Teaching English From a Global Perspective

Edited by Anne Burns

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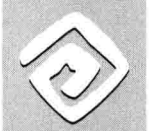

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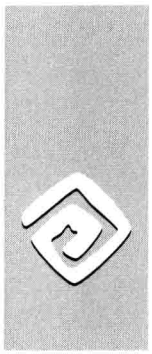

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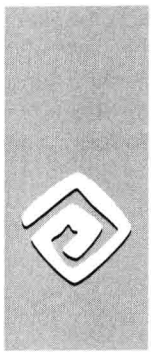


Series Editor's Preface

The Case Studies in TESOL Practice series offers innovative and effective examples of practice from the point of view of the practitioner. The series brings together from around the world communities of practitioners who have reflected and written on particular aspects of their teaching. Each volume in the series covers one specialized teaching focus.

CASE STUDIES

Why a TESOL series focusing on case studies of teaching practice?

Much has been written about case studies and where they fit in a mainstream research tradition (e.g., Nunan, 1992; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Perhaps more importantly, case studies also constitute a public recognition of the value of teachers' reflection on their practice and constitute a new form of teacher research—or teacher valuing. Case studies support teachers in valuing the uniqueness of their classes, learning from them, and showing how their experience and knowledge can be made accessible to other practitioners in simple, but disciplined ways. They are particularly suited to practitioners who want to understand and solve teaching problems in their own contexts.

These case studies are written by practitioners who are able to portray real experience by providing detailed descriptions of teaching practice. These qualities invest the cases with teacher credibility, and make them convincing and professionally interesting. The cases also represent multiple views and offer immediate solutions, thus providing perspective on the issues and examples of useful approaches. Informative by nature, they can provide an initial database for further, sustained research. Accessible to wider audiences than many traditional research reports, however, case studies have democratic appeal.

HOW THIS SERIES CAN BE USED

The case studies lend themselves to pre- and in-service teacher education. Because the context of each case is described in detail, it is easy for readers to compare the cases with and evaluate them against their own circumstances. To respond to the wide range of language environments in which TESOL functions, cases have been selected from EFL, ESL, and bilingual education settings around the world.

The 12 or so case studies in each volume are easy to follow. Teacher writers describe their teaching context and analyze its distinctive features: the particular demands of their context, the issues they have encountered, how they have effectively addressed the issues, what they have learned. Each case study also offers readers practical suggestions—developed from teaching experience—to adapt and apply to their own teaching.

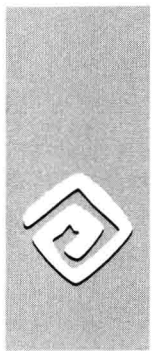
Already published or in preparation are volumes on

- academic writing programs
- action research
- assessment practices
- bilingual education
- community partnerships
- content-based language instruction
- distance learning
- English for specific purposes
- gender and TESOL
- grammar teaching in teacher education
- interaction and language learning
- international teaching assistants
- journal writing
- literature in language learning and learning
- mainstreaming
- teacher education
- teaching English as a foreign language in primary schools
- teaching English from a global perspective
- teaching literature
- technology in the classroom

THIS VOLUME

The studies in this volume reveal the complexity and challenge for ESOL teachers in a world in which every teaching setting claims or contests a place for English. Teachers and teacher educators cannot afford to ignore the issues and challenges raised by this timely and important book.

Jill Burton
University of South Australia, Adelaide



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CHAPTER 1

Interrogating New Worlds of English Language Teaching

Anne Burns

INTRODUCTION

When I became a teacher back in the 1970s, the world of English language teaching (ELT) was a more comfortable and cozy place of people who followed neat and predictable methods—secure, especially for a native-English-speaking teacher, in the assumption that learning English meant learning to speak like me.

The rapidity of the global spread of English, long predicted but then still only imagined, has come as a surprise, the pace of change over 50 years or so more dramatic than anticipated: "In 1950, any notion of English as a true world language was but a dim, shadowy theoretical possibility, surrounded by the political uncertainties of the Cold War, and lacking any clear definition or sense of direction" (Crystal, 1997, p. vii).

Now, it is a truism that English is a lingua franca, a language used locally and internationally, not only among so-called native speakers but by anyone wishing to activate his or her role as a member of an international communicative network. And to be an English teacher today is to play an inevitable part in this globalizing enterprise, to recognize new areas for inquiry, now raised for the perhaps the first time in the long history of ELT.

My introduction to this volume canvasses some of the major themes and questions challenging the new worlds of ELT into which the emergence of English as a global language is taking the TESOL field. Each subsection raises an area for inquiry, encapsulated by a prefacing quotation, and then brushes broadly over some of the literature that has highlighted debates over the past 25 years. Inevitably, each question raises further questions. It is my hope that these continuing questions provide a point of departure but also a point of convergence for discussion, reflection, and interaction among teachers as they read the chapters in this volume. I invite you, the reader, to contemplate these questions and, wherever possible, to reflect on and critique them with your colleagues—or, perhaps even better, to use them as starting points for action research explorations (see Burns, 1999; Edge, 2001) of your local teaching context as a microcosm of a globalized teaching endeavor.

In numerous and interconnected ways, the chapters in this volume touch also on these questions and themes. The themes surface many times in an intricate and complex relationship across the various discussions and descriptions, so that they are

not easily teased apart. As a way of organizing the contents and making some responses to the questions, however, at the end of each section I highlight which contributions in this collection take the central question as a major focus. My aim is to provide a way for readers to interrogate and compare their own responses with the pivotal issues highlighted by the contributors.

WHOSE LANGUAGE?

> An international language is not the possession of a specific group. It is public property. It is not the vehicle of a single culture. It becomes the vehicle of any culture to which a user applies it. (Carrington, 1988, as cited in Bryan, 1994, p. 101)

By characterizing speakers of English through three concentric circles, Kachru (1986) foreshadowed the expansions and shifts increasingly associated with the intensity of the spread of English in the current world.

The *Inner Circle* comprises the "old-variety English using countries" (Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 13), like Britain and Australia, where English is the dominant language (L1) and the main vehicle for communication in public and other domains. These countries are also characterized by increasing language diversity through immigration. In *Outer Circle* countries, English may be relatively well established in institutional settings and popular culture but is paralleled by a repertoire of other languages, as, for example, in Denmark, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Philippines, or Singapore. English is a second or additional language (L2) for the "English-knowing bilinguals" (Pakir, 1999a, p. 107) who live in Outer Circle countries. But it might even be an L1 for others. Both local and international varieties of English are used by speakers in a range of different contexts. Speakers in *Expanding Circle* countries, such as Japan, China, Korea, or Brazil, use English in more restricted ways, such as for scientific or business purposes. Although English may still be learned as a foreign language, its status as a language for international access and use is constantly being repositioned.

The three circles model is more than a convenient map of the spread of English. It is a dynamic portrayal of the fact that the ownership and use of English no longer reside with L1 speakers. Even in terms of sheer numbers of users, this cannot be the case. Graddol's (1997) estimates point to 375 million Inner Circle speakers, 375 million Outer Circle speakers, and 750 million Expanding Circle speakers—a total of 1.5 billion speakers worldwide (an inevitably conservative estimate 8 years after it was first proposed).

English, then, is an international commodity; speakers of English are more likely to be using the language with other multilingual speakers than with monolingual speakers, and for their own cultural, social, political, and economic purposes, removed from Inner Circle norms. Given this situation, the notion of the *native speaker* now calls up numerous queries. For example,

- Does being a native speaker automatically assume one has greater proficiency in the language than being a nonnative speaker?
- Are native speakers mainly people who are born and bred in Inner Circle countries?

- Are native speaker interactions intrinsically more communicative and of more worth than nonnative speaker interactions?
- Is native speakerness defined by ethnicity, associated mainly with Western/Caucasian backgrounds?
- Is a person brought up in a household speaking English and (an)other language(s) a native speaker?

Brown (chapter 2) outlines how the notion of internationalization that became an overarching institutional commitment at her university also underpinned the courses on World English that she taught. Guided by the university's International Vision Statement that students "will enter the 21st century as leaders in an emerging global community" (Office of the President, 2001, n.p.), the faculty in her department translated this philosophical stance into their teaching. She describes the courses, the content that underpinned faculty goals to create internationally aware professional language educators, and preservice teachers' various reactions to these ideals. Brown suggests that programs such as these are necessary if preservice teachers are to avoid being "ethnocentric instructors" with "inadequate or inaccurate understandings of various contexts of instruction" (p. 28).

Friedrich (chapter 3) looks at the issue of *Whose language?* from a rather different perspective. Hers is an educational situation where university instructors in non–Inner Circle countries are increasingly required to teach in English subjects that would previously have been taught in their mother tongue, Spanish. This requirement, illustrated in her context of Argentina, is not untypical of a growing universal trend. For her, it raised the question of how to design a program that would work to overcome the fears and shortcomings felt keenly by a group of business administration faculty. Working through and workshopping with these instructors on their concepts and myths related to World English, users of English, and native speakerness, she alerted them to the more comfortable possibilities of intranational and localized dimensions of practice, as "no universalizing initiative can account for all the possible uses or needs for English" (p. 44).

WHICH SPEAKERS?

> An increasing number of scholars are . . . questioning the appropriateness of one native speaker norm in a time of large-scale migrations, cross-national and cross-cultural encounters, and increasingly linguistic . . . differences among speakers of the same language. (Kramsch, 1998, p. 16)

If English can no longer be said to be the property of an exclusive club of Inner Circle locations (Widdowson, 1994), then the notion of the native speaker as the norm for ELT must increasingly be called into question. Some (e.g., Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 1995; Phillipson, 1992) argue that basing teaching on the norms of native speakerness is a sociopolitical issue. It fosters inequality, assimilation, and compliance with native speaker values (Tollefson, 1991); imposes the power and status of some on others (Holliday, 1994); impedes learners from adopting culturally preferred ways of interacting (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996); constitutes a form of linguistic (Phillipson, 1992) and capitalist (Naysmith, 1987) imperialism; and reproduces and maintains global inequalities (Pennycook, 1995).

Others (e.g. Kramsch, 1998) argue that the maintenance of the native speaker model is unrealistic as it sets goals for learners that are unachievable. As it is essentially comparative, its dominance in the classroom inevitably becomes a deficit perspective on learner achievements and demotivates learning. The teacher's role becomes one of negatively judging the gaps between learner and native speaker production (and, in many cases, their own) rather than acknowledging learners' ongoing gains. Cook (1999) points out that the literature on L2 teaching and acquisition is rife with negative terms such as *deviance* and *failure*. Even where the difference of the L2 user is recognized, the native speaker implicitly dominates teaching and research.

Placing emphasis in the classroom on the idea of the L2 user rather than the native speaker shifts the emphasis toward the realities of the global uses of English. New ways of thinking can begin with changes in terminology, so that L2 speakers are referred to as *multicompetent* (Cook, 1999) or *expert users* (Rampton, 1990) or other terms chosen by learners themselves—thus defining people by what they are rather than by what they are not. Cook points out that *competence* is a neutral term used to refer to native speaker knowledge of the language and is free from evaluation against an outside standard. Multicompetence, therefore, recognizes without being judgmental that people have knowledge of more than one language. Similarly, expertise is learned, relative, and partial rather than fixed or innate (Rampton, 1990).

Classroom goals can be redefined in terms of where learners are now in their approximation to the tasks and texts they need and want to use rather than in relation to externally imposed native speaker norms. The process of *approximation* can incorporate activities that begin with the teacher's and learners' L1s and build on language, ideas, and interests that can then be extended into the L2. Part of this process might include discussing what intercultural factors emerge for multicompetent users of English and what personal or social implications there are in the movement between languages. Approximation also means that learners and teachers can be more active and creative in selecting contexts, content, and roles that are of interest and relevance to them. They can make themselves and other L2 speakers the main goal and focus of classroom activities. Using L2 speaker models as a basis for classroom activities is still relatively rare in language teaching, but recent developments in corpus-based learner data (e.g., Granger, 2003; Longman Corpus Network, 2004; Seidlhofer, 2002) hold promise as a way of providing learners with examples such as frequency of lexical items, syntactical patterns, and discourse features.

The notion of the native speaker is unlikely to fade away for some time to come, even if it is a pedagogical fiction. As Davies (1995) points out, "The native speaker is a fine myth; we need it as a model, a goal, almost an inspiration. But it is useless as a measure; it will not help us define our goals" (p. 157). Becoming aware of its persistence—"its ghostlike presence" (Cook, 1999, p. 190)—in the classroom can, however, be a valuable starting point for questioning assumptions that might underpin teaching practices:

- To what extent is your teaching motivated by native speaker norms and goals? Is the native speaker the model you have in mind, explicitly or implicitly, when teaching?
- What or who is considered to be an ideal English speaker by you and by the learners? Is this person an L1 or L2 speaker of English?

- Why is this person the model in your particular teaching context? What aspects of the person's use of English are valued?
- What activities could you develop that might draw on L2 speakers as the models for learning?
- How could competent L2 speakers be used more extensively in your teaching situation?
- What L2 resources are there in your teaching context that learners can use as a basis for learning English?

Meier (chapter 4) and Matsuda (chapter 5) call attention to the importance of finding ways to introduce teachers to the changing sociolinguistic and intercultural realities inherent in English as an international language. Meier, in describing an approach taken to teaching a seminar on interculture in a MATESOL program, suggests that teachers need to become intercultural "understanders" with "greater communicative flexibility that precludes a construal of language teaching as an attempt to produce native speaker clones" (p. 53). Matsuda examines the issues from the perspectives of the gaps between teaching perceptions and practices and the major goals of the national curriculum, which she perceived when researching in schools in Japan. Drawing on classroom observations and discussions with teachers and students, she notes the delimiting effects that preferences for native speaker norms and (U.S.) standards have on teaching and learning. These effects include misrepresenting the nature of English as an international language and the diversity of its speakers, reinforcing the primacy and superiority of the native speaker teacher, and setting unachievable goals of nativeness as the targets for proficiency and pronunciation.

WHICH LANGUAGE?

> The long-standing debate, even now not wholly laid to rest, over which language is better, that of Britain or of the United States, has had all sorts of effects over the decades, from establishment of the literary canon to what pronunciations and usages are correct and should, therefore, be taught. (Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 16)

From the 16th century, as English spread across the world through migration and colonization, it became "nativized" (Kachru, 1985, p. 11) in new locations by existing and new speakers, so that today it is possible to recognize different major varieties of Inner Circle English—Australian, British, American, Canadian, and New Zealand English. But it is also possible to speak of newer subvarieties of English, developing where English is extensively used because of historical, political, and social factors as a second or parallel language among L2 speakers in such places as Europe, Singapore, or India. These World Englishes have generally emerged in Outer Circle countries and have developed their own internally consistent phonological, grammatical, and lexical patterns that differ from other varieties but are used by English speakers on a daily basis.

In the field of ELT, British and American English have been widely regarded as the preferred targets. However, limiting learners' exposure to only one or two of the infinite variations of LI and L2 varieties and representing them as universal norms

denies the realities of the repertoires of World Englishes learners encounter when they go out into the real world. The relevant point is that English is an international language because it has not retained the narrow norms of one variety. It has had to be diverse and independent to become so widely used (Widdowson, 1994). In practice, therefore, learners may have considerably more exposure to regional varieties of English—for example, Australian, New Zealand, Indian, Singaporean, or Malaysian in the Southeast Asian region or Euro-English in the European Economic Community—than to the varieties that have been held up as the two normative models in most language classrooms.

Given this situation, language teachers in the 21st century will increasingly be challenged to assist learners to select the English variety they will see as the most appropriate in different circumstances. This selection will be made, not in terms of a single correct variety, but in relation to local usages, values, and requirements, and inevitably alongside or in combination with other languages. You may need to reflect on questions like the following:

- What variety of English do you present to learners? Why do you see this variety as essential or preferable?
- What variety of English is assumed in the textbooks and materials you use? Is it the main or only variety that learners are likely to encounter outside the classroom?
- Does the way you present your classroom activities assume the existence of a single variety? Do you introduce activities to raise learners' awareness of other varieties? If so, what kinds of activities?
- To what extent do you introduce local or Outer Circle varieties and discuss with the learners how, where, and why they are (or could be) used?
- Do learners have experiences of more than one variety of English? What are their attitudes and beliefs about these varieties?

Evans (chapter 6), writing from the viewpoint of a native-English-speaking teacher working in an Inner Circle country, Australia, notes the challenges that these kinds of questions pose for teachers, particularly when coupled with the expectations of learners who have come to the country and to the particular educational institution specifically to learn in a native-speaking environment. As she notes, this situation puts a teacher who is conscious of the sociolinguistic realities of global English "in a bind" (p. 75). Her contribution sets out an option that avoids both the Inner Circle norm and the anything-goes model. Her critical and comparative approach highlights for learners the intercultural and pragmatic choices they can make in a national context that is itself, after all, a locus of globalized English use.

WHICH STANDARD?

> [Standard English] is a variety, a kind of superimposed dialect, which is socially sanctioned for institutional use and therefore particularly well suited to written communication. In its spoken form it can be manifested in any accent. (Widdowson, 1994, p. 380)

As English has spread and changed throughout the world, a constant concern has been that it will fragment into so many different varieties that English speakers will no longer be able to understand each other. Interestingly, this concern seems to be applied less to speakers within Inner Circle countries—Britain, Australia, the United States, Canada, New Zealand—than to those outside. As Brutt-Griffler (1998) comments,

> Most, if not all Inner Circle English speakers appear willing to meet on a common linguistic plane, accept the diversity of their Englishes and do not require of one another to prove competence in English, despite the considerable differences in the varieties of English they speak and the cross-communication problems entailed thereby . . . this situation must be extended to all English-using communities. (p. 389)

Although some commentators have argued for a single native speaker standard that should serve across all contexts (e.g., Honey, 1997; Quirk, 1985), others, taking a sociolinguistic point of view, contend that this argument is unrealistic. English is now so diffused across the world that it is more important for speakers of English to be able to communicate with each other. Therefore, if a stabilized variety does emerge, it will need to be one that is mutually intelligible to speakers across the world (Kachru, 1985; Strevens, 1983; Widdowson, 1994).

It is valuable for teachers of English to be aware of these arguments. The traditional fixation in many ELT contexts on the notion of working with one standard—at least in the case of spoken English—can easily lead to language misrepresentation. Where teachers and learners work with a basic premise that language is fixed and stable, this denies the adaptation, creativity, and hybridity that is essential if any language is to develop and thrive. It forces learners and teachers into a position where the main purpose for uttering the language becomes imitation rather than communication—especially communication that now takes place on a world scale. Given these arguments, Cook's (1999) recommendation that "language teaching would benefit from paying attention to the L2 user rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker" (p. 185) becomes of interest.

An important aspect of shifting the focus to the L2 user is the notion of *intelligibility* (Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 21). Kachru and Nelson explain that this notion involves three components:

1. intelligibility (the speaker produces sound patterns that are recognizable as English)
2. comprehensibility (the listener is able to understand the meaning of what is said)
3. interpretability (the listener is able to understand the purpose or intent of what is said within the particular context)

S. McKay (2002) illustrates this concept as follows:

> For example, if a listener recognizes that the word *salt* is an English word rather than a Spanish word, English is then intelligible to him or her. If the listener in addition knows the meaning of the word, it is comprehensible, and if he or she understands that the phrase "Do you have any salt?", is intended to be a request for salt, then he or she is said to be able to interpret the language. (p. 52)

Jenkins (2000) argues that a principal need in teaching English as an international language will be to find phonological norms and pronunciation models. Her research identifies key features that appear to have the greatest impact on intelligibility in interactions between two L2 users of English: articulatory settings (e.g., tongue shape, position of the lips), nuclear stress (e.g., how the stress in different parts of a sentence affects meaning in other parts), and particular segmental features (specific core sounds such as consonant sounds). She suggests that if teachers work on these features of pronunciation with learners, they can then focus on receptive rather than productive skills in order to help them achieve good communication. She also suggests that learners should be exposed to different L1 and L2 speaker accents to enhance their receptiveness to the range of English varieties. Using native speaker accents as models rather than norms, as Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) suggest, also takes teachers and learners in a different direction from the notion of a single fixed standard.

Where learners' rather than teachers' English-language-using context becomes the main reference point for learning, the notion of the standard to be achieved can become the subject of interesting sociocultural exploration. You and the learners you work with can explore some interesting questions together:

- What notions of the standard for English are dominant in your teaching context? Are they different for spoken and written English?
- Why is this standard considered to be the most appropriate in your teaching context? To what extent do you discuss the concept of a standard with the learners? What are the learners' attitudes toward the idea of a language standard?
- What attitudes exist in your local context toward varieties that are considered to be nonstandard?
- Are these varieties introduced into the classroom in any way? What kinds of discussions take place in your context in relation to these varieties?
- What repertoires of standard and nonstandard English do you use yourself both inside and outside the classroom? What relative values and relevance do these repertoires have?

Tarnopolsky (chapter 7) describes a situation where, in the current absence of a codified international English, he introduced learners to two standard varieties of English, British and American, in response to their expressed needs and in the interests of providing learners with "a lingua franca that gives them the easiest and broadest access to the most diversified international contacts" (p. 91). He discusses the complexities he faced in designing such a curriculum and how his learners' responses led to ongoing modifications.

High school preservice and practicing teachers' attitudes are the focus of the chapter by Brock (chapter 8). He draws on his survey research in Macao to analyze the beliefs of the teachers about the role and importance of English, learning and teaching, the curriculum, and ELT as a profession. In particular he focuses on teachers' attitudes concerning which standards and norms they should adopt in their context. Although the teachers showed a preference for the Inner Circle varieties of British or American English, he notes that these options are still fluid, with considerable freedom on the part of teachers to make choices. He sees this as a positive situation but wonders whether in the future such decisions might be influenced by the more centralized policies of neighboring Hong Kong and China.

WHICH TEACHERS?

> Monolingual teachers with little if any cross-cultural experience may have to stop and think about the situation in which English is acquired across the world. In most cases it is taught to nonnative speakers by nonnative speakers, neither teachers nor students (who themselves become the next generation of teachers) ever having any contact with a native user. (Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 18)

It is estimated that approximately 80% of the world's English teachers are bilingual speakers of English (Canagarajah, 1999b). Yet the reality in many ELT contexts is that native-English-speaking teachers are the preferred norm, even when these teachers may have no other qualifications than the ability to speak English. This state of affairs impacts negatively on the confidence and security of nonnative-English-speaking teachers, their sense of themselves as ELT professionals, and their evaluations of their proficiency and pronunciation of English (Seidlhofer, 1999; Tang, 1997; Thomas, 1999). However, recent debates have raised awareness of the fallacy of the native speaker teacher of English (Canagarajah, 1999b) and the importance of recognizing the role of the nonnative-English-speaking professional in TESOL (Braine, 1999; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992).

The labels *native* and *nonnative professional* are themselves problematic; they suggest a simple dichotomy that does not allow for the range of language teaching and learning experiences, language aptitudes and proficiencies, training and professional development opportunities, and inter- and cross-cultural contacts that an individual teacher might have experienced. The stereotype that the nonnative professional learns English in an EFL context and is therefore unable to acquire native proficiency holds true no more than does the stereotype that the native speaker is one who has perfect command of the language and the knowledge, skills, and ability to teach it. As Canagarajah (1999b) notes, the assumptions embedded in this dichotomy are both linguistically inaccurate and politically damaging. Nevertheless, as several commentators have noted (Govardhan, Nayar, & Sheorey, 1999; Jenkins, 2000; Liu, 1999; S. McKay, 2002), discriminatory hiring practices based on no more than (so-called) native speakerness persist in numerous ELT contexts.

The argument that it is "critical to raise consciousness about the role of international teachers of English in the field and validate tools for their empowerment" (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 429) is now gaining ground. Among the strengths of nonnative teachers (Cook, 1999; Medgyes, 1994; Seidlhofer, 1999; Widdowson, 1994) are