of ten or eleven, when they are in their first year at secondary school. However, a number of German states plan to introduce foreign language teaching at primary level within the next few years. This will undoubtedly lead to changes in the general format of foreign language instruction at secondary level.

One might look at the cultural side of foreign language teaching from two perspectives. The first is the outward view. In this we try and place English language teaching in our state school system within a global framework of English language teaching worldwide. On the one hand, *this* perspective needs to take into account the role of English as *the* international language. Critical voices refer to 'linguistic imperialism' and 'linguicism' (Phillipson 1992). On the other hand, German English language teaching as *foreign* language teaching is part of teaching about the world, of global education, and should also reflect global issues. More and more foreign language educators urge the language teaching profession to take up the challenges of peace education (e.g. Christ 1988, Freudenstein 1992), of education for human rights, of education for the environment and of education for language rights, most recently in a report which was prepared for UNESCO (Batley *et al* 1993).

The second perspective is the inward view. It focuses on the relationship between language learning and culture learning. Foreign language learning implies and embraces culture learning. As foreign language educators and teacher trainers, we have to be aware of this relationship and suggest ways in which it may be reflected in English language teaching

curricula and methods. My paper concentrates on this second perspective but, of course, the role of English in the world today affects our ideas of cultural learning within English language teaching. The two perspectives mentioned cannot be kept totally separate.

It seems to be generally accepted that language learning and culture learning are linked. Learning a language therefore implies learning something about culture as well. One might even say that learning about another culture in depth is only possible by learning the language as well.

Cultural learning in the foreign language classroom touches three spheres: empathy and understanding, knowledge and communicative skill. A foreign language course which incorporates all three aspects trains its learners for intercultural competence and is likely to be an enriching experience. Again, there is general agreement among syllabus designers and curriculum planners to strive for intercultural competence in the foreign language. But there are divergent ideas of how one gets there, or if one can reach this goal at all, and different notions of what exactly the learners should be able to do as interculturally competent individuals.

I feel that two aspects of the intercultural component of foreign language teaching have so far been largely overlooked. The first of these is the issue of fitting cultural learning to the age group of the learners. By talking about the learners in general we tacitly assume that cultural learning is the same for everybody. But are children and adolescents capable of perceiving, interpreting and learning cultural matters in the same way as adults? The second aspect which - to my knowledge - has not been given a great deal of attention, is the role of the teacher as a mediator of cultural learning. In discussing the three components of cultural learning I shall try and shift the focus a little to the learners and their teachers. So far, however, I find that I have far more questions than answers.

1   Understanding the other

Let me begin with the area of empathy and understanding. In recent years the German discussion of this aspect of cultural learning has been dominated by two terms: *fremd* and *verstehen*. I felt a cultural gap very acutely when I was trying to find adequate translations for these words. The German noun *Fremdverstehen*, which combines the two terms, and which to my mind labels the field of empathy and attitude in cultural learning very succinctly, cannot be replaced by just one English noun without losing a number of important ideas. Something which is *fremd* may be called strange, unknown, exotic, distant, foreign and alien in English. Each one of these adjectives denotes part of the idea of *fremd*.

A great deal of thought has been given to analysing the other, or the foreigner, in a range of academic disciplines: sociology, ethnology, philosophy, psychoanalysis and psychology, to name but a few. It is difficult to see in which way these theories may be applicable to foreign language

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learning in schools. School learning differs in significant ways from personal encounters with other cultures and with foreigners which form the foundation of philosophical and other studies. Further and more essentially, foreign language learning in schools is for children and adolescents, whose perceptions and reactions are not necessarily the same as those of adults. This important caveat should be kept in mind when we consider what it means to strive for an understanding of the other in our teaching.

Julia Kristeva (1990: 213) has pointed out that we are all foreigners in the multinational and multicultural societies of today, no longer united and protected by a common philosophy and religion, dependent on our very personal moral code in our encounters with the others. When we meet the 'other', the foreigner, we are reminded of the unknown, the alien part within ourselves, she says (1990: 11). Kristeva claims that those who realize they are foreigners inside themselves will neither suffer from their status as foreigners in the outside world nor will they glory in it (1990: 209). Kristeva's view seems to me to be a very European one, because it is founded on an idea of human personality where the individual is aware of the facets of his or her identity.

Can we assume that children possess this kind of self-awareness? Probably not. Developmental psychology says that it is only with the end of puberty that each individual's identity becomes firmly established. If we leave aside the issue of general identity formation and just look at the growth of the children's ideas about their own national and regional identity, we have to refer to studies undertaken several decades ago by Jean Piaget and Anne-Marie Weil in Geneva (cf. Schmitt 1979: 51ff) and Gustav Jahoda (1963) at Glasgow. Their findings suggest that the process of becoming aware of one's own national and cultural identity unfolds in stages and continues beyond primary school age. Some of the ten to eleven-year-olds in Jahoda's study were not able to distinguish clearly between nationality (British), region (Scotland) and language (English). One child said, 'one week I'm Scottish and the next week I'm British' (Jahoda 1963: 60). There is a dire need for more research in this field so that we may find out if the TV-watching children of today retain these developmental stages. Is it possible that the greater exposure to other cultures which comes both from TV and their personal experience as tourists or within their own classrooms has accelerated the children's grasp of nationality and cultural diversity?

However, the fuzzy notion very young children have of their own national identity can lead to behaviour which is reminiscent of Kristeva's analysis, they are all foreigners. Whoever has the chance to observe young children of different cultural backgrounds, who are strangers to each other, begin playing together, will notice how successfully they manage to interact, to establish a flow of communication across all language barriers, to accept each other as partners in the game.

There is another aspect, in which these children differ from adults. They perceive other things. What strikes adults as strange or foreign is not

always considered noteworthy by children. Therefore we need to understand how children perceive others. A number of psychological studies used the children's descriptions of other people as their starting-point. These studies suggest that the development of person perception runs through a number of different stages. With increasing age, the children's descriptions change from the concrete-like appearance, to the more abstract, like attitudes, and from a characterisation of people as either simply pleasant or unpleasant to a more differentiated picture (cf. Rogers 1978). So far, the anecdotal evidence from lay observations of children's behaviour seems to be backed up by psychological research.

Psychological theories of perception have established that we perceive both on a conscious and a subconscious level (Guski 1989: 11). As we perceive our surroundings in order to orient ourselves in the world and to survive, we structure and evaluate our perceptions according to certain rules. But because our perceptions are also influenced by our momentary needs and attitudes, certain things in our environment acquire greater importance than others. This explains in part why children see differently and consequently act differently from adults; their needs and interests do not always coincide.

A further factor to be taken into account when discussing variations in perceptions is our knowledge of the world. What we know, and what we therefore expect, considerably influences what we see. Helmut Heuer has shown that this is true for the intercultural perceptions of language learners (Heuer 1992). Again, it is obvious that children and adults must differ in this respect. However, it is by no means the case that adults always see things more accurately because of their greater knowledge of the world. A child's view may be far more perceptive and penetrating just because it is not hampered by culturally biased presuppositions emerging from a greater store of knowledge.

Finally, the way in which we come into contact with the 'other' may play an important role. So far, I have tacitly assumed that meeting the 'other', the foreigner, happens as a personal encounter between individual people. But meeting the foreigner in the English Language classroom occurs mostly - and for a majority of pupils exclusively - through the medium of texts and pictures and the work of the teacher with these materials. Learning theory has taught us that experimental learning is superior to book learning in terms of retention and involvement, but we know little of the effects of these types of learning in terms of retention and involvement, but we know little of the effects of these types of learning on the development of perception and understanding in children. It is important for teachers to know how children see cultural differences when they occur in factual or in fictional texts, in films or in role plays, or in real-life situations and personal encounters. It is even more important for teachers to know how they can help children in their learning and understanding. Especially with younger pupils, the teacher's personality and attitude towards the 'other' will certainly colour her pupils' perceptions and reactions.

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Thinking about how we perceive the 'other' must be followed by thinking about how we interpret the 'other' and how we react to it. The English translations for the German adjective *fremd*, listed above, point to a number of possible reactions. Something strange, different, alien may be considered interesting, exotic, boring, incomprehensible or threatening among other things. For our goal of understanding the 'other' some of these reactions are less desirable than others.

If we reject the 'other' as boring, we refuse to become involved. If we are fascinated by its exotic nature, we are simply reacting to the obvious differences from the familiar. The philosopher Bernhard Waldenfeld (1990: 57ff) has outlined how we try to cope with the 'other' and the alien by appropriating it in various ways. According to Waldenfeld an ethnocentric attitude shows itself in taking one's own values, behaviour and ideas as the yardstick against which to measure the 'other'. It is only when we stop seeing the 'other' purely in contrast to our own culture and begin to reconsider the familiar in the light of the 'other' that we may understand. Waldenfeld argues that we need to experience the 'other', to enter into a dialogue with it. Can we be certain, however, that this process finds its climax in an understanding of the 'other'? Can we possibly understand other cultures at all? There are two schools of thought concerning this question. The first one claims that the other culture must remain strange. As we are able to understand something only on the basis of our personal knowledge and experience, a foreign culture will never be fully understood (cf. Bremner 1989). Hans Hunfield thinks that the 'other' has to remain a permanent riddle and that we should learn to live with our inability to understand the 'other' (cf. esp. Hunfeld 1991, 1992).

In the context of foreign language teaching, and it is interesting to note that both authors quoted who are supporting this pessimistic view are foreign language educators, this position has serious repercussions. An approach which stresses the foreign culture as basically incomprehensible and enigmatic will rely heavily on those aspects which are very different from the home culture. Therefore the pessimistic view of intercultural understanding might foster a more superficial and distanced attitude in the learners. They could feel that there was no need even to try and understand the 'other'.

The second school of thought acknowledges the problems which exist for any attempt at intercultural understanding, and yet it does not view the gap between the other and us as unbridgeable, because we all inhabit a common world. For his 'pedagogy of intercultural understanding' Lothar Bredella (1992) draws together potent arguments from a wide range of disciplines. His conclusion is that some kind of intercultural understanding is possible. He says:

> ...the methods for understanding the foreign do not have to make the students forget their prior experiences, concepts and values but can acknowledge them. The success of understanding the foreign

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> depends on the intensity of the interaction in which one's concepts
> and values are clarified and put at risk in the encounter with those
> of the foreign culture.
>
> (Bredella 1992: 594)

Christine Schwerdtfeger (1991) draws our attention to cultural symbols as
the bedrock of intercultural understanding. She uses the term 'cultural
symbols' for those areas of experience which are universal to humankind,
e.g. our concepts, values and behaviour as regards time or space, death or
illness, evil or friendship. It is obvious from this list that a view of
intercultural understanding which touches on these basic issues of life
must recognise and give space to feelings. Therefore Schwerdtfeger rightly
stresses the importance of emotions for our encounters with the 'other'.
Her aims as a foreign language educator are to make learners aware of
cultural symbols and, consequently, to link this heightened perceptiveness
to their own feelings and their foreign language learning. Awareness
becomes a key term.

Aiming for an understanding of the 'other' in foreign language teaching
points to the educational dimension of foreign language learning. Helping
learners achieve intercultural sensitivity, establishing a willingness to
understand, creating an open-minded attitude towards their own and the
target cultures, taking their feelings and perceptions into account: in all
these ways foreign language teaching can contribute to the personal growth
of the learners and pave the way for lifelong intercultural learning. Yet in
the classroom teaching attitudes and feelings are always connected with
some topic or situation. Cultural awareness needs information and
discussion to grow. This brings me to the second aspect, that of knowledge.

2   Cultural kernels

The teaching of facts about the target culture has been a traditional
component of foreign language teaching in Germany for some time. Though
there is no general agreement on a canon of knowledge to be imparted,
nevertheless certain criteria for the inclusion of cultural information in
foreign language textbooks have been developed. Information should be
correct, authentic, topical, representative and unbiased (cf. Sauer 1975,
Grothuesmann/Sauer 1991, Doyé 1991).

The problem of material selection is a very serious one for English Language
Teaching. For a start there are quite a number of different Englishes
spoken in our present world, then there is the role of English as an
international language and, finally, there are many different English-
speaking cultures to choose from. What should school children be taught
about this array of English-based or English-using cultures? Is it necessary
for them to be familiar with, e.g. the geography of Britain, American pop
culture or the history of Australia? Or should we restrict our teaching to
the everyday life in one of these countries? We may find answers to these
questions when we put the acquisition of knowledge about the target

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cultures into the general context of teaching for intercultural competence by using English.

Which functions does factual knowledge about a single or several target cultures fulfil in this context? With regard to working towards an understanding of the 'other', the cultural aspect discussed so far, knowledge plays a supportive role. A foreign language learner will be able to arrive at a more balanced view of the target culture if she or he knows something about it. However, receiving information in a foreign language class is no guarantee for developing cultural awareness, empathy and a willingness to understand (cf. Meyer 1993: 127f). There seems to be no straightforward causal relationship between knowledge and attitude.

Gisela Hermann's research (1978) sheds some light on the role of knowledge. Pupils with low scores in ethnocentricity were typically those who knew a lot about the target country, but who were also interested in subjects like geography and history. The reverse was also true: markedly ethnocentric ideas came from pupils with little interest in and little knowledge about the target culture. A very important contributing factor was the individual's success as a foreign language learner. Failure in English, which was indicated by a bad school report, correlated with high ethnocentricity. Still, we cannot automatically assume that the English lessons were the sole factor in creating or in failing to create an interest in English language and culture. The home environment and the parents' attitude may be just as instrumental for the cross-fertilisation between attitude, curiosity and the acquisition of knowledge, and the respective influence of home and school in this context.

There is another point to consider in connection with factual knowledge when aiming for intercultural understanding. If we follow the reasoning of Bredella, Schwerdtfeger and others, then understanding is helped along by going back to basic human experiences. This might be a point where attitude and knowledge - both about one's own and the target culture - can profitably intersect. Let me give two examples. Studies of German immigrants in Britain (Berghahn 1988) and in Australia (Berloge 1990) suggest that food and the way we organise our personal space, our home, are two such basic cultural practices. In the case of the emigrants, the arrangement of living-room furniture in a German manner or the preference for certain kinds of food and the observance of German-style meals and mealtimes were kept, sometimes into the next generation (cf. Berghahn 1988: 223ff). Some Australian friends of the German immigrant women even adopted things like 'kaffee and Kuchen' into their daily routines (Berloge 1990: 111) Maybe the globalisation of hamburgers, pizzas and TV dinners to be warmed up in the microwave has changed the present generation's link with the local cuisine, but the question of personal space seems to me to be a cultural kernel. Again, however, we have to keep in mind that these examples are taken from direct intercultural encounters, not from the sphere of classroom learning.

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Taking basic human experiences, cultural kernels, as the starting point, we may be able to develop thematic units for intercultural learning within foreign language teaching. In English language classrooms cultural kernel topics would have a dual purpose: on the one hand, they could provide information on the target cultures; on the other hand, they could motivate the learners to look at their own culture too. Decisions as to what target cultures to include, whether to contrast Germany and Britain, for instance, or whether to adopt an international stance, are dependent on the age group, the location and, perhaps, the type of school. And because cultural kernels are common to us all, we can bridge the gap between cultures to a certain degree. Students can become aware of and build on their own experience. And this works at all age levels if the teacher takes her pupils' perceptive powers into account. Experience is a key word. For the foreign language classroom that means that we cannot rely on book learning but have to include some 'field work' (Michael Byram 1991), when learners have the chance to observe the target culture, e.g. people's behaviour at bus stops. As Michael Byram (Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991: 186ff) and Généviève Zarate (1990) have shown, an ethnographic approach can be very fruitful.

Although we should try and create as many points of contact as possible between home and target culture for the learners, we must admit that within the state school system field work is going to be a rare occurrence for most pupils. Even though imaginative foreign language teachers have demonstrated that it is possible to provide opportunities for meeting people from the target cultures in the home country (cf. Edelhoff and Liebau 1988, Müller 1989), yet the majority of language learners will still encounter the foreign culture mainly in their textbooks and in texts. In the last two decades a great many suggestions have been made about how to deal with all types of texts from a cultural studies point of view (cf. Buttjes 1981, 1986/87; Kramer 1990; Kramsch 1993; Kuna and Tschachler 1986 - to name but a few). Nevertheless, I feel that we need to give more thought to the kinds of texts and activities which could involve the pupils in cultural learning on a more personal level.

The main purpose of any general foreign language course is to enable the learners to communicate in this new language. And here lies a second very important function of knowledge about the target cultures: it is also strategic knowledge. It helps learners to grasp something about the other culture and to become aware of their own cultural values and practices; it also helps them to survive better, i.e. with fewer misunderstandings and breakdowns, in cross-cultural communication.

3   Cross-cultural communication

The study of intercultural communication deals with the effects which cultural diversity has on interpersonal contact. Knowledge about other cultures and cultural awareness are often seen as subservient to the general aim of intercultural communication (Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff 1990: 83).

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Applied linguists are working on a general theory of intercultural communication. Consequently, many focus on that type of intercultural communication which is not culture-specific, but occurs in all kinds of cross-cultural interaction. It is evident that for this type of communicative skill, knowledge about a certain target culture is not essential. What is important is an insight into the culture-dependent nature of communicative styles and behaviours. A number of strategic skills need also be acquired if the intercultural communicator wants to identify and correct misunderstandings, or if she has only a very basic foreign language repertoire to draw on. As regards culture-specific concepts of intercultural communication, Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff fear that learners may be deceived into a false sense of security because they have a rudimentary knowledge about the target culture. Furthermore, they warn of the dangers of stereotyping and of 'going native'.

Where does all that leave English language teaching in schools? If we were to train learners of English at schools in the use of English as an international language, we would need to rewrite the courses. Including goals like cultural awareness would provide a more international perspective, and it would equip language learners to manage intercultural encounters in the English language, even if these are not with native speakers of English. In concrete terms a general English language course would have to incorporate communicative training for negotiating some kind of 'intercultural meeting point' between speakers. Strategies for this purpose include explaining one's own cultural presuppositions and associations with certain words as well as finding out about these things from one's partner.

In my view there are a number of drawbacks to a general English language course at schools which concentrate on communicative training based on cultural awareness. Let me pick out two. The first problem is that of content. Twenty years of communicative language teaching have shown that it is not enough just to talk, one must talk about something. Children are naturally curious about their peers in other countries. They want to learn something about the target countries. And for us, trying to build a unified Europe, Britain and Ireland are our English speaking neighbours. Therefore, cultural learning within ELT should focus on these two countries in the first years of the course.

The second problem concerns the learners' language performance. If we try and make communicating in the foreign language a conscious process of choosing words and phrases not only on the basis of their grammatical and lexical accuracy and communicative appropriateness, but also on the basis of their cultural connotations, we raise the barrier for speaking. The timid and the sensitive especially will be even more afraid to say something for fear of being wrong, if they have to monitor not only grammar and vocabulary but also cultural adequacy. Any foreign language teaching before the age of puberty, before the individual personality becomes more stable, must weigh the gains in cultural awareness against the losses of spontaneity

and willingness to speak. A lot will depend on the actual realisation of intercultural aims at the different levels. So far, research in intercultural pragmatics has concentrated on adult second or foreign language learners (Kasper 1993: 42).

Learning a foreign language at school, far removed from the target culture where it is spoken and with only a few opportunities for personal encounters with that culture and language, creates a very particular learning situation. We are told, and many of us know from experience, that acquiring a foreign language reshapes our own cultural and language identity and can be a deeply enriching process. But does this happen at school? Do ten-year-olds who are highly motivated when they begin their English lessons feel that learning English is a key to new experiences? Or is it not just fun to learn new words, a bit like a secret code? Whenever I ask students of English at university what they felt about their English learning at school I hear descriptions of the drudgery of textbook work, the pain of grammar practice and the constant threat of tests. But in most cases there were two things which made English meaningful to these students during their school years - and they probably would not have chosen English at university otherwise - real-life encounters with an English language culture during a year abroad or an exchange visit and at least one enthusiastic teacher.

4   Teachers of English

Foreign language teaching theory can build beautiful intercultural castles in the air. But if we want to change the quality and the direction of English language teaching in our schools, we will have to convince the teachers. Teachers are the mediators of the foreign cultures, they are also the best models their pupils have of successful and confident intercultural communicators. The teacher's functions do not lie solely in the dispersion of linguistic knowledge and the training of skills: teachers are also vital for creating motivation for their subject. The teacher's personal involvement with other cultures can greatly stimulate the learners' interest. The younger the learners, the more important the teacher.

Teaching English for intercultural competence in the areas of attitude, knowledge and skill outlined in this paper requires teachers who can bring the foreign culture into the classroom. That does not mean that a teacher needs to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of all English language cultures plus his own; neither does it mean that teachers of English have to be bilingual. But it does imply that an English teacher remains curious and willing to learn about English speaking cultures, that he or she has embarked on this lifelong road of discovery and is willing to let the learners share some of this experience. If teaching the English language for intercultural competence is meaningful for the teacher on a professional as well as on a personal level, then it may become meaningful for some of her pupils as well.

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It is the task of foreign language teacher training, mainly at the universities, to establish courses of study where the students are prepared for this kind of English language teaching. Intercultural aspects and their didactic application deserve to be given room in teacher training if we want the next generation to learn English at school in a wider intercultural context.

* A more detailed version of this paper appeared in the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 1, Tnbingen/Germany: Narr.

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Cultural determinants of foreign language learning

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Change has become one of the major buzz words at ELTECS conferences. It does seem to be accepted that political and/or societal changes in central and eastern Europe must lead to changes in education, more specifically in language education. How to implement those changes is a widely discussed issue in the ELTECS network. This raises three fundamental questions:

1   Why are languages taught differently in different countries?
2   Why and under what conditions do teaching methods have to change?
3   What are the necessary changes?

It seems to me that before we start discussing the implementation of methodological changes, it is essential to attempt an answer to the first two questions. I do not have any ready-made answers. The thoughts that follow are not based on extensive research but are rather, the result of random observation and intuition. I will focus on the first question.

Three observations:

1   I have tried to learn Chinese for one and a half years without any success. I hardly know how to say 'thank you' or 'hello'. Still, I consider myself a relatively successful language learner. I attribute my failure to the fact that I was taught Chinese the Chinese way: lots of choral repetition, lengthy grammatical explanations, emphasis on reading and writing, etc. I do not claim that you cannot learn a language by those methods: millions of Chinese who speak foreign languages fluently are obvious proof to the contrary. I do, however, claim that this method does not work in a German context.

2   At ELTECS conferences it is mainly during informal talk over coffee or beer where the issue of cultural differences and language learning appears. During papers and workshops the participants listen very attentively to the western 'experts' presenting new ideas for language teaching. They leaf through new textbooks and write down instructions for new games and activities. When ideas are discussed informally, comments can be heard similar to the following: 'It's all fascinating, I would try it out, but I do not think I can get my students to participate. For them such an activity would be too childish', or, 'I very much believe in things like groupwork and pairwork; but the teachers I have to train cannot overcome their inhibitions and I know they will only do it in training sessions. In classroom they will go back to the good old translation and text analysis with the teacher in the central position.'

3 The newly-founded European University Viadrina at Frankfurt (Oder) in the east of Germany, with its international and culturally diverse student body, is an ideal testing ground for the theory that learners from different cultural backgrounds come to the foreign language classroom with different expectations. The language centre at the university offers courses in nine foreign languages.

The languages are taught mainly by native speakers. In a pilot study the teachers were asked to describe the students' attitude to language learning and their behaviour in the classroom. As *Table 1* clearly shows, there are group differences in learning behaviour. As Polish and East German students are more different than Polish and West German students, ideology and the former political systems cannot possible be responsible for the learning behaviour of our students.

Polish students	East German students	West German students
hard-working	scholasitc approach: it has to be done	open minded
determined	reliable	spontaneous
broader	punctual	creative
world-knowledge	conscientious	enthusiastic
creative	restrained	good at group work
spontaneous	reserved	personally involved
active		
easy to motivate	passive	unreliable
concern for correctness	systematic	open to different teaching activities
co-operative	do not want to talk	consumer-orientation
interested in other cultures	not curious	too talkative
open-minded		highly motivated
see new language as enrichment		
sometimes like school children		
unreliable		

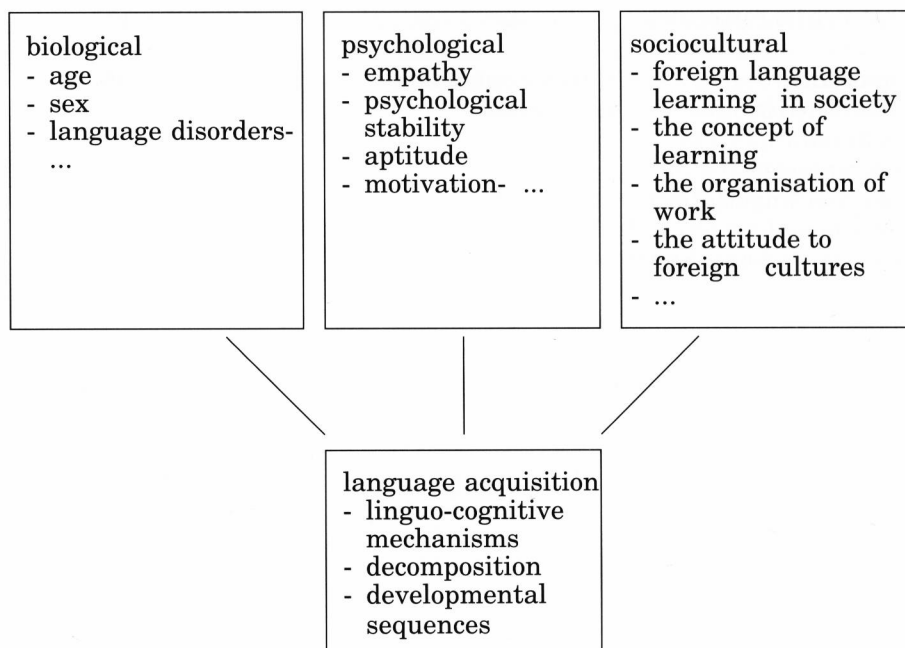*Table 1* European University Viadrina: Group differences in learning behaviour

As research into second language acquisition has convincingly demonstrated (see Ellis 1992), the fundamental processes of language learning, the route which learners take to acquire the grammatical foundations of a second language, is very much the same for all learners. The fact that the same errors can be observed across learners with different mother tongues and different cultural backgrounds is the basis for this assumption. *Table 2* shows the errors which can be observed in the acquisition of English as a foreign language, irrespective of the background of the learners.

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I catch no fish.
I caught not fish.
I didn't caught a fish.
I wasn't caughting a fish.
I haven't catched a fish.

Table 2 The development of past time reference in L2-acquisition

There are, however, immense differences between learners as far as the rate of acquisition is concerned, and between the levels of proficiency learners can achieve within a given time. There are 'good' learners and learners with many problems who seemingly cannot go beyond a certain level of competence. Moreover, there seem to be differences with regard to overall proficiency between learners from different nations. I do not wish to reiterate stereotypes, but most people who travel to Scandinavia come back with the impression that everyone speaks at least English fluently.

There are three types of factors (*see fig. 1*) which influence foreign language learning. Biological, psychological and sociocultural factors do not alter the route which learners take, but they are largely responsible for success or failure and the speed with which we acquire a foreign language. All these factors are interconnected. Thus, gender differences in language learning behaviour is probably due to social factors rather than the biological differences between men and women.

biological
- age
- sex
- language disorders-
  ...

psychological
- empathy
- psychological
  stability
- aptitude
- motivation- ...

sociocultural
- foreign language
  learning   in society
- the concept of
  learning
- the organisation of
  work
- the attitude to
  foreign   cultures
- ...

language acquisition
- linguo-cognitive
  mechanisms
- decomposition
- developmental
  sequences

fig. 1 Determinants of foreign language learning

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The psychological make-up of the individual learner seems to play an important part in language learning. The key terms are: empathy, the ability to identify with other individuals, psychological stability and motivation. Aptitude is a widely disputed phenomenon. It is a part of the common myths about language learning, difficult to define and probably a conglomerate of different psychological and sociocultural factors.

The way language learning is seen and promoted is part of the culture of a society. Thus, to bring about changes in language teaching it is not sufficient simply to change the methodology or introduce new textbooks. If these changes are not seen within the whole cultural context in which they take place, they will remain superficial and ineffective.

I would like to address four cultural factors which seem to have an impact:

* the role of language learning in society
* the concept of learning in society
* the organisation of work in society
* the attitude to foreign cultures.

If you compare the role of foreign language learning in some countries in Africa or Asia to the role it plays in some countries in western and eastern Europe, you will observe an important difference. The majority of the population in countries like India or Nigeria grows up bilingually or multilingually. To be multilingual in those countries is the essential key to survival. You hear several languages being spoken in the streets. You have to communicate with your next door neighbour in a language that is different from the language that you use with the teacher of your children. Language learning is all around you. It is part of daily life. In largely monolingual countries, i.e. those with one dominant language irrespective of several minority languages, until recently language learning was more or less an academic exercise, part of the so-called 'high culture', closely connected to the teaching of arts and literature. You can imagine that the motivation to learn a language which you cannot use in daily communication is very often lacking.

Foreign language teaching in a European context is quite often connected to secondary goals. In the 19th century students were to be educated for a certain upper class lifestyle. Nowadays peace education and international understanding are the key goals. If students do not accept these goals, they get easily frustrated and lose motivation.

As we all know, language learning is different from learning other skills. It is, however, a school subject. Language proficiency is evaluated, i.e. it is graded, despite the fact that the learner is quite often not in conscious control of the learning process. He quite often feels misunderstood because he had in fact put a lot of effort into learning. On the other hand, because it is a school subject students expect a certain framework. If these expectations are not met, then again a lack of motivation could be the result.

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In some cultures the role of a teacher is well defined as the most competent person in charge. In language teaching he or she should adopt the role of a facilitator in the background and not play the role of the almighty possessor of information. If the students are not prepared for this change of teacher role, they will not take language teachers seriously.

The way daily work is organised depends very much on the structure of a society. Cooperation and teamwork can hardly be found in hierarchically-organised societies. There the superior decides and the subordinates have to execute his orders. Students who experience this distribution of roles in their everyday life will be confused when they have to perform group or pair work in the language classroom, where they are expected to work side by side on a common goal. I think to attribute the role of an avant-garde to language teachers is overestimating their influence on society as a whole.

If there is no favourable attitude to foreign cultures in society as a whole, there is no motivation to learn foreign languages. There are also aspects of different cultures our students find critical as they seem to violate their own cultural norms and beliefs. Should they adopt the viewpoint of native speakers of that culture? The emphasis on critical issues like race relations, pollution, drugs, etc. probably comes from the tacit assumption that all young people are interested in those topics, irrespective of their cultural background. This can lead to serious misunderstanding and a rejection of materials which are produced in the country of the target language.

I am sure I have only touched on the problems connected with the cultural background of language learning and teaching. What should we do?

Our societies are continuously changing. This may lead to essential changes in cultures which in turn will have certain, almost automatic, effects on language teaching. We have to raise the awareness of teachers and students to the cultural differences in learning behaviour. Maybe then they will try out new and maybe more effective new ways of teaching. We do not want to change our teachers' or students' personalities, we simply want to help them to become better teachers or learners.

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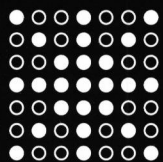
The British Council

Best of ELTECS
Theme 4:
Networking

Networking: an analysis for activists

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1   Our hosts, the British Council, have generously funded a scheme to put English language teachers in contact with each other in the hope of starting up networks which will produce useful and productive results.

    1.1   In some respects this is a leap in the dark for most participants and some questions regarding networks need to be answered:

Why networks? Do they have any value? How are networks structured? Can we have different types of network? Are some types of network more effective than others? What channels do networks work on? Finally, how can you walk out of this room and start up a network of your own?

2   The term network can apply to any group of objects which connect with each other, or 'talk' to each other, e.g. a computer network, a rail network, even a network of cells in the bloodstream. Our concern, however, is those networks called *social networks*. A social network is an organisation, or group of people, and a 'social organisation without some form of communication is an impossibility' (Miller 1951: 249). A group can take action and it can be more effective in taking action if it is a cohesive group. In addition, a group can exert pressure both internally on its members to conform, but also externally, e.g. on government or institutions such as universities. A network is useful in providing mutual help to its members, but it can only achieve all of these aspects of influence as far as it has effective channels of communication (Miller 1951).

    2.1   A network consists of different types of members. *Fig. 1* shows different elements of a network. The person who refuses to join a group, who keeps him/herself to him/herself is isolated, and as a consequence lacks information, lacks support. On the other hand, some people are actively rejected by all groups and have no choice but to be isolated. Others form pairs or dyads, while yet others form chains of contact as illustrated in *fig. 1*. There is also a star, the person with whom all members communicate and who receives all information and is the focus of several lines of communication. Finally, a person may belong to a group and maintain relationships only within the network. Such a person becomes dependent entirely on that group for all information, all support, and becomes a slave to the group, follows the leader and could lose all independence.

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2.2   If even one member of a network has contact with a person who is a member of another network, this contact extends the influence of both networks externally by creating *social relations* between the groups. They develop and maintain social relations by talking to each other. In addition, if A talks to B, and B is a friend of C, A considers C to be the friend of a friend, approaches C to form a useful connection and ask C for a favour. In this way a useful connection has been made for A and possibly for C, a small network has been started, and who knows where it may end.

2.3   The social relations within a network may follow from different kinds of activities which influence its structure. It may result from the activity of paying money, perhaps towards a fund, or in a betting-shop, where contact is only with the collector of cash and the network is a loose one; or, it may be a network in which commands are passed down from one member to the other, such as a terrorist cell, or within a hierarchical organisation committed to criminal activity.

2.4   Milroy (1980) has defined a social network as a mechanism for exchanging goods and services, for imposing obligations and conferring corresponding rights upon its members. For example, in a neighbourhood network, one may ask a neighbour to mind one's children, give each other assistance in an emergency, use each other's telephone and so on. However, the problem is that obligations are not met by equal favours and an asymmetrical relationship can develop between members of a network.   *Fig. 2* illustrates the asymmetrical relationship between the star and other members of the network, with the star receiving communication, information, perhaps favours too, but not returning these.

2.5   Those members who have more power within the group can impose norms, standards and values, so that a network is a means for setting 'rules' of conduct for its members. Some of these rules can become irksome, and in some networks, there can be bad rules such as the norm among a group of delinquents. These 'rules' are unspoken, they are not written down in the form of a constitution, but they are understood by the members as pressure to conform. One such rule could be pressure to speak a certain language, e.g. a network of Irish nationalists may insist on its members speaking Irish rather than English. In other circumstances, a member of a working-class network may become upwardly mobile as a result of a new occupation and adopt a standard dialect, but pressure from the group and a feeling of solidarity with the group, might ensure that the member always reverts to working-class dialect when in the presence of network members. Some excellent linguistic work has been done in this respect by Milroy (1980) and others.

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2.6   Generally though, a network is a useful social mechanism for enforcing rules acceptable to all. It creates linkages between people along which flow goods, services and of course information. It is an excellent means of diffusing new ideas and often members of the network will listen to a respected member of the network rather than, for example, to a sales representative trying to sell a new product. Research done some years ago among a group of doctors showed that one particular doctor was highly respected for all his opinions and his expertise, and the rest of the doctors adopted a particular medicine to prescribe to their patients only if this doctor recommended it (Menzel and Katz 1956). This finding has led to the two-step theory of influence which states that if you wish to change a network's purchasing habits, or its member's attitude to let us say government policy, the most effective way to achieve this end would be to approach the most influential member of the group and make him or her change his/her mind and then let that person influence the others.

3   A network is structured along its lines of communication and the communication net will depend upon the purpose of the network. In *fig. 3*, the first type of communication net is typical of a broadcast net in which A can spread information (or misinformation) at will, and generally, receives no feedback in return. One or two members may discuss A's information but generally there is no means of counter argument. This could be described as a propaganda net of communication. The second type is typical of a primary group where every member knows the other and all the members maintain face-to-face communication. In this type of network, the communication passes from one member to the other until it returns to the originator of the message, and he/she can check whether the message has been distorted or not. In a small group there is less chance that the message 'Send reinforcements, we're going to advance', becomes, 'Send three and four pence, we're going to a dance'.

3.1   There are more formal types of networks, clearly hierarchical ones, networks created for a purpose. These we call *instrumental* networks and they could consist of a group of company managers or directors who meet with a specific purpose, such as to exchange market information, or to organise an event.

3.2   In a large network of a number of people, different patterns of relationship may develop with a clear hierarchy within a group. The star will be at the top of such a hierarchy while the rejectee may be at the bottom. Around the star a sub-group, or cluster can be identified by the greater traffic of communication among the small group within the larger group.

3.3   The group within the group are often the people who regard themselves as the in-group. The intense traffic of communication

among them, is described as the *density* of the network. If they also meet each other in a number of different role-relationships, the network then is said to have *multiplexity* as well as density.

3.4   In some networks, perhaps one within a church parish, people may meet every day and in many different relationships. For example, they may work on a farm co-operative, borrow tools and sugar and salt from each other. They may also drink at the pub in each other's company each evening and attend the same church. Hence they constitute a network of density and multiplexity. An Asian extended family is an example of a network based on family relationships but which also involves its members in business relationships. Such a network gives familial support to its members meeting at weddings and funerals, but also has an instrumental character in its business relations, hence it has both density and multiplexity making it an effective self-support network.

3.5   A summary of the characteristics of Networks discussed so far is as follows:

> **3.5.1** A network is a social group for maintaining relationships of different kinds, for exchanging goods and services, for extending support to each other, for taking action. It can only be as effective as the effectiveness of its communication channels.

> **3.5.2** A network may be informal or formal, and may offer its members equal or hierarchical status. Belonging to a hierarchical network may increase or decrease one's status.

> **3.5.3** A network may be instrumental, but it may exist solely for the purpose of expression of emotion, e.g. a support organisation such as CRUSE for widows and widowers. In a family network, the emotions will be varied - there will be jealousy, envy, anger but also love and support, often in the form of a business relationship.

4   One way to find out which type of network has the most effective communication is to do an experiment.

4.1   Leavitt, an American psychologist, set up four types of communication groups as seen in *figs. 4* and *5*. In each group, five people were seated around a table, but separated by vertical partitions which could be manipulated according to the desired pattern of communication. Carved in each partition were slots for passing messages. Each participant was given five different symbols out of a possible set of six and the entire group had to discover as rapidly as possible, the one symbol held in common by all members. Each group completed fifteen such tasks and at the end of the tasks each group was given a questionnaire to answer.

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4.2 In the fork and the wheel, the most central person received all the information and sent out the answers, although the organisation of the fork evolved more slowly. The chain did not have a stable organisation although C, at the centre, usually sent out the answers. The circle was the least consistent of all with no discernible pattern.

4.3 The most efficient *formations* in terms of the fewest number of errors, were the fork and the wheel. The circle made the greatest number of errors. However, there was no significant difference in the amount of time taken between all formations although, once again, the circle took the longest time.

4.4 When asked to nominate a leader within each group, the circle members were undecided and could not agree. In the chain, two-thirds agreed that the leader was C, no-one thought that the leader was A or E. Eighty-five per cent of the fork knew C was the leader, and everybody thought B was the leader of the wheel. This experiment showed that recognised leadership is closely linked to the position of centrality in gathering and disseminating information. *Information is power.*

4.5 In terms of enjoyment, however, the circle, which was the most disorganised, the most unstable and made more errors, was thought to be the most enjoyable. Thus, sharing of information and two-way communication links ensure enjoyment for all members of a network and possibly lead to long-lasting membership of such a group.

5 Before I bring the talk to a close, a mention must be made of the *channels* of communication, the means of carrying information.

5.1 These can be as complex as the electronic hardware of radio, video, photographs, electronic mail, or the most common means of maintaining communication these days, the telephone. Nevertheless, the chief channels of communication are those of touch, smell, taste, sight and voice.

5.2 The *medium / media* we use are words, non-verbal communication, visual representation.

6 Finally, you may not know it, but any time in the next few minutes each of us will start up a conversation with a total stranger, find an acquaintance in common, and start the process of forming one more network to add to the many that already exist among us.

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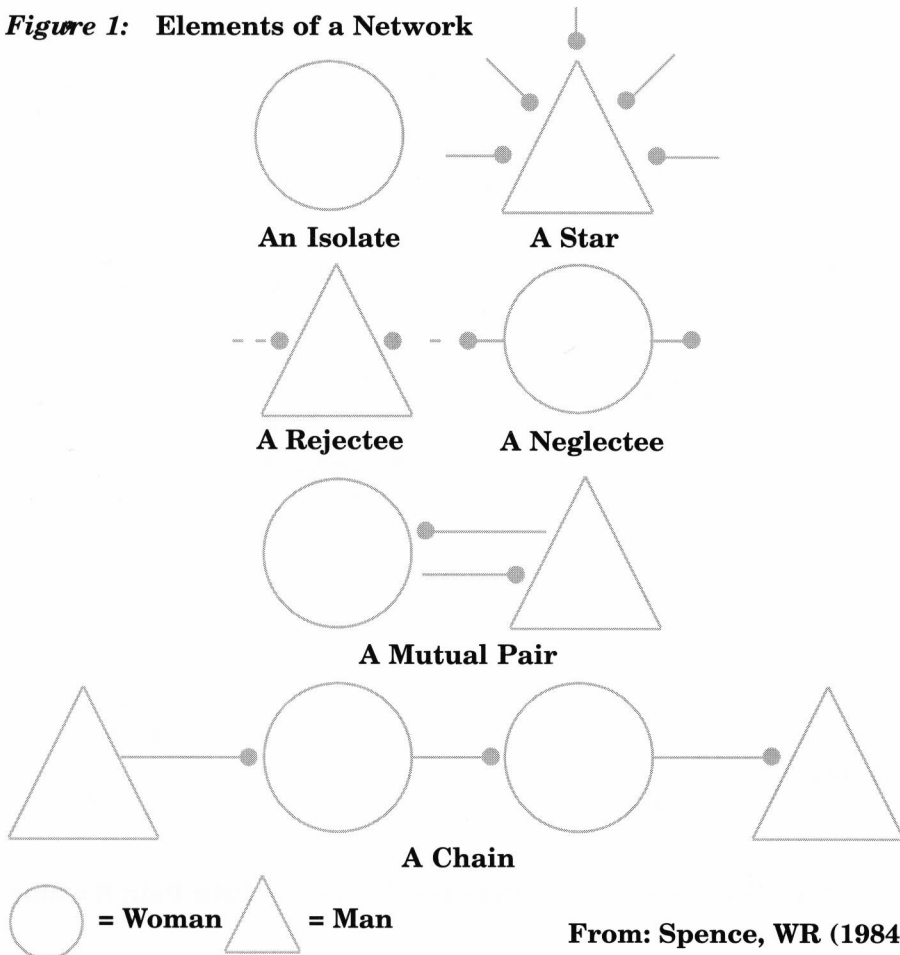
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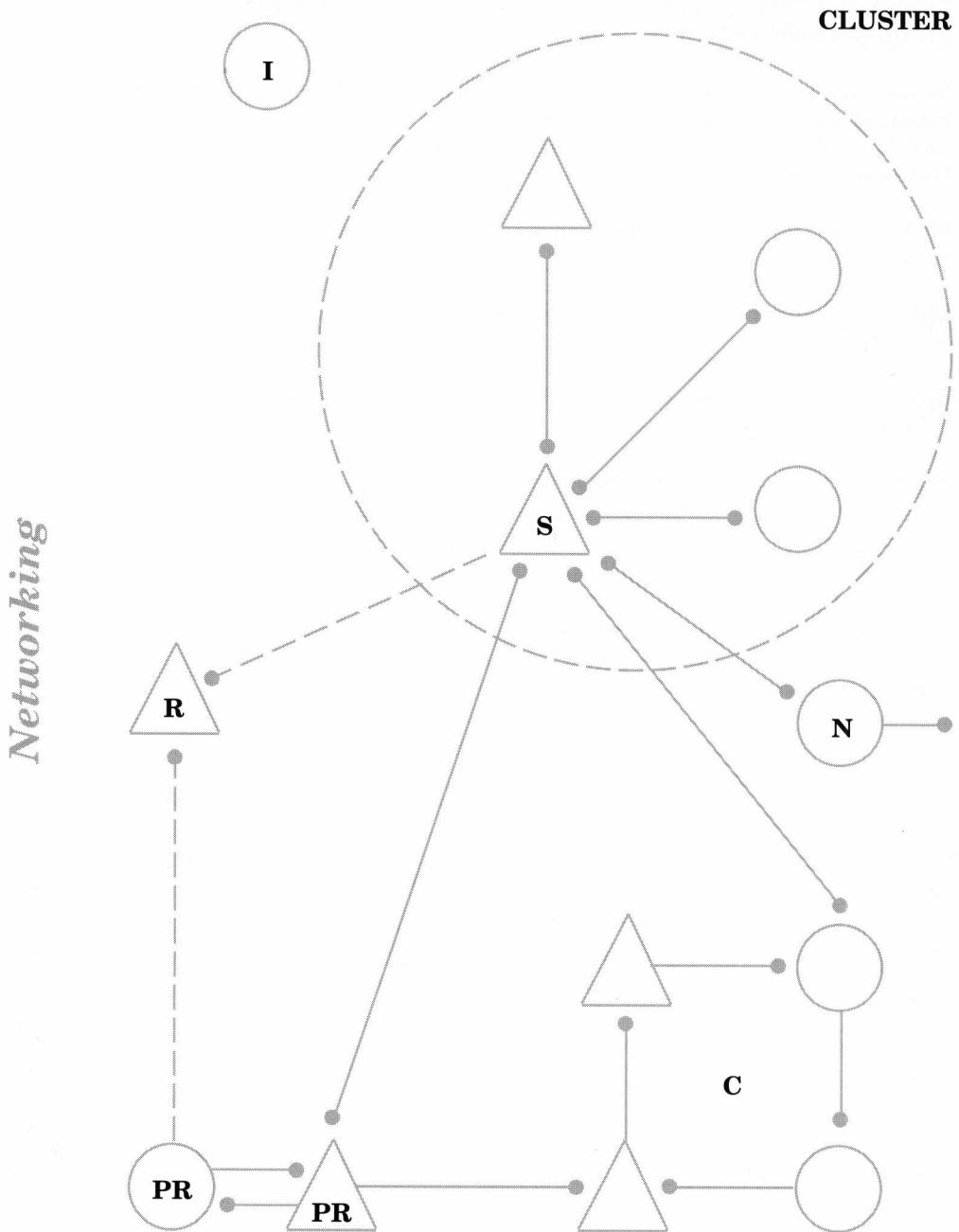Miller G A (1951) **Language and Communication.** New York: McGraw-Hill

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*Figure 1:* **Elements of a Network**

An Isolate   **A Star**

A Rejectee   **A Neglectee**

A Mutual Pair

A Chain

◯ **= Woman**   △ **= Man**

From: Spence, WR (1984)   *131*

Figure 2: **Forming a Network**
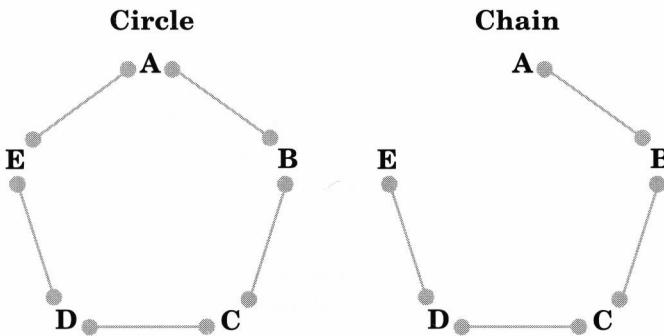

I = Isolate; N = Neglectee; R = Rejectee; C = Circle; PR = Pair; S = Star

Figure 3: Diagrams illustrating different communication nets.
Letters represent members of the group, and the arrows
indicate the directions in which messages can pass.
From Miller, GA (1951)
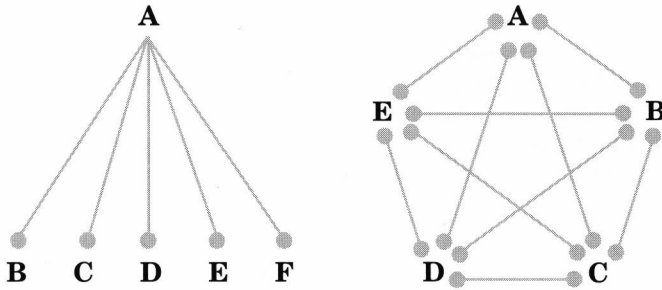
Figure 4: Diagrams of two types of communication nets studied
by Leavitt (1951)

Figure 5: Diagrams of two further type of communication nets
studied by Leavitt (1951)

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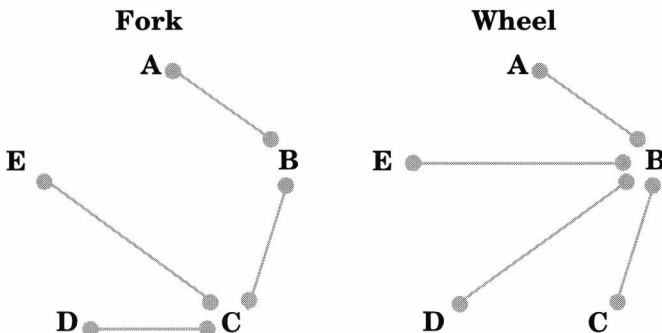
Peers in pairs: a prolegomenon

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Introduction

The Centre for English Teacher Training at Budapest (CETT) was established four years ago. It offers a three-year pre-service teacher education programme established to reduce the acute shortage of English teachers in Hungary. Although CETT runs a highly successful programme, we believe that the time has come for stock-taking and evaluating its operation.

With this in mind, in the spring of 1994 I set up a research team to assess pair-teaching, one of the most innovative components of the programme. The investigation is planned to be a longitudinal one, taking up the whole of the 1994/95 academic year. The main respondents are third-year CETT students in the process of doing their teaching practice, but also included in the study are their mentors (or co-trainers) based in various primary and secondary schools, their CETT tutors, as well as the pupils they are teaching.

Before launching the project, I had perused the curriculum of CETT (Griffiths and Ryan 1994), particularly the chapter referring to third-year teaching practice. According to the Curriculum, pair-teaching is a preferable form of teaching practice by virtue of:

a) *providing additional support:*
In contrast with single-handed teaching, the trainees are supported not only by their mentors and their tutors, but also by their trainee partners;

b) *fostering the idea of teacher co-operation:*
The trainees can experience an accelerated awareness that comes through planning with, teaching with, and observing another teacher. Moreover, pair-teaching prevents trainees from becoming isolated in their future teaching careers.

The chief designers of this system of pair-teaching, Bodóczky and Malderez, corroborate this rationale:

> *[We] firmly believe in pair responsibility as support, as a tool for developing reflective practice, and as encouraging the habit of co-operation. Furthermore, the problems seem to stem rather from choice of partner than from the concept itself.*
>
> (Bodóczky and Malderez 1993: 11)

Their conviction made me wonder: Why do Bodóczky and Malderez attribute occasional short-circuits merely to the weaknesses of *practice* and not to those of the *principle* itself? Are they led by 'parental bias' or by the largely positive experience they have accumulated over the years?

Based on these assumptions, I formulated two research questions:

a)   Is it true that pair-teaching as realised at CETT provides additional support?

b)   Does it really foster the idea of teacher co-operation?

At this point, however, I could not help realising that my queries had reached beyond pair-teaching as such, and even beyond the narrow confines of CETT. In order to clarify my standpoint, in the rest of the paper I shall focus not so much on pair-teaching and the evaluation of its current practice at CETT, but rather on ingrained beliefs about ELT in general. Hence 'prolegomenon' in the title.

The philosophy of CETT

CETT has a well-defined philosophy as documented in the Curriculum. For instance, what in traditional curricula are labelled as *teacher training, supervisor* and *teaching practice* are respectively called *teacher education, mentor* and *teaching experience* in the CETT Curriculum. In a similar fashion, verbs such as *foster, develop, facilitate, enhance* and *empower* are preferred to *teach, train, impart* and *instruct*. The Curriculum is heavily laden with terms which smack of the ideals of humanistic education and communicative language teaching.

The question now is: To what extent does this philosophy stand up for critical analysis? More importantly, are denizens of CETT willing to subject their ideology to a critical analysis? Are we ready to adapt *self-reflection,* persistently set as a major goal to our students, to our own selves as well? Do we practice what we preach?

In order to make my point clearer, let me digress by turning to two thinkers who have greatly helped evolve my ideas.

In exploring the development of the child, Jean Piaget distinguishes two dominant types of behaviour: *assimilation* and *accommodation* (Piaget and Inhelder 1969). '*Assimilation*' is a term for the incorporation of a new situation by transforming it to fit into an already organised scheme of action. In an institutional context, this implies openness to new ideas, provided that they are largely compatible with the accepted terms of reference, or at least can be adapted to correspond to them. If a stimulus persists in defying acknowledged dogmas, it will be rejected, ignored, swept under the adjustment of an organised scheme of action to fit a new situation.

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In other words, on encountering a stimulating novel idea, an instituation will review its framework and, if necessary, alter it to become congruent with the constraints of this new idea.

Both types of behaviour appear to be crucial for an institution which lays claims to abiding by the philosophy it professes. I suspect, however, that even the most self-critical institutions are more prone to assimilate than to accommodate, because the latter type of behaviour requires far more courage, flexibility and determination. CETT appears to be no exception.

For example, we base our methodology course on reference books that promulgate the same humanistic ideology that we advocate (assimilation). Seldom do we consider books which run in the face of our professional convictions (accommodation). In our defence, there *are* no such books available these days! Almost all the titles brought out by the major publishing houses are propped up with similar ideological underpinnings.

Now let me contemplate the thoughts of Karl Popper (Popper 1968). He argues that it is impossible to prove a theory in absolute terms. Suppose we have seen thousands of white swans, and nothing else but white swans. Is this sufficient evidence to contend that all swans are white? Certainly not, because sooner or later we are likely to spot a black swan. Therefore, instead of saying that 'All swans are white', we had better formulate the statement negatively, like this: 'Not all swans are white'. It logically follows that while verifying or proving a phenomenon is impossible, falsifying or disproving it is not. Only those theories may be regarded as scientific which advance a crucial experiment or observation with sufficient strength to falsify them.

To illustrate the point in question, it is impossible to prove that all the basic principles of communicative language teaching are valid: some of them won't pass the acid test (Medgyes 1986; Swan 1985). Hence, instead of the vain efforts to prove the overall validity of communicative language teaching, we are well advised to be on the lookout for its shortcomings. And if we persevere, we are likely to find a couple of them before long.

Consonant with Popper's argumentation, I consider the difference between a *self-critical* evaluation procedure and a *self-indulgent* one of crucial importance. A self-critical researcher aims to display the intrinsic weaknesses of his theory, while a self-indulgent researcher is in desperate search for evidence that he is right. Self-evaluation is reliable to the degree that the quest for counter-evidence is relentlessly maintained. Nothing short of the limits of our present knowledge should prevent us from challenging our own convictions and even from uprooting them. Aiming for anything less is self-gratification, manipulation and hypocrisy.

By the same token, it is no use clinging to our new-fangled idea, because if we are reluctant to defy it, someone else will. After all, everything that once had been claimed to be the truth turned out to be a fallacy in due time.

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This fate is sure to await communicative language teaching, humanistic education or pair-teaching, too, as these concepts are interpreted nowadays. In other words, we should not for a moment claim to have found a panacea. If someone challenges our principles, we are well advised to heed their words. Rendering Popper's viewpoint, Magee says:

> *The man who welcomes and acts on criticism will prize it almost above friendship; the man who fights it out of concern to maintain his position is clinging to non-growth.*
>
> (Magee 1975: 39).

The lessons I have extrapolated from Popper's teachings may be summarised like this:

- Don't be under the delusion that your philosophy will stand the test of time.

- The more fervently you try to prove that you are right, the less credible you become - accept criticism in good faith and reflect upon it.

- Search for evidence that you are wrong - if you succeed in falsifying your brain-child, rejoice.

- Welcome those who swim against the mainstream - avoid teaming up with think-alikes.

- Disagree with every dogma and spread dissent.

Returning to the main thrust of my paper, CETT is unreservedly committed to humanistic values. Rife in our vocabulary are words such as *reflection, self-evaluation, negotiation or collaboration.* Our philosophy is lucidly formulated in this curriculum requirement:

> *By the end of the course, trainees will be expected to demonstrate a 'healthy' distrust of dogmatic rules.*
>
> (Griffiths and Ryan 1994: 18)

But do we set the same standards for ourselves that we set for our students?

Imagine the following situation. CETT has advertised a new post. In addition to attaching their C.V., applicants are requested to describe briefly their teaching philosophy. One applicant innocently admits that she hardly ever initiates communicative activities in her lessons, she is loath to do groupwork and pairwork, and she prefers to teach her pupils straightforward grammar rules with a lot of explaining in Hungarian. This routine is normally followed by drills to practise the new points in class and by translation exercises for homework to consolidate them.

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Honestly, would we consider shortlisting this applicant? Would we bother to visit her lessons to make sure whether or not her philosophy works well in practice? Wouldn't we automatically go for applicants whose approach is admittedly closer to ours? In the spirit of Popper, however, shouldn't we favour the dissident over the CETT clones? Just to widen our spectrum and make ourselves a more heterogeneous staff? Just to have somebody around who suggests an alternative form of teacher education, thereby forcing us to reassess our well-entrenched views?

Or how would we deal with a trainee bold enough to openly defy our beliefs? Take Monika, for example, who refuses to pair-teach. She argues that teaching is basically a solitary activity - if it weren't, tandem-teaching would be the general pattern of teaching the world over. On what grounds do we claim, she says, that the best way of preparation is for a largely *collaborative* teaching practice?

As a staff priding ourselves on tolerance and empathy, first we resort to persuasion. Only if this doesn't help do we decide to take disciplinary measures. After all, Monika has to comply with the standard requirements just like anyone else. We can't set a precedent, can we? Alternatively, we may connive at her deviant behaviour, hoping that it won't encourage anyone else to follow suit. And throughout this intermezzo, our philosophy remains intact. The only lesson we've learnt is that Monika is a pest. Even at CETT, there are bound to be a couple of misfits who just won't collaborate...

Various forms of collaboration

Collaboration is a buzzword these days - note the synonyms that have grown up around it: *collaboration, co-operation, networking, collegiality, colleagueship, coaching, team teaching, pair-teaching, co-operative networking, peer collaboration, collegial support, teacher support groups, collaborative alliances,* etc. (Nunan 1992).

Depending on the nature of the relationship, collaboration can be established between
a)   unequal partners *(supervisor-trainer; trainer-trainee; mentor-trainee; trainer-mentor)*
b)   equal partners or peers *(learner-learner; teacher-teacher; trainee-trainee).*

Peer collaboration may be pursued in different forms.

1   *Group work* and *pairwork* between learners have long become widely used in the communicative classroom - possibly overused in some quarters.

2   Far less often can one read about *team-teaching*, which implies two or more teachers sharing the responsibility for and the burden of

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teaching a particular group of students. Collaboration in team-teaching can be fairly loose, when the participating teachers do no more than occasionally consult each other on the group they share. However, one may also find teachers whose collaboration is so close that they plan and conduct every lesson together.

3   *Pair-teaching* is a special form of team teaching with two participating teachers. At CETT, for example, all the trainees are required to pair up and teach one class together for a full school year. While they are obliged to teach in pairs, partners are free to choose each other and work in tighter or looser forms of symbiosis.

4   More recently, teachers are encouraged to 'network' admittedly with the purpose of facilitating their professional and personal growth. While *peer networking* groups may employ bizarre techniques, such as those suggested by Edge (1992), they generally have recourse to less esoteric techniques, such as brainstorming, case study analysis, or video viewing.

Learning - collaborative and solitary

There are strong reasons for encouraging collaboration. People are social beings, bound to live and work together for survival, and the need for collaboration seems to be a law of life, including education.

Most certainly, learning is a collaborative game. People may learn in an institute with the help of teachers, or in the target language country, or by way of self-study - and in each of these situations, even in self-study where teacher materials are being used, the collaboration involved is patent.

However, in none of these contexts is collaboration the ultimate goal - it is merely there to facilitate learning. It can pave the way for internalisation of knowledge and skills, but it has no access to the learner's head where the act of learning takes place.

Learning is solitary in that the most essential acts are performed by the learner him/herself. Consequently, it is the learner, and not the teacher and other interlocutors, who takes the lion's share of responsibility for the learning outcome. It is further assumed that while learning may be prompted by collaboration up to a certain point, it is hampered beyond it. The professional teacher should be able to pull the reins in before trespassing on the learner's private property.

In other words, since collaboration serves as a means to an end, its scope is limited: collaboration should support individual efforts, and not vice versa. If this is true, it is odd that the professional literature pays so little attention to the solitary aspects of the learning process.

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Teaching - collaborative and solitary

Teaching is an activity of a similarly ambivalent nature - it is both collaborative and solitary. The function of teaching is to generate learning, that is, to create ideal circumstances for learning to take place.

On the one hand, teaching is a social game in which the teacher normally initiates and the learner performs, although the teacher at her discretion may reverse the roles. In addition, she collaborates, directly or indirectly, with colleagues, superiors, perhaps supervisors, as well as with syllabus and materials writers. The success of collaboration depends on how well these agents fit the teacher's own attitude.

On the other hand, once the classroom door has closed, the teacher must make and carry out all the decisions on her own - she is obliged to do the better part of her work in solitude! Like the surgeon in the operating theatre, she can turn to no one, not even to her most readily available partners, the learners, when she 'makes the cut'.

Why is it, then, that recent ELT philosophies are so reluctant to acknowledge that the teacher's solitude is the natural concomitant and the very essence of the teaching activity? Protagonists of so-called humanistic education keep quiet about the inevitability of being left on one's own and made accountable for one of the most intricate human pursuits. At the same time, they contend that most teachers suffer from loneliness and isolation, a paralysing feeling which can only be attenuated by means of regular and organised forms of collaboration with colleagues in and outside the classroom. In many schools, so runs the argument, conventions and superiors hinder attempts to establish camaraderie.

Claxton, for example, complains that:

> *It is still much more common than not for teachers to do their teaching behind closed doors, unobserved by another adult, and to feel somewhat threatened on the odd occasion when they are being watched.*
>
> (Claxton 1989: 34)

But what is wrong with teaching behind closed doors, I wonder? What is the point of fellow-professionals regularly coming by to observe each other? Besides the genuine players of the teaching game, teachers and learners, why have kibitzers who encourage a showcase - a bravura at best, a miserable flop at worst? On-lookers are not welcome in the operating theatre, either.

Edge adopts a more extreme view:

> *We all too regularly limit teaching to an individual, subjective experience shared with no one. As a direct result of this, we restrict*

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> *our ability to develop as teachers. ...self development needs other*
> *people: colleagues and students.*
>
> (Edge 1992: 3-4)

In reply to this, firstly, it is utterly impossible for any teacher not to share her experience with students - there are bound to be quite a few around. Secondly, what makes Edge believe that we do not usually share our professional experience with colleagues? Honestly, I have never been to a staffroom where professional communication has been banished or stifled. The form of interaction may not be so systematic as Edge would deem desirable, but it is still ubiquitous. Thirdly, it is not primarily self-development but the very act of teaching that requires the participation of colleagues and students: there are no schools without them!

In partial disagreement with Edge, Little says that these days:

> *Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete*
> *and precise talk about teaching practice (as distinct from teacher*
> *characteristics and failings, the social lives of teachers, the foibles*
> *and failures of students and their families, and the unfortunate*
> *demands of society on the school).*
>
> (Little 1982: 331).

While welcoming progress of this kind, I do not understand why Little pits organised forms of professional interaction against conventional chit-chat in the staffroom. In my view, it is difficult to draw the demarcation line between these two forms of interaction, and neither deserves priority.

Reading contemporary authors, one has the impression that they use 'loneliness' and 'isolation' as exclusive terms, while 'solitude', a less marked word, is painstakingly avoided. In my vocabulary, 'solitude' is used with reference to the teacher's inevitable role as an independent and fully responsible agent *in the classroom*, whereas 'loneliness' and 'isolation' stem from lack of co-operation between colleagues *outside the classroom.*

It goes without saying that a pervasive feeling of loneliness and isolation can have a deleterious effect on the teacher's self-image, drastically impeding her professional development. Solitude, on the other hand, is not to be rejected or reduced. In my view, it is precisely the solitariness of the teaching profession, or rather the awareness of having full control over the whole operation and assuming full responsibility for its outcome, that makes it such a challenging and fascinating job!

To sum up, I tend to agree with Lortie, who claims that 'Teachers are largely self-made' (1975: 80). To me this means that collaboration has only a limited, albeit essential, part to play in the development of teachers. We may turn for assistance and support on occasion - or regularly - but in the end it is ourselves alone who should be held responsible for planning, decision-making and implementation. Consider any component of teaching

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competence, knowledge, skills attitude or awareness: the outcome of the teaching operation hinges on the competence and dedication of the individual teacher.

Some teachers do suffer from bouts of loneliness or isolation, but the majority probably don't. At least not to the extent that some teacher educators and researchers would have us believe. And even those who complain about the scarcity of collegial support do not necessarily attribute it to adverse school conditions or, more sweepingly, to a society that doesn't care. Their queries may have more to do with difficulties that the teaching profession intrinsically entails. While these difficulties may give rise to occasional fatigue and, in extreme cases, to stress, I am confident that teachers love their profession, precisely because it secures plenty of room for accomplishing their individual goals.

What I am arguing for is that co-operative efforts should serve as a tool to fulfil individual goals, and not the other way round. What I am arguing against is the false belief that collaboration is the key to successful teaching, hence individual aspirations should play second fiddle. The 'ELT village' teems with messiahs and gurus, who, under the disguise of well-sounding clichés and unassailable truisms, are determined to force you to think, speak and behave as they do. My modest proposal to my fellow teachers is: Engage in professional collaboration if you wish, but don't give up your personal integrity!

Finally, let me summarise my suggestion and warnings with the following maxims:

- Be critical of any view that you are expected to take for granted.

- Trust your experience more than what is proclaimed to be the truth.

- Turn an attentive ear to opposite views.

- Conceive your own theories.

- Continually revise your theories and chuck out the ones that do not work in practice.

- Engage in collaboration - but with moderation.

- Cherish your professional integrity.

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The role of journals in the foreign language classroom

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Magazines and teacher training

Magazines and journals provide teachers with regular contact with developing ideas, experiences and views on language teaching and learning. Unlike methodology handbooks, magazines are constantly renewing themselves. And, unlike most books, they contain a multiplicity of voices, often contradictory, or revealing very different experiences. The value of this ongoing 'conversational' quality, the feeling of being in very immediate communication with a number of professional colleagues is, perhaps, the strongest reason for including the use of teachers' magazines in any teacher training course, be it initial or in-service. Once the appetite has been whetted, it is likely the individual teacher will want to go on reading - and perhaps writing for - such publications him/herself.

One of the features of the ELT world is that it is so subject to change and fashion. Stimulating as new ideas may be, many teachers find themselves confused with the barrage. It is easy to lose a sense of perspective, to feel that what was done in the past in language classrooms was 'no good', and that all that is promulgated at conferences is new and therefore 'good'. However, by reading articles reflecting a wide variety of teaching situations regularly, it is easier to develop a sense of continuity and objectivity, and to become critically aware that some ideas or materials may be excellent in themselves, but are unsuited to one's own teaching situation or personality as a teacher. In other words, they help develop critical awareness, both of outside ideas and one's own professional profile. Once a teacher knows his/her strengths and weaknesses, it is easier to concentrate on improving on the weaknesses, through a kind of 'self-help' ongoing training programme.

The extent by which the teaching of English has changed over the last twenty years can be illustrated by asking two simple questions:

- *Why did you learn English (or continue to learn it when you had a choice)?*

- *Why are your students learning English?*

Although many of the answers - parental pressure, pop music, fashion, relatives in English speaking countries, etc., will be the same, others will be different. The possibility of travel to Britain, or to another country where English can be used as a means of communication, is a new one for many people. The need for English in the workplace, as some kind of insurance policy for finding employment in the recession-hit 1990s, is something more and more people are aware of. The possibility of study at

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university level in other countries, the use of English in computing, the need to read scientific and technical literature which is available only in English... all these imply a very different world for many learners and teachers than that of the 1970s. And such a different world presumably needs a rethinking of classroom activity and objectives.

The extent to which what goes on in classrooms (and, by extension, is contained in teaching materials and should be going on in training programmes) has changed can be illustrated by a look back over the past issues of any good teaching magazine or journal in which the articles are written by practising teachers and can be taken to represent the reality of their classrooms. A fairly random study of issues of *MET* and *ELT* Journal over twenty years, and of *PET* over a slightly shorter period, produced the following 'summary' of the types of articles common in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The provide a snapshot view of changes in our profession, showing teacher preoccupations and enthusiasms.

1970s
- structural syllabus
- visual aids
- pronunciation
- division of skills
- clear presentation
        practice
        production cycles
- teacher-centred classrooms

1980s
- fluency/accuracy
- classroom management
- testing
- integrated skills
- creativity
- ESP
- teacher training
- teacher education/development
- materials evaluation
- literature (in some countries)
- new technology

1990s
- English as an international language
- mobility (work/study/leisure)
- international credibility (exams)
- cultural studies
- individualised learning/self-help
- role of the teacher
- role of the learner
- learner expectations/learner training
- materials evaluation

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The lists are by no means exhaustive, and another person examining the same journals might come up with a slightly different choice of topics - but the message is clear: in the last twenty years, teachers have concentrated on different aspects of their craft at different times. Whether, of course, the students learning English in these decades have benefited more, or less, from such shifts is probably debatable.

This kind of long term objectivity about teaching English, which magazines can supply so readily, is a help in teacher training and teacher education. Teaching in the best of circumstances is a lonely profession, the individual needs to build up self-confidence and self-awareness (and this should surely be fundamental to the aims of any training programme). Teachers need to be helped to be critically aware of what is happening in their own classrooms and in others, and to develop the ability to choose, to invent, to change, and to reject: in other words, to be self-sufficient.

On training programmes, the use of magazines as a stimulus to thinking, reading and discussion is obvious: exposure to other people's ideas - perhaps especially ideals with which one does not agree! - are an ideal point of departure for formulating or sharpening up one's own ideas. The magazine as catalyst is something not to be neglected.

Magazines offer these possibilities to their readers; they also offer possibility to the teacher as writer. Again, self-confidence is the normal outcome. There is a terrific boost to self-esteem in seeing ideas and words in print - and teachers can do with as much encouragement of this kind as possible! Many currently used textbooks and teachers' handbooks began as magazine or journal articles; the teacher as writer would be joining an international or national fraternity of contributors to the endless debate on 'how can we teach English most efficiently/enjoyably/economically ...?'

What the magazine *Modern English Teacher (MET)* was relaunched in 1992, its 'new look' was based on a great deal of research into teachers' needs. The contents - the result of that research - reflect the preoccupations for the 1990s listed above. They include:

- the teacher as a person
- the teacher as a professional
- language for oneself
- language for the classroom
- the English-speaking world for oneself
- the English-speaking world for the classroom
- other teachers/teaching contexts
- the classroom
- published materials
- professional concerns
- personal development

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What emerges here is a concern for the teacher as a professional, and for the teacher as an individual, with a life outside the classroom. If magazines can help to make training programmes more realistically geared to the real needs and interests of teachers in today's world, they will have proved their worth.

Note: The author has to declare a prejudice: she was Editor of *MET* from 1976-1990, and is currently its publisher. She is firmly committed to the use of teacher magazines and journals for individual and group teacher training and teacher education, and welcomes the British Council ELTECS initiative to make their diffusion more widely available in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. She would be interested to hear how individual teachers and trainers are, in fact, using these magazines.

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The aim of the English Language Teaching Contacts Scheme (ELTECS) is to generate and sustain a network of English language teaching professionals across the wider Europe.

It is a British Council Manchester-led-initiative which complements existing ELT activity in central Europe and eastern and southern Europe, including the CIS, by involving participants in networking and partnership building events both in the UK and throughout the region.

ELTECS is managed by the British Council's ELT Projects in Europe Unit, Consultancy Group, Professional Services, Manchester. It is advised by a steering committee representing ELT interests.

It is open to specialists from central Europe and eastern and southern Europe who can discuss and decide key ELT issues from the public and private sectors.

Areas covered
- teacher training
- English for specific purposes
- distance education
- British studies
- language and policy planning
- examinations
- publishing and media
- translation and interpreting
- ELT administration and management

Networking activities
- seminars
- courses
- workshops
- attachments
- conferences
- visitorships
- journals
- academic links
- newsletters
- directories.

Information

For further information, please contact your local British Council office or the address below.

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