Educational approaches for an international language[1]

Alan Reeves

Departament de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

ABSTRACT

The fact that English is taking on the status of International Language (EIL) has led to debate about the usefulness of native speaker varieties (principally British or American Standard English) as the language teaching norms in different worldwide contexts. However, the parallel question of the suitability of methodologies to different cultural settings has not been raised. Current EFL methodology, as represented in teacher training courses and text books, remains clearly influenced by Western educational ideologies and objectives. The article looks at the relation between culture and methodology, questions the uncritical acceptance of some recent "individualised" approaches to language teaching, and, in view of recent suggestions about culture and learning styles, proposes that the development of methodological approaches for EIL should take the local cultural conceptions of language, learning and education into account.

> Is it possible to make statements about learning in other cultures which are not at the same time ethnocentric value judgements? (Riley 1990)

> What theoretical and methodological problems are there in the international promotion of English being intricately interwoven with the export of pedagogical theories, and more broadly with political, commercial, and philosophical ideologies elaborated in the West? (Phillipson 1992)

1. Introduction

These two quotations reflect the major dimensions of the area I want to discuss in this paper. Underlying both of them is a concern with the cross-cultural nature of foreign language learning and teaching. The question of culture has been recognised as important for some time in the various methodological journals, and in teacher training courses. It usually limits itself to a discussion of cultural bias in the choice of course content. In general, however, the teaching profession seems slow to appreciate that the teaching of English as a Foreign

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1. Some of the ideas in this paper developed out of conversations with David Block and Geoff Jordan, of ESADE Barcelona.

Language (TEFL) is by definition a cross-cultural activity, and while there is a certain concern with what should be taught, there has been virtually no discussion of how teaching itself might be made more cross-culturally sensitive. In modern international business contexts, it has long been understood that cross cultural awareness, on the part of individual or corporate negotiators, may mean the difference between success and failure. We can wonder whether methodologists might profit from a similar broadening of perspective.

Part of the problem is that language teaching methodology tends to be highly prescriptive. As a discipline, it has the practical purpose of providing guidelines for successful language teaching. At the same time it is an evolving discipline, and the kind of prescriptions it makes reflect currently popular schools of thought and research. The idea that its central principles and values might be perceieved as peripheral, insignificant, or even misguided in some world contexts, has rarely been entertained. My aim in writing this paper is, then, to introduce a dimension of cultural relativity into the discussion of methodology; this seems to be important at a time when English is fast becoming an international language. It also seems important that a discipline so centrally concerned with interaction, cooperation and communication should be able to question its own relevance.

The adoption of a natural language with its own history, literature, cultural presuppositions and world-view, for purposes of international communication, creates a complex situation in which elements of socio-psychology, culture, politics, economics, and of course, linguistics are all interwoven. The task of developing effective programmes for English language instruction is therefore a complicated one, since the points of reference for a theoretical base must be cross-cultural and not mono-cultural. This is an area which is little understood, and furthermore, unfamiliar to language teachers.

The relevance of Native Speaker models (Standard British English, for example) for the teaching of an international English has already been questioned. At the phonological level, for example, this would imply the use of Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) as the norms against which second language proficiency should be assessed. Yet a study by Smith and Rafiqzad (1978) did not show any greater intelligibility for native phonology over non-native phonology, amongst subjects from nine Asian countries plus the USA. At a more general level, Kachru (1983) sees the choice of a teaching norm as a choice between a *monomodel* approach and a *polymodel* approach.

He describes the assumptions behind the monomodel approach:

> A monomodel approach presupposes that there is a homogeneous English second language (L2) speech community, and that the functional roles assigned to English in each area are more or less identical. More important, it assumes that the goals for the study of English in various parts of the world are more or less similar.

Since all three of these assumptions are false, he proposes that a polymodel

approach, which recognises that English as a second language may vary with respect to these mentioned factors, may be the most suitable. This argument is of course supported by the fact that English already has several recognised varieties (Indian, West Indian, Philippine, etc.), whose status is regarded as equivalent to standard British or American. However, there is also a moral question here. Smith (1983) cites Quirk (1968):

> Notions such as English is the Englishman's gift and the language remains fundamentally 'ours' etc, are parochial and naive [...] they do not even remotely correspond to linguistic realities and they can do nothing but harm to the cause of human relationships and international harmony.

Recognising this means accepting that the intended users of English as a second or international language might have at least some say in selecting or determining the norms of the variety they find the most useful. It seems obvious that, by extension, they might also want some say in determining what kind of educational approach will be the most effective. In most contexts, the teaching of English depends on a course book, most likely produced in Britain or the United States, whose eventual shape has been determined not only by pedagogic but also by commercial factors. The book carries models of the language forms to be learnt, but along with this, it represents a specific methodological orientation. It is clear, however, that with such a wide distribution neither of these aspects can be more than a hypothetical estimate of real language and learning needs.

The rest of this paper has two inter-related aims. The first of these is to offer a critical assessment of the methodological orientation which is currently being disseminated, as part of the world-wide English Language Teaching (ELT) enterprise. Secondly, and arising from this, is the question of whether it makes sense to think of a language teaching methodology as something which is exportable at all. Before considering either of these points however, it is important to clarify what methodology might consist of, and where it comes from.

2. The elements of methodology

In order to provide a base for the discussion, some terminological clarifications are necessary. Richards and Rodgers (1986) make use of a distinction formulated by Anthony (1963), between approach, method, and technique:

> The arrangement is hierarchical. The organisational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach.

The definition of "approach" is:

An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught.

From this we can see that it is quite possible for a variety of techniques to be capable of carrying out a method, and that different methods can be consistent with one approach. The area where we achieve the greatest unity is therefore the approach. Even so, talking of "unity" is perhaps misleading. The rate of change in ELT methodology is alarming. To make a comparison, since the advent of the generative paradigm in the late fifties, which is of course still with us, ELT methodology has gone through three, some might say four major shifts of emphasis. The result is that at any given time, methods and techniques which trace their origins in widely different schools of thought are being used simultaneously, sometimes even within the same institution. Any attempt to give the current picture would be an unjust overgeneralisation.

A methodological approach can be seen as an answer to questions such as the following: Who are the intended recipients of instructional programmes? For what reasons do they need to use English, and what is the ideal balance of language skills to suit their purposes? What theory of language is likely to offer the most useful and productive insights in the specification of objectives? What theory of learning is likely to be most helpful in determining the character of classroom activities which are proposed as a means to these objectives? In answering these questions from an international perspective, there is a lot at stake. In 1987 *The Economist* made an estimate of 330 million people in different parts of the world who all need and use English as a second language, largely for instrumental reasons. This figure excludes those who make use of an established variety or intranational language, such as Indian English. Even so, this estimate is certainly on the conservative side now. We have to include the role of English in the imminent single European Market, as well as in Eastern Europe, where the possibilities for economic and cultural activity, much of which will no doubt be conducted in English, have suddenly opened up. With this increasing demand, it is clear that the worldwide ELT profession has a responsibility to provide answers in a way, or ways, which respond to the interests of this expanding community of learners. Is this actually happening?

3. Progress or change in ELT methodology?

In view of the worldwide demand for English, it is not surprising that the amount of effort invested, particularly in the TEFL area, should have caused a rapid series of methodological changes. This is apparently a process in which approaches and classroom practices have been adapted and improved in the light of experience and new theoretical insights. It therefore seems reasonable

to suggest that modern language teaching, at least in those centres which take the trouble to inform themselves about new developments, should be more effective than that of, say, ten years ago. Now, a quick review of recent applied linguistic and methodological literature will reveal that the current watchword of our profession is "learner autonomy", and that behind the various statements of this practical objective we can discern an *individualised* educational approach, concerned with the realisation of potential and the development of skills for learning, as well as language. So a simple evaluation would be to say that learner autonomy, and individualisation in language instruction, represent the high point of evolution within the language teaching profession.

The view expressed in this paper is that this conception of methodological progress is basically incorrect. This is not due to a lack of ability or effort on the part of methodologists (I speak as one who makes a living from teaching the subject, and I can vouch for the effort if not the ability) but because the criteria for what constitutes an educational approach suitable for language teaching keep changing. However, one has to look beyond the immediately relevant disciplines of language teaching to explain why the criteria do change.

4. Individualisation as an educational value

Firstly, we have to say that the days when methods were compared to see which was the most effective are long since past. This is now recognised as a simplistic view of a highly relative question:

> With so many variables it is impossible to pick out any one set of didactic procedures which will yield the best results under all circumstances. (Van Els et al. 1984)

Most practising teachers recognise this, at least implicitly, and although methodological texts are there to give recommendations, it is likely that experienced teachers make use of a set of procedures which they have created or adapted in the light of their own experience. The result of this is that methods are rarely, if ever, applied in their pure form, but are continuously reinterpreted. While this might have been disturbing to the methodological practitioner of several years ago, the fact that methodology might in reality turn out to be rather an amorphous affair does receive a certain license from applied linguistic   re-search, traditionally the source discipline which claims to provide insights of value to the language teacher. The recent moves towards individualisation in learning and the promotion of learner autonomy can be seen as responses to two important insights. The first of these is Pit Corder's (1981) concept of a "built-in syllabus", which implies that the route of acquisition is determined by learner-internal factors, and consequently that there are strong *a priori* limitations on what can be learnt (and thus successfully taught) at a given

moment. The second is the recognition that students differ in their preferred learning behaviours (Abraham and Vann 1987, Chamot 1987). Since these two factors cover both declarative and procedural aspects of language learning respectively, the path to direct intervention in the learning process, via a method of whatever kind, is effectively barred. As a result, the contemporary view of methodology is of a practice which is facilitatory, but not causative of learning, and under such circumstances standardised codes of classroom practice may be hard to recognise.

While the methodological debate seems to have moved away from centre stage, it is noticeable that an increasing amount of attention is being paid to teacher development and related issues. As Clarke and Silberstein (1988) point out, there has for a long time been an almost "unidirectional flow" of information from theory to practice, with the familiar "implications for teachers" section appearing at the end of many applied linguistic papers which are not themselves practically oriented. Recent work in classroom ethnography, self-monitoring and action research proposes an alternative view in which the classroom itself is seen as a legitimate source of research questions, and which allows teachers to be instrumental in their own professional development by seeking answers to these questions in a systematic way. This approach has two consequences for the role of the teacher.

Firstly, and in relation to the practical aspects of the teacher's work, it means that the teacher is no longer someone who "applies techniques" which have been devised in different contexts and then imported into the class. Secondly, with respect to the theoretical aspects, it means that the source of innovation in teaching is not necessarily to be found in models of learning proposed by applied linguistic research. Instead, there is a move towards a view of the teacher as initiator, and classroom practices may be a synthesis of theory and reflected-upon experience, adapted to external constraints such as learner needs and institutional procedures.

In summary, the contemporary scene might be described as student-centred classes, and teacher-centred methodologies. The parallel between these tendencies is striking. A student-centred class requires a certain focus on learner training, since it must offer the individual student the means to make decisions about his own learning. However, the commitment to greater independence implicit in such a stance means a development which goes beyond merely linguistic concerns, since it encourages the acceptance of greater personal responsibilities. The same can be said, *mutatis mutandi*, of the teacher engaged in a self-monitoring programme. Recognising the need for change encourages a reflection on the factors which limit it, and in many cases, this may involve the individual at a deeper level than the simple ability to manipulate techniques effectively. The unifying element here is often termed "personal development", a concept which embraces both learner autonomy and teacher development, and which is clearly individualistic in emphasis. This concept does not derive

directly from linguistics or even pedagogy, but is more closely related to the concept of education. The implication is that as teachers, we are responsible for providing an educational structure within which individuals of different kinds can develop, while at the same time recognising that this process is interconnected at various points with our own development as teachers, and as individuals. Most of us, presumably, would regard such views as unexceptionable. Widdowson's comment (1984):

> Proposals for a person oriented approach to language teaching/learning [....] are influenced [..] by an educational ideology which proclaims the rights of the individual against the imposition of institutional control. I would subscribe to such an ideology myself, and in an open society I can say so.

draws attention to the responsibilities of an educational approach in the shaping of society, and shares a lot with the views elaborated in the writings of Rogers (1979), Maslow (1969), Bruner (1966), Freire (1972), Habermas (1970), and others. But to be provocative, one might ask whether such an individualised conception of education would be possible, or even appropriate, in a society that is not certain of its own continued political stability, that does not have a clear concept of its own cultural identity, and lacks the economic bases which make it possible to set up and maintain its own programmes of cultural and educational development. In other words, the current need to promote individual over collective value, and the resulting interest in individualised approaches to education, might be more symptomatic of a certain set of socio-cultural, political and economic conditions, than simply an attempt to bring language teaching into line with what applied linguistic research has shown us about the nature of language learning. To put it in plain terms, is individualisation a western luxury?

After all, there is something here that needs explanation. Why, we may ask, should applied linguistic studies lead to a position which is independently supported by a certain ideological/cultural viewpoint about the purposes of education? Why should the notion of individualisation, in this case in language education, which recieves scientific support from studies on both the route and the rate of SLA, also conform to our conceptions of what the main aim of an educational process is? Can we not imagine a situation in which these two are at odds with each other? We might begin to answer this question by looking into how an approach to language teaching comes into being, and inevitably, at the same time, into considerations of cultural relativity.

5. What is methodological development?

Van Els et al (ibid) devote a section to a consideration of source disciplines in ELT. Recognising that language teaching does not rest exclusively on any one scientific discipline they propose that:

Pedagogy, psychology, psycholinguistics, and linguistics have something to say about guided L2 learning...

and continue with a revealing paraphrase of Zonder (1978) to the effect that:

...the problems for which FLT seeks a contribution from the source disciplines have not in themselves been the object of research in the source disciplines.

and, illustrating the point by reference to theoretical linguistics:

The goals and motivations of theoretical linguistic work are established independently of the interests of those who seek to benefit from the output of that work.

It is clear from these remarks that studying the source disciplines themselves would not reveal how they are synthesised into a methodological code of practice, of the kind which can prescribe classroom behaviour. Something seems to be missing from the picture. A partial answer to this can be found in Dubin and Olshtain's (1986) remarks, in which the italics are mine, and are the point of departure for the next section of this paper.

During any particular period, designers and pedagogues *quite unconsciously* tend to adopt orientations which either emphasise language analysis or use, since these views are tied into cultural beliefs about the educational objectives of the society as a whole.

In fact, it is debatable whether the process described really does take place unconsciously. Rather, one might say that an orientation towards language analysis, or use, (cf. Bernstein 1971 on "position" vs "person" orientations) is adopted, or better said, worked out, precisely in order to represent a particular set of cultural beliefs about educational objectives. Here, then, in addition to the various scientific source disciplines which Van Els proposes, we have to add an ideological/cultural standpoint, which is the factor which will determine the particular character that the synthesis of source disciplines will take. The concept of *ablocutionary value*, which is proposed by Julian Edge (1989) in the context of a discussion of the reader's contribution to text comprehension, may help clarify how ideological and cultural factors can exert an influence. Edge's justification for the term "ablocutionary value" is as follows:

...a possible way of saying something more informative than Speech Act Theory at present allows about perlocutionary sequel (unintended perlocutionary effect) by taking the perspective of the reader/hearer to account for that person's understanding and actions.

The existing terminology (Austin 1962) includes both *perlocutionary object* and *perlocutionary sequel*, which can be glossed respectively as the intended and unintended effects of an *illocutionary act*. Edge cites Austin's example of the illocutionary act of warning, which may achieve its object in alerting the hearer,

but also have the unintended sequel of causing alarm. However the first of Austin's terms is clearly speaker/writer oriented (i.e. what one intends to achieve by an utterance) and the second does not adequately capture the assignment of unforeseen interpretations to a text/utterance, by the reader/hearer, for his own purposes. Edge is concerned precisely with this tendency of readers to actively exploit texts for their own reasons, and as he points out, this exploitation can occur whether or not the reader can be said to comprehend the text, at least in the sense of identifying the writer's intention. Of course, it is comprehension, in an absolute sense, which is out of place here, and one senses that Edge's ablocutionary value is somehow an extension of the concept of interpretation, which is more central to current conceptions of discourse processing. (see eg. Cook 1988). Edge cites Sperber and Wilson (1982; see paper on Relevance Theory in this issue) as saying:

> A successful act of comprehension (which is what is aimed at by both speaker and hearer) is one which allows the hearer to go beyond comprehension proper.

and later adds:

> The reader's ablocutionary value has the same integrity as the writer's illocutionary intent.

In other words, what the writer intends can only be part of a theory of communication. There are two important points here. Firstly, a reader-oriented conception of communication such as this one, has the effect of promoting the status of the reader, relative to text and writer. Secondly, Edge recognises that if texts are comprehended, then they are not *merely* comprehended. They are made use of. Readers (except perhaps for those in language classes) are motivated.

Building on this insight we can begin to understand the influences that give our approach to language teaching an overall shape. Contemporary methodology, as presented in teacher training courses, is, like other disciplines, almost entirely mediated by texts of some kind or other. Retrospectively, one can of course retrace the major influences: Cognitive Code teaching (characterised by its emphasis on the explicit teaching of grammatical rules) arising from Chomsky's (1959) attack on Skinner's (1957) "Verbal Behaviour"; Communicative teaching (which prioritises the creation of situations for language use) arising from Hymes'(1971) attack on Chomsky, and so on. What is needed, however, is some account of how and why individual writers/researchers search for and perceive texts as relevant to their purposes, transform textually presented material, and leave it in a form ready to be taken up and transformed by others. If, as Sperber and Wilson say, the hearer (include reader) must "go beyond comprehension proper" then there will inevitably be a certain tension within successive sets of illocutionary intentions and ablocutionary

values. The tension arises from the need to present (in this case) methodology as a body of knowledge which is coherent, and reflects the interests of those who are concerned with elaborating language teaching approaches in accordance with the educational objectives of a given society. In the course of time, as new connections are made, insights and ideas feed back into the text world, so that the status of information gradually shifts from new to presupposed, and in this way the discipline can be said to have advanced.

Consider the following remarks from Brookes and Grundy (1988):

> It seems axiomatic that learner autonomy should be the goal of every learner and every teacher.

We can ask if it would have been possible to make this statement twenty five years ago. And if not, why is it now possible to present an individualised educational approach as axiomatic, i.e. as something which *precedes* argument? To make use of an image from stylistics, we might conceive of the whole fabric of ELT discourse as resulting from "consistent unidirectional fore- grounding" (Mukarovsky 1964) of selected features by different writers with the result that the emerging dominant features "set in motion, and give direction to the relationships of all other components." (ibid). The fabric of ELT discourse takes on a certain culturally determined relief, and its rhetoric will appear as natural to those sharing the same cultural beliefs.

Recognising the role of cultural value judgements in the elaboration of teaching methodologies offers a possible explanation of why methodological "progress" seems to be more a case of "reaction against preceding methodologies" (Grundy 1985). Presumably, if we were dealing uniquely with scientific disciplines, we would expect to see something more closely resembling scientific progress, in which models and theories are progressively subsumed by others having greater degrees of generality and predictive power. But to some extent such a situation is inevitable, since it is culture that determines the uses to which language can or will be put, and for this reason a language teaching methodology has to be classed along with other cultural artefacts.

6. A role for strategies?

To return to the first question which was posed at the end of the introduction, what now follow are some critical comments about the individualised approach to language teaching, more specifically about the way individualisation, as an educational objective, is expressed in practical terms.

As a research question, the focus on strategies has gained importance since the publication of the "Good Language Learner" study (Naiman et al 1978.)

and has been indirectly encouraged by acquisitional studies which reveal surprising similarities in the *route* of acquisition, or more specifically, in certain developmental sequences, which are found to be the same for learners of different first language backgrounds. While this finding has led to speculation about acquisitional universals of various kinds, the practical result has been to shift methodologists' attention onto the *rate* of acquisition, which, it is proposed, may be accelerated by the provision of a favourable learning environment. Differences in the rate are explained by environmental factors as well as individual differences between learners. These include aptitude, motivation, intelligence, cognitive style, age and personality. It has also been found that learners differ according to their preferred learning behaviours, or strategies. Most researchers (eg.Chamot 1987) now classify these into three major types: *cognitive*, which are concerned with direct operations on linguistic material, (for example, repetition, deduction, translation), *metacognitive*, concerned with planning, organising, and evaluating learning-directed behaviour, (for example, focussing on selected linguistic features, or assessing one's own learning progress), and *social-affective*, concerned with arranging for opportunites to be exposed to and practice the language, (for example, involving oneself in conversations with other learners and/or native speakers). The proposal is that by studying the strategies used by successful learners, one can build up a body of knowledge about strategy use which can then be made available to all learners, so that the general success of learning is increased all round:

> With successful training, less competent learners should be able to apply strategies to the acquisition of a variety of different language skills and transfer the strategies to similar language tasks. (O'Malley 1987)

We can understand why some modern course books have a "learner training section" in which learners are encouraged to talk about how they learn, and the appearance of books such as "Language Learning Strategies" (Oxford 1990) and "Learning to Learn" (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989). The assumption is that strategies are causative of learning. The approach then consists of helping learners to discover what strategies constitute effective learning, which will help them become better language learners, and at the same time make them less dependent on the classroom for future learning success. In this way, strategy research provides a basis for learner autonomy, as an educational goal:

> Instruction is a provisional state that has as its object to make the learner or problem-solver self sufficient. Otherwise the result of instruction is to create a form of mastery that is contingent upon the perpetual presence of a teacher. (Bruner 1966)

Intuitively, these views seem to be entirely right. There is a reassuring implication that a language teacher cannot take all the responsibility for everything a learner needs to know, and that a more realistic role might be to

enable learners to continue to learn and use the language independently, once they leave the class. But one can wonder whether the wave of enthusiasm which is carrying the learner autonomy movement forwards is based on ideological or scientific premises. Anita Wenden, whose research centres on learner strategies, laments the fact that learner training still remains very peripheral to most teachers' concerns, but admits:

> This lack of emphasis on what most would agree is a very important set of skills may be due in part to the scant empirical validation of its feasibility and effectiveness in second language learning. (Wenden 1987)

In order to put this approach on a firm footing, applied linguistic research needs to be able to demonstrate that strategies are indeed causative, i.e., logically prior to and necessary for learning. After all, there is the possibility that strategies emerge simultaneously with the development of second language proficiency, and that they represent the way in which a learner progressively solves the different problems that mastering the second language holds for him. This is what Skehan (1990) refers to as the "strategies as causal vs. strategies as caused" question. Although evidence is scarce on either side, a study by Chesterfield (1985) does support this latter position. Also supporting this view is the relationship noted by Skehan (ibid) between Chesterfield's longitudinal data on the order of strategy emergence and O'Malley's (1985) cross-sectional data on the frequency of strategy use. The strategies which appear earlier in time also appear to be those which are most frequently used. Clearly more research is needed to see if the longitudinal and cross-sectional data really do match up, but the possibility does seem entirely plausible. According to various studies in second language acquisition, (e.g., Wong-Fillmore 1976, Ellis 1984) early stages of acquisition are characterised by "formulaic speech" in which chunks of language are memorised, and can be reproduced in communication. The chunks themselves can be analysed at a later stage, thus freeing individual linguistic items for recombination into creative speech. This would concur with a strategy sequence in which memorisation precedes more demanding cognitive strategies such as deduction and recombination, of the kind necessary for language analysis.

Evidence in favour of the "strategies as caused" position would weaken the argument for strategy training, and certainly rule out the treatment of strategies in isolation. The important question is whether strategies can actually be dissociated, for instructional purposes, from the linguistic, organisational and interactive aspects of learning which would normally be the cue for their appearance. If not, teachers would be justified in directing their efforts towards the formal and interactional aspects of language learning (as they always have done) and dealing with learning-related issues as they come up. In reality, it is likely that many experienced teachers already do this, whether or not they claim to be consciously promoting learner autonomy.

As long as the trainability of learning strategies is still an open question, it must be premature to argue that teacher intervention in this area promotes learner autonomy. Even if it does, the argument in favour is by no means clear-cut. We have no measure of autonomy, and so no means of knowing whether students actually need to be trained. As a colleague David Block comments, "there is something strange about an approach to language teaching which assumes students, especially adult professionals, could actually get into your class if they hadn't worked out one or two things about learning before-hand..."

The other question is a practical one. The very nature of the classroom, as a collective unit, imposes severe limitations on this kind of endeavour, and in practice the problem is likely to be dealt with rather superficially. Real indivi-dualised learner training must involve a very close monitoring and analysis of learning strategies, as well as guided experiment in the use of alternatives. It must, quite obviously, be directed at an individual, and not at a group.

The cumulative effect of the current barrage of literature on the importance of learner autonomy will be to put teachers under pressure to adapt their teaching styles, just as over the last fifteen years or so, they have been under pressure to become Functional / Communicative / Humanistic or whatever. As they discover that their institutional structure is simply too rigid to allow the fluidity of groupings which might foster an individualised approach, still less take on the economic problems, there will be a backlash against learner training. The problem is that as often happens, the baby will go out with the bathwater. Perhaps for ideological reasons (i.e., the appeal of the "learning to learn" rhetoric), individualisation as an educational approach has been presented largely as a matter of training in learning strategies. Given the institutional restraints on effective learner training, teachers, unable to percieve positive results from their efforts, will react against individualisation as a whole. This would be a great pity. In recent years research has revealed a lot about individual differences between learners, and it is clear that a language teaching methodo-logy must take account of this.

7. Are methodologies exportable?

The second major question relates to the exportability of methodological approaches. It is apparent from what has been said in earlier sections that there is a real risk of what might be called "cultural blindness" which would result in the imposition of an approach in contexts where it is inappropriate and possibly even counter-productive. Again, the problem is anticipated in the two quota-tions with which this discussion began. We might suspect that in the West, where educational objectives are formulated against a largely democratic back-ground, and where respect for individual rights is at least acknowledged (one

can always say not enough) educational objectives are to a large extent shared. Even so, there are discrepancies. A study carried out at the ESADE Business School, Barcelona (Lewis and Reeves 1989) revealed that when asked to select which of nine factors were the most important in determining quality of learning, students clearly favoured "clarity of course objectives", "quality of presentation", and "vocational relevance". Two other factors "freedom in learning" and "teacher talking time" had been included, to reveal differences in methodological orientation. But the results did not suggest that students saw either of these as significantly related (the latter inversely) to the quality of learning. These findings run counter to the earlier study by Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) in British universities, where the overall profile turned out rather differently, freedom in learning and quality of learning being quite closely correlated.

Different educational value systems, and their effect on language instruction have been analysed by Clark (1987). He suggests three main tendencies: Classical Humanism, Reconstructionism, and Progressivism. Each of these has its own characteristic approach to virtually every aspect of organised language instruction, for example, syllabus content, teacher's role, classroom activities, overall learning aims, assessment, and very importantly, approaches to curriculum renewal itself. What is not discussed is the possibility of interference and conflict when elements of the three systems become confused. Such interference can have a temporal dimension, as might happen when curriculum planners, in their desire for educational reform, propose the use of "modern" open-ended communicative or task-based activities in an educational context which does not share, or does not yet share, the educational objectives which validate such an approach, and in which there is correspondingly little awareness of, or sympathy with the ideological questions involved. In such cases we might speak of a reform being "ahead of its time" although in practice the phrase might be more of an excuse for failure. There can also be a "geo-cultural" dimension, as when "foreign experts" are brought in to set up instructional programmes and in so doing make use of a set of procedures drawn from a cultural context whose values are alien to the host culture.

Riley's quote, from the introduction, is remarkably apt here, and should make us think twice about the validity of learner training activities in contexts which are increasingly cross-cultural in nature. To refer back to the strategy research, the study by O'Malley (1987) showed that while a group of Hispanic students who had been trained in the use of combined grouping and imagery strategies did better in a vocabulary learning task, than a control group with no training, a group of Chinese students actually did worse. The explanations given for this are rather revealing:

[The first concerns] the persistence of familiar strategies. Other investigators have tried unsuccessfully to train students to use strategies that compete with more familiar techniques

> [...] Grouping and imagery used together as a combined strategy may be sufficiently difficult for most persons that only individuals with high imagery can make use of the unified strategy.

We may wonder what real conclusions to draw from this. Hispanic students have "less persistent strategies" and are therefore more receptive to treatment? Chinese students have "low imagery"? While this was clearly not O'Malley's intention, it is hard to avoid the impression that Hispanic students are in fact better learners than the Chinese. A question that O'Malley does not raise is that the whole concept of what constitutes a good learner might be culturally weighted in the first place. If this is the case then the relationship between culture, strategy, and learning should be realigned, and there is a good argument for including the study of learning styles within an acculturation model of second language acquisition, such as Schumann (1978), instead of assuming that the strategies are somehow present (or absent) before language acquisition begins to occur. Differing achievement test results might then be explained by a concept such as cultural distance, instead of in terms of the "good or bad learner".

If research such as this is typical of material that is being used as input to the elaboration of language teaching methodology, then one can begin to see the risks involved in the unquestioned propogation of a methodology which is really based on ethnocentric values. The problem seems more acute when it is recognised that very often those (native speakers) who teach are often responsible for testing as well. Success or failure in learning may be defined in terms which have little relevance to the target community, which already has its own body of shared presuppositions and knowledge about language and learning. Long term effects related to promotion and career opportunities are another aspect of the problem, and in the end, one can ask whose interests are really being served. This would be an unfortunate set of consequences for a language which claims to be international.

8. Conclusions

I now have to draw the two separate threads of this argument together. It seems apparent that a whole series of complicated pedagogical issues arise out of the fact that English has become a language with international status, and it is clearly naive to assume one merely has to "teach the language". Firstly, it has been argued that as long as we do not have a culturally neutral conception of successful learning, (this must be a long way off), then it is premature to export a methodological approach which claims to promote *individualisation* by producing *good learners* by training them in a set of strategies which may well be *culture specific*. Studies in applied linguistics, particularly in that area which

seeks to apply knowledge about learning behaviour to the development of effective approaches to language instruction, should recognise the cultural limitations of any statements about learning which are made. Riley (1990) remarks that an anthropological perspective is required:

> Only an anthropologically informed inquiry can provide the perspective and the con- trastive mechanisms necessary to intercultural studies: all other forms of inquiry will be ethnographic, that is, they will produce parallel but separate descriptions of what it is like to be Danish, Vietnamese, Moroccan and so on, but no integrated contrastive distinctions.

Moving towards an anthropological standpoint will no doubt have the effect of complicating this area of applied linguistic research. But on the other hand, it is perhaps a sign of an advancing discipline that it is possible, even necessary, to establish links with other disciplines in the solution of important problems. Until further work has been done in this area, statements about learning based on strategies of the "good language learner" must be regarded as relative in nature. In reality they may become progressively less useful as the possibilities for permanent intercultural contact and exchange increase.

Secondly, the point has been made that there is an impressive amount of research into individual differences in learners which should be of interest to methodologists trying to devise new approaches to teaching. Looking back at the existing material, it is noticeable that little has been made in methodological terms, of the work on motivation, even though it is one of the variables which has been the most investigated. This research might key into a methodology via the factors of "interest" and "need".

As far as interest is concerned, Skehan (1990) recognises that one of the sources of language learning motivation could be:

> ...the inherent interest of learning, because classrooms or learning situations might be attractive places in themselves.

While classrooms do not often live up to this description, the point is that interest is an external factor open to manipulation, and by means of a careful choice of materials and challenging tasks, it may well be possible to modify learner attitudes in such a way that motivation increases. But although modern course books attempt to present an interesting range of topics, (amateur psychology seems popular), systematic studies which attempt to determine what the general characteristics of an interesting task might be seem to be thin on the ground. One could hazard a guess that one important characteristic of such tasks is that their outcomes are not defined linguistically, thus immediately making an almost limitless range of topics and authentic materials relevant for learning purposes. (See for example *Project Work*, Fried Booth 1986, or the work on Third Generation Tasks developed by Ribè, 1988).

Concerning "need" it is worth reminding ourselves that the vast majority of learners who need English as a means of international communication, need it for instrumental reasons, which will undoubtedly encourage a critical perspective on learning materials and syllabus content specifications. Students who do not perceive the relevance of proposed materials will not be motivated to learn from them. On the other hand, one can see a direct line of causation running from the recognition of needs, through perception of materials as relevant, to increased motivation and perseverance in learning. There is a strong case here for incorporating some kind of negotiation with the learner about what needs the syllabus should be most responsive to.

Very broadly speaking, the factors of interest and need correspond to integrative and instrumental types of motivation respectively. Concerning the former, we can assume that student attitudes are not static, and that it therefore makes sense for methodology to concern itself directly with the formation of student attitudes. For the latter, it seems likely that professional requirements determine a less flexible set of motivational factors. The two types of motivation might then be seen as appropriate to secondary level general language education, and adult professional language training, respectively. These points are outlined not as solutions but because they seem to be a promising starting point for applied research into the teaching of English as an international language. An advantage which is immediately apparent is that factors such as interest and need have to be determined locally. Research must then limit itself to providing a framework which links motivation to classroom procedures, and which can only be filled out once these factors have been determined. In this way the problem of ethnocentricity is avoided.

A final point relates back to the ablocutionary conception of methodological development. Texts relating to all aspects of teaching, whether philosophical, theoretical or practical have no real communicative value unless they are purposefully exploited by methodologists who are concerned, not simply to understand, but to integrate textually presented information into a coherent body of knowledge. With this point in mind, it clearly does not make sense to speak of an educational approach for English as an international language, but rather, educational approaches. The success of language education programmes depends upon collaboration between "local" and "visiting" academics, curriculum planners and materials designers. This collaboration might follow certain general principles. Firstly, both local and visitor have a responsibility to develop a deep understanding of the local educational ideology, since educational reforms will only operate at a surface level if they are not grounded in a recognisable system of educational beliefs. Secondly, once these factors have been determined they will form a set of premises on which applied linguistic and methodological research, serving the interests of the local community of language learners, can be based. Thirdly, while there is enormous scope for both theoretical and practical collaboration in language teaching research, decisions

about which research questions are relevant must be taken with respect to the local context.

Quite legitimately, recognising the role of ablocutionary forces in this process, one should expect that the form the educational approaches take on may differ from the native speaker's preconceived model. Ironically, one can summarise the above position by a simple demand that the logic of individualisation should be pursued to the end. What is needed is an individualisation which not only allows freedom of choice in learning style, but also freedom of choice in deciding how learned material should be made use of:

> Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable. (Stenhouse 1975)

This might be adopted as a useful image for teachers, teacher trainers, and applied linguists who are trying to reach an understanding of their role in the development of English as an international language.

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