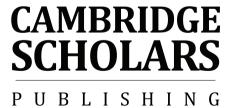# Teaching English in Multilingual Contexts

Teaching English in Multilingual Contexts:
Current Challenges, Future Directions

Edited by

Azra Ahmed, Graeme Cane and Mehnaz Hanzala

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I: Teaching English in Multilingual Situations

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

FOREWORD

There can be no disagreement with the generalisation that the ease of learning a language is an enviable natural property of infancy and childhood, provided hearing is preserved. Language acquisition is a natural ability at an early stage of development that poses complexity with advancing age for most adults but not all; some are clearly resilient to degradation of the ability.

Since the English language has evolved in different social environments to become a widely distributed code for communication of knowledge and thought, the need for efficient acquisition of competence in understanding and using the language to enable sustenance and support development in a competitive world has grown exponentially. An example of the implications for adult learning is seen at the Aga Khan University (AKU) that has to bridge continuously the disconnection between the use of vernacular for communication outside the workplace and development of the competence of students and staff in English language required for higher education meshed with the management of integrated, multi-disciplinary, technically highly dependent services of the University Hospital.

The central theme of the Fifth International Seminar at AKU organised by its Centre of English Language concerned the exploration of efficient ways of acquiring competence in the use of English for learning and work in multilingual societies. Exploration of methods in use, the role of assessing educational needs and other applications in progress, including technological access and assistance for learning, were presented, demonstrated and debated in two days of perpetual motion. The editors have done well to capture and present these activities for learning and reference by teachers of language in a multilingual world.

—Dr Camer Vellani
Distinguished University Professor
The Aga Khan University

PREFACE

The eleven chapters in this book represent a selection of the papers presented at the Fifth International Seminar organised by the Centre of English Language at the Aga Khan University, Karachi, in April, 2009. CEL's initiative to launch a large-scale forum where applied linguists, researchers and language teachers could get together to discuss issues related to English language teaching led to the first AKU-CEL Seminar being held in 2001, and the event has taken place biennially at the Aga Khan University since that time. The 2009 Seminar, from which the papers in this volume are drawn, was attended by more than 400 presenters and participants from Holland, Iran, Malaysia, Oman, Spain, the United Kingdom, as well as Pakistan. The theme was *Teaching English in Multilingual Contexts: Current Challenges and Future Directions.* As Pakistan is a multilingual country where English is learned by most people as a second or third language, the theme seemed highly relevant to the context here. In addition to examining the role of English vis-à-vis the local languages of Pakistan, presenters at the seminar also discussed two important changes that have taken place in recent years: the changing role of English and the establishment of local varieties of the language in the postcolonial world. These changes are briefly discussed in the following two paragraphs.

One phenomenon that we have witnessed in many parts of Asia in recent years has been a switch from using English to communicate only with native-speaking foreigners to speaking English with other Asians inside our own countries. In Singapore, for example, Chinese Singaporeans speak to Malay or Indian Singaporeans in English for most matters these days. At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), English is the language of communication at meetings because it is the only language which the representatives from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, etc. have in common. Thus, today, many Asians are using English to speak to other Asians, and this situation seems likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

Another change that has taken place is the establishment of new English varieties in countries where English plays a role alongside local languages. We can talk today about a Nigerian variety of English or a Filipino variety of English or a Pakistani variety of English. Each of these

varieties has its own phonological, grammatical and lexical features in the same way that Australian English, Scottish English, or Canadian English have their own distinctive features.

The purpose of the 2009 Seminar was to stimulate discussion and research on the role of English in multilingual countries and to explore how English can be taught more effectively within the educational contexts of these countries. In contemporary Pakistan, English co-exists simultaneously with a range of local languages and the education system's aim to produce English-knowing bilinguals is mirrored in many other countries where English plays an official or semi-official role such as Ghana, Kenya, Papua New Guinea or Singapore. The sub-themes of the 2009 Seminar were as follows:

1. Bilingualism & Biculturalism
2. English as an Additional Language
3. Teaching English with a Purpose
4. ESP & EAP
5. Business English
6. English in the Wider Community
7. Learning Technologies
8. Learner Autonomy
9. Teacher Training & Development
10. Innovative Materials Design & Teaching
11. Critical Thinking and Language Development
12. Testing and Evaluation

Readers will be able to see for themselves how the eleven papers selected for this volume provide insights into many of the above sub-themes in their own individual ways. The following is a brief summary of the content of each of the chapters in this book and the authors' aims in writing them.

Taking a fundamental look at the *what* and *how* of language teaching, Andrew Littlejohn turns to *Real-World Economics*, a term which has been promoted in recent times by a group of socially aware economists who feel that classical economics is basically *asocial* in its outlook and that economic actions need to be considered within a social and human context. Littlejohn introduces the term *Real-World Language Tea*ching and asks if language teachers and learners are being led by models which ignore the social or human element in teaching and learning. He gives us the example of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and argues that the decisions taken by pro-ELF linguists about what should and should not be

considered linguistically acceptable when English is used as a lingua franca (e.g. features such as omitting third person singular 's' in present tense verbs [i.e. using *he go* for *he goes*], pluralisation of nouns considered to be uncountable in native-speaker English [such as *equipments, furnitures, informations*], using a fixed question tag such as 'isn't it', etc.) have been taken without consulting English learners around the world or the learners' personal perceptions about the kind of English they wish to speak. As Littlejohn states, "Syllabus designers cannot simply hope to specify content for learning and assume that that is what will get learned. Although commonplace, such a top-down approach is essentially asocial in that it ignores the views that learners themselves inevitably have about what is being offered to them for learning".

In her paper, *Building Communities of Practice for Teacher Development: A Comparative Study*, Fauzia Shamim argues that the one-off workshops and short courses which are frequently offered by experts to language teachers in Pakistan may be unsuccessful in promoting genuine teacher development because they are not related to the specific needs of teachers. Shamim suggests that building Communities of Practice (COPs) in the teachers' own workplaces may be more successful because they provide the teachers with opportunities to engage in collaborative learning which is directly related to their own situation and needs. Her paper analyses the development of COPs in two different contexts in Pakistan in order to assess their validity as a strategy for teacher development in the country and in similar contexts elsewhere. The paper offers a framework to guide COP design for those who wish to improve the way we handle the professional development of language teachers in multilingual contexts.

Hayo Reinders explores the concept of learner autonomy and suggests that, rather than producing a definition of the term *autonomy*, it may be more meaningful to explore the behaviour that characterises autonomy by looking at the more dynamic concept of *autonomous learning*. In his paper, Reinders quotes Dickinson (1995:14) who suggests that:

> There is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught. They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation.

Reinders argues that learner autonomy is a multi-faceted concept which consists of several layers and should be seen as an ever-changing process which teachers and students can best achieve through working closely together. By focusing on their students' learning behaviour in a particular context, teachers can adapt their teaching to better suit specific

student needs and encourage the development of successful autonomous learning.

In their paper, *The Right Approach to Teaching Writing in an English for Academic Purposes Setting: Some Perspectives,* Azra Ahmed and Mirat Al Fatima Ahsan explore ways of developing the academic writing competence of a group of nursing students at a private university in Pakistan. The authors examine three currently popular approaches to teaching writing: the product approach, the process approach and the genre-based approach, and offer a hybrid model modified by them for the Pakistani context which aims to strike a balance between these approaches. Ahmed and Ahsan believe that their model, with its integrated e-learning component, was able to contribute significantly to the lexical, grammatical and overall writing development of their students by the end of their course, and feel that it may be a useful approach for teaching academic writing in multi-lingual countries such as Pakistan.

Critical incidents are unplanned events that take place on a daily basis in classrooms around the world. They may involve the high points in a lesson where the teacher appears to achieve a learning breakthrough or the low points where the learning process seems to have broken down in some way. In their paper, *Using Critical Incidents to Develop Reflective ELT Practitioners*, Nasreen Hussain and Shaista Bano Zaidi introduce the important concept of Critical Incident Analysis and discuss the process of helping teachers to reflect on their professional practice using peer observations, studying video clips of their own teaching, and setting up e-mail exchanges between trainers and trainees. The authors argue that training teachers how to reflect on critical incidents can increase their understanding of what is going on in a lesson and how their classroom practice can be significantly improved.

In her paper *Affective Education: How Affective is Our Learning?,* Fatima Dar argues for the importance of affective education in promoting the emotional, social, moral and character well-being of learners. While affective education seeks to augment student growth in relation to attitudes, interests and values, Dar claims that, in most academic institutions, this important domain finds little or no space as efforts are generally geared solely towards academic growth and improvement. Her paper examines the core elements of affective education and how these elements can help to strengthen an English language curriculum. She suggests that the following approaches can be used to support students' affective education: asking learners to create collages which allow them to display their own individual feelings about relevant topics, to do role plays, to explore the students' personal responses to movies and TV

programmes, to ask them to take part in plot and character improvisations, and to hold class debates on emotional issues. Dar concludes her paper by arguing that affective development needs a permanent presence in the curriculum. She feels that, if affective issues are carefully blended into the existing academic curriculum, they will have a more powerful and longer-lasting impact on learners.

The overall purpose of the seminar was to look at the teaching of English in multilingual contexts and Samina Qadir's paper explored this theme by examining code-mixing and code-switching between English and the national and local languages of Pakistan. Code-switching refers to the decisions made by bilingual speakers to select one language over another according to the purpose or social context of an utterance. Code-mixing draws on at least two languages fused together as a hybrid or mixed language, as when a Malay / English bilingual says: *This morning I hantar my baby tu dekat babysitter, lah* ('*This morning I took my baby to the baby sitter.*'). The term code-mixing emphasises hybridisation, and the term code-switching emphasises movement from one language to another. Mixing and switching probably occur to some extent in the speech of all bilinguals, but the author's point here is that code-mixing between English and Urdu can now be seen to occur in the formal written discourse of Urdu textbooks. The paper explores the nature and use of code-mixed writing found in school textbooks in two subjects, Urdu and Pakistan Studies, and the author suggests that this mixing is having a significant influence on the lexis and status of Urdu in Pakistan today.

Sarwet Rasul's paper also looks at code-mixing in Pakistan but, rather than investigating formal written texts as in Qadir's paper, Rasul explores the role of the media in creating language change through the use of code-mixed spoken texts. In particular, the author identifies various sociolinguistic aspects of code-mixing in television advertisements. She analyses twelve advertisements related to cooking and fashion in terms of the Urdu-English code-mixing that occurs in the commercials, and discusses the active role of the media in bringing about language change through its use of code-mixing.

In her paper on the use of portfolios as a tool for assessment of written work, Nasreen M. Ahsan suggests that one of the reasons students in Pakistan are reluctant to submit written work is their lack of confidence in their language skills, especially when it comes to English for Academic Purposes courses or Written Communication Skills courses. The author suggests using portfolios with students as an innovative formative assessment procedure which could boost student confidence in their writing and also help them to prepare for their end-of-semester written

examinations. Ahsan describes an action research project which she conducted using portfolios to gauge the teaching, learning and overall impact of this mode of continuous assessment. She concludes that the whole experience of making students prepare and submit their portfolios and write their reflective pieces was positive from both the teacher's and students' perspectives. The author believes that, as a result of developing their portfolios during the semester, the students were able to gain useful practice and increased confidence in dealing with those particular genres.

In his paper entitled *A Rating Scale for the Assessment of Writing Skills*, Wajdan Raza discusses a rating scale he developed for the assessment of English writing skills by university students in Pakistan and investigates its reliability in terms of three features: rater severity, item difficulty and the candidate's proficiency level. Using the scale, eight raters assessed the writing of seventy engineering students at a private university in Pakistan and the results showed that the use of the scale developed by the author can have a beneficial effect on the reliable assessment of writing ability.

One of the many innovations introduced by the Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) into secondary school assessment in Pakistan was a test of listening comprehension in assessing English language proficiency. In her study on *Equity in the English Listening Comprehension Examination*, Isbah Mustafa asks the question: "How much does the student's regional background affect her / his performance in the listening test?" "Is a student from, for example, rural Sindh or Gilgit-Baltistan at a disadvantage in the listening test in comparison with urban students?" In this final chapter of the book, Mustafa discusses the role of regional and economic background on candidate performance based on AKU-EB's listening test results.

We hope that the selection of papers in the book reflect the thought-provoking presentations, the academic debate and lively discussion that took place at the 2009 Seminar in Karachi. The eleven authors came to Karachi from different academic, cultural and geographic backgrounds and with different experiences of the world of English Language Teaching, and this diversity contributes to the range, interest and value of the book. Amongst the authors, there are speakers of Dutch, English, Italian, Punjabi, Sindhi, Spanish, Urdu, etc. etc. They are all multilinguals for whom the seminar theme of how best to teach English in multilingual contexts is a challenge they face on a daily basis.

—The Editors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SECTION ONE

TEACHING ENGLISH
IN MULTILINGUAL SITUATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

REAL-WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHING

ANDREW LITTLEJOHN

Abstract

Inspired by an increasing level of social awareness amongst economists which has promoted a movement for 'Real-World Economics', this paper considers what is required for 'Real-World Language Teaching'. It first discusses issues in the specification of syllabus content, focussing in particular on problems with the proposal for a core English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) syllabus, and possible learner perceptions of this. Next it considers the 'real world' applicability of major theories (or 'faiths') of language acquisition processes and argues that they fail to take account of learners' views of the relative value of task types or teachers' aims. The suggestion advanced in the paper is that contemporary syllabus design and theory is thus characterised by an asocial view of language teaching. Detailed knowledge about the social psychology of the context is absolutely vital for Real-World Language Teaching.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on our thinking about the two main dimensions of language teaching: the *what* and the *how*. I recognise that a distinction between *syllabus* ('what') and *methodology* ('how'), although well established, is by no means an uncontested one, as, for example, the various discussions related to process syllabuses have demonstrated (see, for example, Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). However, for the purposes of this paper I do not wish to go into the distinction itself but to consider underlying conceptualisations of what should be the focus of work in language teaching and, indeed, language teaching research. In particular, in looking at recent developments in thinking about language teaching, I want to raise the question of whether we have considered the social psychology of classroom learning sufficiently.

I want first to begin by drawing on insights that have come to the fore in a field very far from our own–that is, the study of economics. This digression will, I believe, signal some significant lessons that we can learn from, lessons which will form the main body of this paper as I then turn to a discussion of recent innovations in syllabus design and in methodological research in language teaching.

Insights from the Study of Economics

In the messy, ill-defined world of the social sciences, the study of economics has achieved some considerable success in establishing a reputation as a positive, exact discipline. Along with physics, chemistry and medicine, there is, after all, a Nobel Prize for economics–something we will have to wait a long time for in language teaching. Part of economics' claim to this status is its reliance on mathematical modelling and the role of theory in predicting outcomes. It was a considerable shock therefore, when, in June 2000, significant challenges were mounted against these very foundations of economic thought. Initially begun as a localised protest by students at the Sorbonne in Paris against their own economics teaching, this challenge labelled 'classical economics' as 'autistic', in the sense that (according to the rebels) it displayed a startling lack of social awareness, an *asocial* view of reality and an inability to grasp the fact that economic actions are *human* actions. Concepts such as 'value', the rebels argued, cannot simply be defined as market prices on a supply / demand graph, for humans see value in very complex terms. Nor, they argued, can projections be based solely on statistical data, for such projections can take no account of how people perceive their world, the 'zeitgeist' of the time, or what people may aspire to. Most significantly, the rebels rejected the belief that economics can be viewed in the same way as physics with its (apparently) immutable laws, and charged that there is no possibility of a 'social physics'.

In the years since the initial rebellion of June 2000, thousands of economists have lent their support to a redefinition of the subject (paecon.net, undated.) establishing a significant movement for change in the teaching of economics and its frameworks for research and thinking. This movement, has led to the establishment of an alternative paradigm, now known as 'Real-World Economics' which draws more fully on insights from social psychology (Fullbrook, 2007), and is now the subject of numerous books, edited collections and papers, particularly in the wake of economists' widespread failure to predict the recent financial collapse of many world economies.

Thinking in Language Teaching: Social or Asocial?

The purpose of the foregoing narrative is to raise what I believe is a salutary question for ourselves: how far are we, in mainstream language teaching, guilty of thinking in largely *asocial* terms about our own discipline? How far are we led by models (whether of syllabus or of acquisition theory) that ignore the substantial social, human element in teaching and learning? It is certainly true that, just as economics has endeavoured to establish itself as a discipline it its own right, with its own models, concepts and theories, so too has language teaching. Indeed, it was a desire to assert the distinctive nature of our work, which led Richards (2001) to make this claim:

> TESOL is an autonomous discipline. L2 learning and teaching needs to be understood in its own terms rather than approached via something else. While much can be learned by applying to TESOL insights gained from such fields as first language acquisition, educational theory, the psychology of learning and so on, increasingly TESOL seeks to establish its own theoretical foundations and research agenda rather than being seen as an opportunity to test out theories developed elsewhere for different purposes. (p. 216)

While few would recommend using language classrooms as places to "test out theories developed elsewhere for different purposes", I feel a certain sense of unease with a strident tone of distinctiveness in the nature of our work, and a claim that language teaching should be seen as an "autonomous discipline". Classrooms are social places (Breen, 2001), lessons are 'social events' as well as 'pedagogic events' (Allwright, 1996; Senior, 2002), and language itself is inextricably linked to our own social identity (see, inter alia, Block, 2009). There will be many, many aspects of language teaching and learning which have substantial overlap with thinking in other areas of research, not least of which will be education, psychology, cognitive science, cultural studies and so on. The question posed by my example from the world of economics, then, is, do we sufficiently take account of these overlaps in our work in language teaching?

I want to discuss this now by taking in turn each of the two dimensions I referred to earlier, the *what* and the *how* of language teaching, focussing in particular on recent developments.

What?

Over its long and varied history, the mainstay of language teaching has been a linguistic analysis of the object of learning–that is, the foreign language itself. Grammar, of course, has provided the most common organising principle for syllabuses, most usually arranged according to notions of simple to complex (present tenses to past tenses, simple to progressive, etc.), coupled with selections of vocabulary, sometimes related to frequency lists. Until the mid-1970s, however, this was largely a cottage industry in which individual writers or course designers used their own intuition to make selections. The situation changed significantly with the advent of functional-notional language teaching and the arrival of seemingly exhaustive descriptors of language use, most notably in the *Threshold Level* (1977*),* and Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978). The advent of the 'technologisation' of syllabus design has since continued unabated, with the incorporation of discourse analysis into the stock of knowledge that syllabus and course writers may draw on, and the use of computer corpora to give greater detail on contexts in which specific language items are used. Most recently, statistical analyses now provide putatively 'reliable' matchings of 'can do' statements to levels of language competence (as in, for example, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe. 2001.)

While the analysis of language form and use has become increasingly sophisticated, with direct consequences for the selection of language presented to learners, it would also be fair to say, however, that the underlying asocial mythology in syllabus design remains unchanged. Although it has long been recognised that a significant gap may exist between what teachers teach and what learners learn (Allwright, 1984), the faith in detailed syllabus design is based on the notion that we can exercise control over what gets learned. Language teaching, however, is not simply a matter of transmission, in which prescribed language items are transferred to the students, unhindered. As Slimani (2001) and others have argued, the outcomes of language lessons are always negotiated implicitly or explicitly by the interaction that takes place in classroom. Learning outcomes are thus idiosyncratic, shaped by the interplay of the personal learning agendas of participants as they unfold in the classroom.

It is precisely this interaction of personal learning agendas which is particularly relevant to a consideration of a recent development in syllabus design, the 'ELF' or English as a Lingua Franca movement, which I would now like to discuss in detail. The ELF proposal aims to set out a 'core' of language features (particularly in pronunciation) to be taught to learners,

and a listing of 'non-core' areas which may safely be dropped. At the heart of this discussion is the realisation that there is today no accepted 'standard', if ever there was one, and that native speakers have no legitimate claim to 'owning' the language. Widdowson (2003) aptly summarises the situation:

> It is a matter of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language. It is not a possession which they lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it. (p. 43)

In these circumstances, where non-native speaker use of English is far more common than native speaker use, it is argued that the conventional distinction between English as a foreign language and English as a second language is largely irrelevant. So, too, are native speaker norms as a reference for determining error. As Jenkins (2003) argues:

> We have a new international English speaking community for whom it is no longer relevant to look at how NSs speak English with other NSs and then transmit this NS-use to NNSs. Instead, we need to find out what NNSs do and need to be able to do when they speak English to each other in international contexts. (A Situation Changing Situation, para. 2)

To this end, Jenkins and others have sought to determine what constitutes 'Lingua Franca English' and have proposed a 'core' of pronunciations and grammar which should guide standards and models presented to learners. This provides for a good degree of tolerance in what is deemed acceptable. Jenkins (2003) concludes that "outside the Lingua Franca Core, any pronunciation showing mother tongue influence should no longer be regarded as an error, but as an instance of regional accent" (A Proposal: A Lingua Franca Core, para. 20).

In a similar vein, Seidlhofer (2004) has found lexicogrammatical features such as the non-use of the third person present tense–s ("She look very sad"), use of an all-purpose question tag such as *isn't it?* or *no?,* and pluralisation of nouns which are considered uncountable in native speaker English ("informations," "advices") as features of English as a Lingua Franca in Europe (ELFE) (p. 220). Jenkins and Seidlhofer (2001) draw two general suggestions from this work:

> First, teachers and students need to be encouraged to adjust their attitudes towards ELFE and to accord it a status similar to that given to "native" varieties. Second, it is crucial for English language teaching in Europe to

focus on contexts of use that are relevant to European speakers of English. In particular, descriptions of spoken English offered to these learners should not be grounded in British or American uses of English but in ELFE or other non-native contexts (depending on where the particular learners intend to use their English in future). (para.20)

Although the ELF proposals have been challenged by writers for problems with the data itself, the basis for assuming intelligibility, teachability, and the logic of the argument (see, inter alia, Scheuer, 2005 and van den Doel, 2007), it seems likely that the ELF movement will continue to gain considerable momentum in the near future. It is not unrealistic to suggest that we may see, for example, published teaching materials in the near future which proclaim their compatibility to an ELF core syllabus, much as we now see materials which declare their conformity to the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001).

As a definition of content for the classroom based exclusively on linguistic analyses, the ELF core proposals suffer from the same problems I discussed earlier, concerning the true nature of what gets learned in the classroom as it is explicitly or implicitly negotiated. A further interesting complexity here, however, is the fact that it seems quite likely that many learners will actually have their own view on the desirability of an ELF syllabus. Language use is more than simply a code for communication. It embodies in it the expression of a personal identity and a cultural reference point. In a very real sense, a language *needs* to belong to people, and to represent certain ways of thinking and being–in short, *cultures*. Thus, a foreign accent marks who we are in relation to the native community of the language we are learning. If I, an Englishman, speak French, I will have an accent. I will have an accent because it reflects who I am–*an Englishman speaking French*. My foreign accent is a statement of my identity, in much the same way as my native speaker English identifies who I am–the region I come from, my socio-economic background, and so on. A struggle to develop a native-like accent in a foreign language may be a struggle to see myself as I am not.

From this perspective, the ELF movement makes sense in offering recognition of the status of a non-native accent. However, the mistake that the movement makes is to take the *product* of a non-native accent and assume that a description of this can form the basis for a variety of English to be taught. It is important to understand how a non-native accent emerges. It emerges from, amongst other things, my *personal* decision (consciously or subconsciously) as to how far I want to depart from the identity I have. Hearing myself *an Englishman* speak *as a Frenchman* entails a redefinition of my own view of myself. It will thus be up to me to

decide how far *I* wish to go in approximating my naturally occurring foreign accent to the native speaker accent, as an indication of how far I wish to go in changing *who I am* (an *Englishman speaking French)*. A curriculum designed around standards that result from an analysis of non-native speaker accents, then, will make unavailable to me decisions about establishing a new identity for myself.

There are further issues in relation to learners' views of an ELF variety, itself. Just as different native speaker varieties of English may be perceived in different ways, it is quite reasonable to assume that many learners will have their own views (or prejudices) on the status of an ELF variety. They may, for example, see it as a 'degraded form', in as much as it is based on tolerances in deviations from native speaker English. While an ELF variety may be the most common variety of English in a particular region, it may nevertheless be the case that a native speaker variety commands greater status, perhaps as an indicator of social class or level of education, and thus constitute a more desirable goal.

The major irony in the ELF movement, then, is in the fact that a seemingly *social* analysis of a problem (that is how English is actually being used) has led to an *asocial* formulation of a solution. By focussing on a definition of the object to be learned–the language–and by basing syllabus plans on an analysis of how that language appears to be used, the decisions which learners individually may make about their own standards of achievement have effectively been bypassed. Issues in relation to personal identity and a personal perception of a variety of English are locked out by prior decisions over what will be made available to the learners.

So what would recognition of these issues entail for the syllabus designer/ teacher? Just as the 'Real-World Economics' movement focuses on how people see things and what they personally value, so too would a 'Real World' approach to the specification of content for a language course need to do this. Breen, Allwright, Slimani and others have suggested that a serious approach to the fact of learner views and interpretation of classroom goals is to incorporate those views into classroom decision-making. We can anticipate that this will be equally true in relation to a syllabus based on an ELF core, as learners will need to be involved in decisions about how far *they* individually wish to go towards developing a native-speaker-like accent and conforming to a native speaker grammar. We need to recognise that language use is a socially constructed phenomenon which is not fixed once it is generalised, but one which is recreated and interpreted by each individual learner during the process of building a new identity.

How?

My assertion throughout the previous discussion is that syllabus designers cannot simply hope to specify content for learning and assume that that is what will get learned. Although commonplace, such a top-down approach is essentially *asocial* in that it ignores the views that learners themselves inevitably have about what is being offered to them for learning. In this section, I want to turn to the other major aspect of language teaching, methodology, and consider how far our conceptualisation of this may similarly share this difficulty.

In very broad terms, most contemporary research and thinking about methodology can be related to one of what we may term the three 'big faiths' in second language acquisition theory. The first of these was inspired initially by Krashen's (1981) work in extending Chomsky's innatist views on language to the case of second language acquisition. This sees the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) as alive and well beyond puberty, and determining success in second language acquisition. In this model, second language acquisition is a subconscious process, in which a focus on meaning will naturally take care of the learner's parallel development of accuracy in form. The second 'big faith', generally termed the interaction hypothesis, recognises that although the process is essentially one in which 'comprehensible input' is responsible for acquisition, consciousness, particularly in the form of 'noticing' formal properties of the input, does have a facilitating role to play (see, inter alia, Long, 1997). The third faith, probably the dominant one in the practice of language teaching but substantially underexplored in research, sees language acquisition as essentially the same as learning any skill (see, inter alia, Johnson 1996). This sees conscious attention as crucially important, with 'practice' responsible for transforming the 'declarative knowledge' of language (i.e. knowledge *about* the language) into 'procedural knowledge' (i.e. the ability to actually use the language automatically).

To a greater or lesser extent, these three views of how language acquisition *actually happens* dominate our thinking today. Yet, their conspicuous failure to substantially account for success or otherwise in language learning, and their inability to actually guide programme design and implementation towards effective outcomes signals a problem in how they each conceptualise the process of language acquisition. I mentioned earlier the need to see language learning as a social process, one in which learners will have their own perception of what they need or do not need to learn, intimately related to the development of a new identity. Underlying each of the three 'big faiths', however, is an almost behaviourist