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ABSTRACT
                The need for teachers of English as a Second Language
(ESL) to have cultural sensitivity is discussed. First, it is
proposed that ESL teachers must develop multicultural understanding
and sensitivity to the cultural needs of students in order to help
them reach their full potential. This means avoiding cultural
domination, treating students as human beings, avoiding
oversimplification, and understanding that cultural needs have as
important a role as linguistic needs in intercultural language
instruction. Second, ways the teacher can increase cultural
sensitivity before entering the classroom are discussed, including
developing one's own personal understanding of culture, acknowledging
the link between language and culture in the human experience,
understanding the classroom as culture and the effect of language
learning on the student's interpretation of reality, and developing a
sense of oneself as a cultural being. The classroom context is then
addressed. Common stages of and student reactions to acculturation
are examined and two strategies for dealing with students as they
undergo these stages are offered. Issues of English language
variation and dialects are outlined. Finally, three methods teachers
can use to practice their cultural sensitivity are presented. A brief
annotated resource list and a 53-item bibliography are appended.
(MSE)

MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY:

AN ESSENTIAL SKILL FOR THE ESL/EFL TEACHER

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B.S. University of Wisconsin--River Falls 1988

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for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School
for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a number of features believed to be necessary for the interculturally sensitive teacher. The principle on which the entire paper is based is that only by developing multicultural understanding can the ESL/EFL teacher help her students realize their full potential. First, it is advocated that before entering the classroom, the ESL/EFL teacher should develop a number of understandings. These include the teacher's own concept of culture; an understanding of that which defines humans; the idea of the classroom as culture; the effects of learning another language; and the need for teachers to understand themselves as cultural beings. Second, some considerations for teachers already in the ESL/EFL classroom are discussed. These include an understanding of the stages of acculturation; skills to work with students as they go through these stages; a consideration of dialectical variations within English; and skills to maintain and develop students' cultural identity.

ERIC DESCRIPTORS

cultural awareness

cultural differences

multicultural education

cultural pluralism

culture contact

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Enseñar es aprender
Aprender es trabajar
Trabajar .es servir
Servir es amar
Amar es morir
Morir es esforsarse
Esforsarse es levantarse
Por encima de todas las limitaciones que hay en la tierra

de los Bahai

To my students, future and past.

CONTENTS

PART III.   IN THE ESL/EFL CLASSROOM

PART I: AN ARGUMENT FOR GREATER MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN ESL/EFL TEACHERS

Chapter 1:   Introduction

> I was not a "nigger" even though you called me one.
> But if I was a "nigger" in your eyes, there was
> something about you--there was something you needed. I
> had to realize when I was very young that I was none of
> those things I was told I was. I was not, for example,
> happy . . . I knew enough about life by this time to
> understand that whatever you invent, whatever you
> project, is you! (Baldwin 1988, 8)

Although speaking from the standpoint of a native speaker of

English, Baldwin eloquently expresses the common lot of a

student who finds himself[1] labelled by the society in which

he lives and the classroom in which he learns. Baldwin's

reaction, righteous rejection of the labelling, is,

unfortunately, very uncommon. All too often, students begin

to believe that they are what they are labelled. By

demeaning their individualism, labelling erodes self-worth.

This acceptance of oppression is all too common in students

of English as a second language in the United States and

English as a foreign language students in countries where

English is the respected and elite tongue of the highest

socio-economic groups. Teachers of English as a second or

foreign language,[2] are, to a significant degree,

responsible for the emotional security of their students.

In order to empower students, teachers must avoid falling

into the trap of cultural imperialism (Freire 1972, 8).

They must end their role as oppressors, wielders of those

magic wands called English language and Anglophone culture.

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The students' culture must be accepted as equally important as that of the target language.

The growing ethnic diversity of the United States and other English-speaking countries has created an increasing awareness of the pressing need for greater intercultural sensitivity in all occupational areas. The presupposition inherent in this increasing awareness is that all cultures have strengths. All peoples are able to contribute new ways of thinking and new strategies for solving problems.

This paper will examine one of the most effective ways that teachers can contribute to a healthy multicultural society: acquiring intercultural sensitivity. It will be composed of three parts. In this, Part I, it will be argued that in order to teach more effectively teachers must gain greater sensitivity towards the cultural needs of their students. Four separate justifications will show the importance of ESL/EFL teachers cooperating with their students and encouraging the healthy transition of students to bi- or multiculturalism.

Part II, which consists of Chapters 2 through 5, will concentrate on the things that a teacher can do *before* entering the classroom in order to increase multicultural sensitivity. Chapter 2 will argue that ESL/EFL teachers need to develop their own personal understanding of culture, grounded in established and accepted concepts. Both scientific definitions as well as two personal concept-

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ualizations will be presented. The third chapter will discuss language and culture as essential components of the human experience. It will be argued that the forces which bind the species are greater than those which divide it. Chapter 4 will consider two factors which, by the very nature of the ESL/EFL classroom, transform students. The final chapter in Part II will discuss ways in which teachers can understand themselves as cultural beings. Various deep and broad intercultural experiences will be advocated, along with introspection and careful consideration of one's own values.

Part III will move into the ESL/EFL classroom. The sixth chapter will examine the stages of and common reactions to acculturation that many students undergo. Two strategies for dealing with students as they proceed through these stages will also be discussed. Chapter 7 will discuss the role of dialectical variations within the English language as they concern the cultural needs of our students. Standard American English will be shown to be only one of many varieties of English. Implications for teaching will also be discussed. The eighth and final chapter will return to some of the issues found in Chapter 1. If the argument that students' cultural needs are just as critical as their linguistic needs is accepted, this implies the need for practical solutions. Chapter 8 will present three methods with which the teacher can practice the sensitivity she has

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developed. The three methods to be advanced will be
utilization of the author's model, adoption of Paulo
Freire's problem posing approach, and incorporation of
specific books.

Avoiding Cultural Domination

In order to consider the significance of the need for
greater multicultural sensitivity, one should examine an
excerpt from Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

> Cultural invasion . . . serves the ends of conquest. .
> . . The invaders penetrate the cultural context of
> another group, in disrespect of the latter's
> potentialities; they impose their own view of the world
> upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of
> the invaded by curbing their expression (1972, 150).

Obviously, the considerate ESL/EFL teacher would like to
avoid the role of cultural invader. But this is more easily
desired than accomplished. If common databases of
educational resources like the MLA or ERIC are searched,
language teaching publications like TESOL Quarterly, ELT
Journal perused, or an ESL/EFL teacher's library examined,
the subject of culture will receive extremely wide coverage.
Many ESL/EFL teacher training programs include courses whose
entire objective is culture. The overwhelming concern of
all these materials is the teaching of culture. With these
courses and publications, the teacher is ready to inculcate
her students with a proper understanding of what it means to
be a native speaker of English. To the detriment of the
students, their culture is willfully avoided or, at best,

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unconsciously ignored. ESL/EFL students and "minorities are
often expected to absorb Anglo culture (and language) while
many Anglo-Americans learn and understand very little about
the cultures of the minority groups" (Wallerstein 1983, 6).
While the learning of English often necessitates an
accompanying study of Anglophone culture, this must neither
exclude nor dominate the students' culture.

Treating Students as Human Beings

> But while both humanization and dehumanization are real
> alternatives, only the first is man's vocation (Freire
> 1972, 28).

ESL/EFL teachers are putting greater and greater effort into
humanizing their classrooms. Efforts are being made to
scrutinize activities and approaches in terms of whether
they encourage personal growth. However, many teachers
still fail to recognize how their techniques jeopardize the
psychological well-being of their students. For example,
some teachers still attempt to humiliate their students into
speaking English. One of them, known to the author, works
at a language school in California. Students who
consistently refuse to use English in this teacher's
classroom are presented with a piece of tagboard emblazoned
with "I PROMISE TO ONLY SPEAK ENGLISH" to wear around their
neck, reminiscent of Hitler's Germany where Jews were forced
to identify themselves with a board on rope. This practice
may seem completely unreasonable when viewed from the
outside. To people who fail to grasp the conflicting

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pressures within the classroom, such practices are obviously
damaging. But when viewed by those on the inside, other
ESL/EFL teachers, the conflicting demands of the classroom
can create a situation in which the inhumanity of the
practice described above may not be immediately obvious.
Other teachers understand the intense pressure to improve
oral proficiency. They understand that this teacher's goal,
more consistent practice, was well-intentioned. They are
able to empathize with the teacher who applies excessive
pressure on students in an effort to meet their linguistic
goals. But empathizing with the forces which cause an act
such as this does not mean that this behavior is acceptable.
Teachers, in their eagerness to improve English proficiency,
must remember the developing identity of their students.
They must monitor their own behavior and that of other
teachers to guard against any dehumanizing behavior.

The students' native language, and by immediate and
obvious extension, the student's culture, must be valued as
much as the language and culture he wishes to learn.
Mocking students when they speak their native language can
only serve to create feelings of cultural inferiority.
Making a serious effort to understand the culture of our
students can only serve to humanize the classroom.

Avoiding Oversimplification

> ESL teachers need to know about their students: where
> they come from, what their concerns are, and what
> cultures they bring [to the classroom]. Without this

knowledge of the students, developing a curriculum and an individualized classroom environment becomes extremely difficult (Wallerstein 1983, 198).

Although the media in the United States continually remind the public of the importance of interculturalism, the tendency to believe in cultural homogeneity is still prevalent. People from around the world (but perhaps more commonly people from countries where English is widely spoken as a native language) tend to reduce other cultures' complexities in a half-hearted effort to understand them. Common phrases like, "People are all the same wherever you go" are potentially very harmful in creating intercultural understanding.

As evidence for the persistence of the tendency to look at other cultures as a series of facts to be mastered, one need look no farther than a guide about American values for ESL students. One, entitled <u>American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States</u>, presents the idea that here in the US, the predominant ideas, values and behaviors are those of the white middle class.[3] "Society's main ideals have been forged by that group. . . . members of other groups usually (not always) agree with those ideals, at least on some level" (Althen 1983, xiii). According to this guide, those who oppose the ideas are very few in number--like hippies. This gives rise to the idea that students should be thought of as coming from the mainstream of a given culture. If ESL/EFL teachers could be sure that

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their students fit a certain mold, cultural understanding would be accomplished by following a list of required behaviors (see Benjamin 1985). But ESL/EFL students, be they immigrants, refugees, or executives, tend to be set apart in some way, distinct from the mainstream. For example, as ESL/EFL teachers, we must recognize that our students are more likely than not to be bi- or multi-lingual/cultural already (Grosjean 1978). Therefore, we must attempt to understand them on their own terms (Fantini 1988), not as perfect representatives of a given society.

The argument against this sort of "facts" approach to cultural understanding can be strengthened further by the following: First, facts change over time, among socio-economic classes, and in various areas of a given culture. Second, there is the danger of reinforcing or even **establishing** stereotypes. Third, even if a compilation of facts could somehow be comprehensive, such a method would only prepare the teacher for a single culture, or part of that culture (Omaggio 1986, 361). All cultures and all individuals within cultures are complex and should be respected as such.   No approach to cultural understanding which fails to grasp this reality is valid.

Are Cultural Needs as Important as Linguistic Needs?

> One major problem we face in EFL situations is not how to deal with the cultural background (Anglo-American culture), but how to respond to the cultural foreground (local culture). (Prodromou 1988, 73)

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It would seem unlikely that most ESL/EFL teachers are so
arrogant or ethnocentric that they think they can teach
Anglophone culture without understanding their students'
culture. In other words, why, when a good teacher would
never consider entering the classroom without first knowing
the students' linguistic needs, backgrounds, and
proficiency, would she fail to recognize the urgency of
developing a beginning knowledge and awareness of their
cultural needs, backgrounds and their degree of proficiency
with other cultures? Such an ignorance represents a wholly
untenable position.

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NOTES

1. A note on pronoun usage: Throughout the paper, feminine pronouns will be used to refer to teachers and masculine pronouns to students (Buchanan (1990) and Stevick (1980) adopt a similar method). Using masculine for all is inherently sexist; switching from one to the other is confusing; and combining both is cumbersome, Further, this usage represents reality: The preponderance of teachers are female. On this, perhaps one of the most sensitive issues of sociolinguistics, a writer is sure to offend regardless of what mode of reference he or she uses. Apologies are extended to those who are offended by the choice described above.

2. A note on intended audiences: This paper was originally designed for all language teachers. After considering the fact that my experience and education rest in English teaching and my examples will come from that field, I decided to narrow the audience to teachers of English as a foreign or second language. The term ESL/EFL will be used throughout the text (Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia 1983, page v.).

This is not to say however that the suggestions and implications of the arguments to be presented are inapplicable to any language teacher throughout the world:

> "The United Sates is not unique in its diversity; multiculturalism is occurring in many nations throughout the world. However, societal and educational responses to heterogeneity are varied. Some have been negative, such as attempt to eradicate diversity (the holocaust in Nazi Germany), to contain whole populations (Jewish ghettos in Poland), to constrain and restrict minorities (Blacks in South Africa), to create cultural and societal hierarchies of dominance (ethnic minorities in Franco Spain). But positive responses such as the civil rights movements, affirmative action, and the like, are the only acceptable ones in a democratic situation" (Fantini 2001, 21).

It has been said that all classes are multi-level. Similarly, all classes are multicultural.

3. I would add that in addition to white and middle class, the mainstream to which Althen refers would consist largely of conservative Christian males.

PART II: PREPARING FOR THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

Chapter 2:   What is this Thing Called Culture?

> Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete (Geertz
> 1973, 29).

> The whole terrain through which we are now struggling
> is a hotbed of subjectivism, a splendid field for the
> airing of national conceits (Sapir 1970, 86).

The initial and most important step required of an ESL/EFL

teacher who is committed to intercultural understanding is

to develop a firm grasp of the concept of culture.   Without

this understanding as a basis, the other requirements which

will be discussed later are nearly impossible.   As important

as this task is, however, it eludes even the most able

teacher trainees.   In an informal survey conducted of Master

of Arts in Teaching candidates at the School for

International Training, it was found that, in spite of two

classes whose objectives included an understanding of what

culture is, students did not feel they had gained a firm

grasp of the concept.   In fact, they often said that they

were more confused *after* the courses than before.   This

confusion is not surprising when one considers that, as

Sapir put it so eloquently in the quotation above, culture

is a nebulous topic, loaded with multifaceted meanings and

potentialities for offense.   The intense nature of many

teacher training programs precludes the possibility of depth

in most subjects.   Furthermore, academics in the disciplines

of psychology, anthropology and sociology produce "on-the-

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side-stabs" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, 141) at definitions which only serve to obscure the already unclear picture of culture.

Common Fallacies

In order to develop a clear understanding of the concept of culture it is necessary to dispel three commonly-accepted definitions. Let us first examine the idea of a cultured individual, or culture as "personal refinement" (Brooks 1968, 210). A likely image brought to mind is that of an elegantly dressed couple who listen to the appropriate music, purchase wares in exclusive boutiques and dine in fashionable restaurants. According to the definiton at hand, this couple would be contrasted with the common folk, mere peasants who are hopelessly unable to appreciate the finer things in life and are therefore "uncultured." This is reminiscent of the notion of barbarians and savages-- members of cultures that are not European in nature --common during the colonial era. Although it is exceedingly easy to mock this definition as ridiculous for excluding the vast majority of humanity, one can still recognize vestiges of this idea in the work of extreme linguistic prescriptivists, society sections of newspapers, and advice columns like "Miss Manners."

The second myth, not completely distinct from the first, is the old grammar-translation idea of culture. It is unlike the first myth because it concentrates on things

and activities rather than on people. This idea would consist of the "higher" arts: classical music, fine art, and renowned prose and poetry. Or, as Sapir put it, the idea of "a certain modicum of assimilated knowledge and experience . . . made up chiefly of a set of typical reactions that have the sanction of a class and of a tradition of long standing" (1970, 80). Although Sapir dismisses this idea as a "vesture and an air," its vitality in ESL/EFL classrooms around the world continues.

Finally, consider the growing trend towards cultural compartmentalization. As countries find themselves required to do business with other countries, publishers rush to produce guides to "foreign cultures." A quick glance at the appropriate section of a bookstore reveals a plethora of books with titles like Bowing and Scraping: Things to Do and Avoid when Communicating with the Japanese, and Working with the French: A Reference Guide to Appropriate Behaviors. Perhaps the most guilty offender of all is a book entitled Do's and Taboos Around the World, a book which lists most of the countries in the world and the behavior required of visitors to that country. In a page or less for each country, this book purports to answer all the questions important for a person to understand the culture of that people. If culture were so simple, the work of cultural anthropologists and authors of papers like this would be in vain. But an understanding of culture is much more than a

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simple list of behaviors or "facts." As Hall says, "The
reason one cannot get into another culture by applying the
'let's-fit-the-pieces-together' process is the total
complexity of any culture" (1976, 131). In the next
section, in order to understand the accepted Western
definitions of culture, five commonly accepted
classifications of definitions will be examined.

Scientific Definitions

Definitions of culture produced by scientists tend towards
the general, for example, "That which the human species has
and other social species lack" (Kroeber 1952, 61). However,
when one classifies the concepts produced by various
disciplines, it is clear that there are a number of
different ideas. The following, which draws heavily from
Kroeber and Kluckhohn's extensive compilation of concepts of
culture, shows some of these differences. Definitions of
culture over the years have included a number of major
groups: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological,
and structural.

Descriptive definitions are distinguished by the fact
that they enumerate the content of culture and they see
culture as a comprehensive totality. For example:

> Culture in general as a descriptive concept means the
> accumulated treasury of human creation: books,
> paintings, buildings, and the like; the knowledge of
> ways of adjusting to our surroundings, both human and
> physical; language, customs, and systems of etiquette,
> ethics, religion, and morals that have been built up
> through the ages. (83).

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Historical definitions, on the other hand, define

culture much more narrowly, concentrating exclusively on

social heritage or social tradition:

> The process of cultural tradition, the process by which
> in a given social group or social class language,
> beliefs, ideas, aesthetic tastes, knowledge, skills and
> usages of many kinds are handed on ("tradition" means
> "handing on") from person to person and from one
> generation to another. (92)

According to *psychological* definitions, culture is a

tool for solving the problems of life. (For a consideration

of these "basic needs" or "cultural universals," see Chapter

3.)

> The culture of a society may be said to consist of the
> characteristic ways in which basic needs of individuals
> are satisfied in that society. (107)

Structural definitions of culture emphasize the

patterns or organizations of culture:

> Culture consists of patterned and functionally
> interrelated customs common to specifiable human beings
> composing specifiable social groups or categories.
> (119)

Finally, the most general definitions of all are those

that are classified under the category called *normative*:

> The customs, traditions, attitudes, ideas, and symbols
> which govern social behavior show a wide variety. Each
> group, each society has a set of behavior patterns
> (overt and covert) which are more or less common to the
> members, which are passed down from generation to
> generation, and taught to the children, and which are
> constantly liable to change. These common patterns we
> call the *culture*. (97)

Each of these definitions is a valid attempt to explain

culture according to the needs of the discipline which

created it. On the other hand, concerning the subject of

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this paper, understanding the culture of ESL/EFL students,
the vital information presented in these definitions can be
considered in a more helpful manner. While the above
understandings are representative of others of the same
sort, the following two definitions are unique. Each
attempts to examine culture subjectively, based on a more
idiosyncratic approach to the concept. By attempting to
understand the essential components of the above definitions
and the two subjective conceptualizations to be presented,
one can develop and make more explicit her or his own
understanding of humanity and culture. This can help the
teacher understand, and therefore work with, her students
better.

A "Myth of Humanity"

> Man is the model-making organism par excellence . . .
> The purpose of the model is to enable the user to do a
> better job in handling the enormous complexity of life.
> By using models, we see and test how things work and
> can even predict how things will go in the future. The
> effectiveness of a model can be judged by how well it
> works, as well as how consistent it is as a mechanical
> or philosophical system" (Hall 13).

Throughout this section, myth is used not as something with
negative connotations but as a term which describes an
understanding of a topic whose authors admit inherent bias.
In an introduction to, A Course on Process, Self and
Interaction, Pepin and Cowles (1975) feel compelled to
discuss their view of culture before proceeding with the
rest of the thesis. They have developed a model which

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begins by concentrating on the individual. They feel that all people, across all cultures, have, at the center, "essence"—an intangible which defines one's existence. On the second ring out from this center come the intrinsic parts of one's being: one's place in time and space and one's physical qualities. The most flexible part of a being is the basis for the next ring—cultural aspects—the results of experiences like upbringing. Apart from these three rings, another important feature of this conceptual framework is the "universe in each of us" (6), the individual's world view. What links all of this is experience. Through experience, one can grow and learn from various intercultural relationships and occurrences. This myth was built on the basic assumptions that people are good, capable of change and open to every possible facet of the "entire range of human existence" (8). For these authors, the concept of will becomes important when one sees cultural forces as limitations. Since all humans have will, they are able to burst all bonds, be they cultural, physical or corporal.

It is interesting to note how difficult it is to recreate this model, to explain it for others to understand. Given the intense personal nature inherent in the creation of meaning, understanding another person's model *should* be a challenge. Like all models, Pepin and Cowles' is biased, based on the authors' understanding of reality.

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Furthermore, Pepin and Cowles freely admit that it "raises questions in 'western' system of logic" (8), thus allowing such *ad hoc* constructions as, "The fact that each universe is a personal one does not exclude it from the universal realm, for every universe is a personal one. It is simply that each personal universe represents one perspective of the whole of the universe" (6). As a Westerner who claims to desire intercultural sensitivity, I naturally admire such flexibility in the consideration of logic. However, despite this admiration, arguments like the one presented above can make it difficult to understand Pepin and Cowles' framework.

The point of all this for the ESL/EFL teacher is simple: the best understandings of culture are not necessarily transparent to another person. If, by reading the various scientific definitions and trying to understand the "myth of humanity" presented above a teacher can develop her own understanding of culture, she will have accomplished a great deal. Another conceptualization, my own, will be presented below. My framework for cultural understanding is based on a great number of definitions, my own biases and a desire to create a model that can be used in the classroom.

An Alternative Framework

I first presented the following model in a "fishbowl exercise" at the School for International Training. The fishbowl is a technique used to expose a large group to the ideas of a small group. The small group discusses an issue

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amongst themselves in front of the class. In this activity,
five other students and I were asked to discuss what had
been significant for us in a class entitled "Cultural
Identity and Ethnic Diversity." Because the following
framework had germinated naturally, I chose to try to
articulate it. After that class, a variety of other ESL/EFL
teachers-in-training commented to me on how useful they
found the model. Having evolved through course work and
discussions with other teachers, it subsequently became the
basis for a conference presentation which led to further
modifications.

My framework will take into account experiences that
enculturate an individual to be very different from his or
her culture mates, including the following examples of
cultural diversity:

> --city dwellers and country people
> --male and female
> --ethnic groups and mainstream society
> --single and married
> --religious groups
> --socioeconomic and political groups
> --special interests (sports enthusiasts, birdwatchers,
>   stamp collectors)
> --recent immigrants versus those who have been in
>   country for two or three generations
> --sexual orientation[1] (adapted from Fantini, 1983)

This model also accounts for "sports of nature"--a
biological term used to describe flowers or leaves of a
plant which do not resemble other products of the plant.
Here, sports of nature is used to refer to the offspring of
a family of a certain background who contradict many of the

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values of that family. Another concept that my model is
designed to encapsulate is the Sapir-Whorf idea that
learning another language liberates the learner, allowing
him to transcend his paradigms. If one believes this idea
one can see that the very presence of a student in the
classroom alters his culture. As they learn the linguistic
code, so students learn the cultural code. Thus ESL/EFL
students' very culture is being altered as well.

I see culture as a set of planes hovering in space
(see Appendix A). On each of these planes exists a level of
culture. On the bottom[2] rests a certain fictionalized
individual. She is unique among all humans before, at that
moment, or after. Therefore, she is alone on her tiny plane
which represents her idio-culture, that which separates her
from all others, that which only she holds (labeled "i.d."
for individual differences). Above the individual, ruling
her life to a greater or lesser degree depending on her
personality and the relative power of all the other planes,
exists the family. The size and strength of this plane
varies according to the value that a given culture places on
family. Of varying sizes and representing the influences of
various other forces come language, nationality, religion,
social status, and race. The final and largest plane, and
the one all of us share in common is humanity. Other planes
whose size would vary according to the individual schema of
any given person include sexual orientation, race, gender,

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socio-economic class, bilingualism, professional association, age and amount of contact with peoples of other cultures.

Let us now consider two concrete examples to show how this model can be applied. Maternal twin sisters raised in the same family by relatively neutral parents would share almost every plane throughout the entire pyramid. In fact, only the bottom plane would differ to a significant degree. Thus, one could say that their cultures would be the same in every sense but that dictated by individual differences. At the other extreme would be an example in which two people would share only the uppermost plane, that of humanity: A heterosexual female member of the !Kung tribe of southern Africa (one of the world's only remaining pure nomadic hunter/gatherer groups) would have little in common with the gay mayor of an affluent Swiss suburb. Another way to put this idea is to say that the more two cultural backgrounds have in common, the more the planes overlap or coincide. In any case, however, the base on which each individual stands is small and the disc which covers each is large. Concerning the other discs, their size varies according to how important that factor is in the cultural identity of the individual.

Let us consider an extended example in order to see how this particular myth of humanity can be applied.

> While I was writing this, a man walked into the
> computer room. From his physical features (richness of

skin tone, shape of nose etc.) and some of his more
obvious non-verbal communicators (way of walking and
distinct accent with which he pronounced his English
phonemes), I surmised that he was from Kenya or Uganda.
Having spent time throughout Africa and thus realizing
the rich diversity of tribal, national, regional, and
ethnic groupings as well as recognizing the
inconsistency of my ability in distinguishing among
these groupings, I dared not risk insulting him by
asking "Are you from East Africa?" To my benefit,
another student, bolder than I, asked the visitor his
origin, which turned out to be Kisumu, a city on the
northern shore of Lake Victoria. This put him on the
frontier of Kenya with Uganda.

At this, I joined the conversation. I wanted to know
more about him. Understanding some of the significance
of certain tribal orientations in Kenya, I wanted to
ask him what tribe he was from. Knowing also that this
question is often considered an insult, I attempted to
phrase it sensitively. So I asked what his native
language was, "Luau," came the answer. Now I knew his
tribe and, if my memory served me correctly, this
tribe's position in the political and economic power
structure of Kenya. An additional clue in
understanding his culture was knowing that his life
experiences had somehow brought him to study at a small
international university in the United States. This
implied that his family valued education enough to make
the necessary sacrifices to allow him to pursue an
advanced degree. Later in the conversation, it came
out that he had not been back to his native country for
over two years. The many questions that this long
absence produced became the basis for further
conversation.

The discs were starting to fall together. Before he
walked in I was familiar with only two discs: the
large one for all humanity and the small one for his
individual differences. By the time he left, but three
minutes later, I had tentatively added some more discs:
one for his native language. One for the fact that he
had learnt English syntax and semantics perfectly (but
that he had chosen to retain the educated articulation
characteristic to East Africa rather than to adopt the
American swallowing act performed by so many non-native
speakers). I added another disc for the fact that he
had received enough education in his own country to
allow him to attend the Master's Program in
Intercultural management. The final factor was that he
was a citizen of Kenya (rather significant when one

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considers that with the linguistic/tribal affiliation which he mentioned, he could be from Uganda as well).

After such a brief conversation, it may seem as if I had learned a great deal. In one way I did; in other ways it can be seen that I learned nothing. I learned a lot when I compare it with how another person might have evaluated him: as a Kenyan he is _____, _____, and _____. (Such a reaction could result from stereotyping or over-generalization.) In reality, however, the framework had hardly begun to be built. But at least I *had* the framework. At least I had the ability to continue to add pieces to the puzzle. By using my paradigm, I had the flexibility to allow contradictory facts to alter my original concept of his culture.

Taking these planes as a whole, one can then see culture as the complete way of a life of an individual as she represents her family, community, nation and humanity. The farther one goes up the steps of the paradigm, the more the planes of one person become the planes of another. On the bottom, of course, there are no similarities-- individuals are unique. The top level, the largest, the only one equal for all of us, contains only those features that we all share. (These features will be discussed in Chapter 3.) In between these two extremes, varying degrees of commonalities exist between individuals and the cultures that have taken part in their formation.

Two people from widely varying national backgrounds may have two large discs that perfectly coincide. For instance, the United States and Japan have very similar international volunteer development programs (United States Peace Corps and Japan Overseas Cooperative Volunteers). If a person from both of these countries spent three years advising

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community gardens in rural Kenya and living and working with the Kikuyu language and people, then they would have a great deal in common, thus sharing a large disc. After the presentation of this model, I was struck by how other features of one's cultural makeup can remain influential and similar across national and linguistic boundaries. The most frequently cited of these features were religion (specifically the effect of Judaism on Ethiopians, Russians and Poles) and sexual orientation (specifically the communities of lesbian women throughout the world).

It may be that many are satisfied by neither the extended explanation of my framework nor the summary of Pepin and Cowles' "myth of humanity." In fact, some might feel frustrated because their concept of culture has been disturbed. If this is the case, then it is now important to restate the intention of all these definitions and models: culture is a difficult but necessary notion to come to terms with in order to teach with intercultural sensitivity. The multi-disciplinary definitions above provide a good base one can use to develop one's own concept. The two personal frameworks can serve as models for those interested in creating their own. By developing her own unique model, the ESL/EFL teacher has taken the first and most critical step in developing a sensitivity to the multi-cultural needs of her students.

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1. **Sexual orientation** is one of the most commonly ignored influences on the lives of our students. When asked why they avoided a conference presentation on the subject of homosexuality in the classroom, ESL/EFL teachers with many years of experience have been known to respond, "It doesn't interest me, I've never had one in my classroom." If one considers the fact that approximately ten percent of all societies is homosexual, one realizes that the likelihood of having never taught a gay man or lesbian woman is nil. Homosexual men and women are active in every sector of every society, from presidents and peasants to Thai teachers and telex typists.

2. **A note on disc arrangement.** One might legitimately ask why the individual is placed on the bottom plane. To another Westerner, this position would probably seem natural. In other words, if a person comes from a similar cultural background as I (a person whose planes coincide quite frequently with my own), it would seem appropriate to place the individual at the pinnacle of a pyramid. However, I realize that the things which define us are much more influential than who we are as individuals. If one considers all the components that comprise human beings, we realize that the essence of humanity is based to the greatest extent on factors **other** than individual differences. Primarily, we are human beings. Thus we see this factor on the uppermost plane. Finally, we are unique individuals, thus we see this factor on the bottom. Differences and similarities among individuals are discussed further in the third chapter.

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Chapter 3: What Does it Mean to be Human?

In this chapter, a number of aspects common to the experiences of all human beings will be developed. Every human society invents a certain language. All languages and societies share certain features. After a sound personal grasp of the concept of culture is developed, an understanding of that which binds humans is the second step in the development of a multiculturally sensitive teacher.

A Unique Species

In order to understand the culture of our students more clearly, we must understand what they, as fellow and sister human beings, naturally have in common with us. Second, we have to develop an awareness of the myriad forces that, from moments after birth and throughout our lives, changes us to be different from one another.

> The teacher must be trained to talk about cultural relativism as well as the universality of certain components shared by different cultures (Dunnett, Dubin and Lezberg 1981, 158).

In recent years, as the interdependent nature of the relationship among all life forms has become more clear, important efforts have been made in the direction of protecting the wonderful and essential diversity of the planet.[1] As a result of this, perhaps, people throughout the world are moving away from the ancient idea of humans as the controlling force whose role towards nature is that of master to slave. All of these steps are encouraging and

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positive because it is only through this shift of the prevailing mindset that we can ensure the survival of the planet and our place on it. One possible result of this trend, however, should be avoided at all possible costs. The relationship between humans and animals does not imply that there are no differences between them. In other words, just because the subjugation of the rest of nature to the needs of humans is an untenable position does not mean that humans are not unique from all other life forms. Again, let Freire speak on this:

> Animals . . . cannot create products detached from themselves. Men . . . through their action upon the world create the realm of culture and history. . . . It is as transforming and creative beings that men, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods--tangible objects--but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts" (1972, 91).

To try to place a higher value on one species than another is not germane to the present goal, that of increasing the cultural sensitivity towards our students. I would discourage such an attempt as both futile and distracting. What is essential is developing an objective understanding of that which divides and binds humans.

Language as an Inherent Feature of all Human Societies

Both unique to and omnipresent in communities of humans, the ability to communicate through a system of symbols is a critical distinguishing component of our species. Students in ESL/EFL classrooms bring with them the ability to learn languages, having perfectly mastered their mother tongue.

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This section will examine the significance of language as a
constant among all humans.

> Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in
> it. In contrast, men emerge from the world, objectify
> it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it
> with their labor (Freire 1972, 119).

One of the essential means by which humans "objectify" the

world is through the use of language--developed and accepted

codes of communication which have been agreed upon as

meaningful by groups of people. The ability to discuss

abstract issues is one of the most important distinguishing

features of *homo sapiens*. According to Sapir, "Language is

a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating

ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of

voluntarily produced symbols" (1921, 5). As evidence for

the human-specific nature and the universality of language,

it is fruitful to consider the knowledge gained from the

study of people raised in isolation, so-called feral

children.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an interest

in the new science of anthropology began to develop. At

that time, scientists and common people alike were

interested in finding a "natural man." This meant that they

were looking for a human being unadulterated by contact with

other humans. As all the examples of feral children

demonstrate, no human in such a "pure" form exists (Shattuck

1980). That which "adulterates" humans is that which makes

them human. Feral children never receive proper care (i.e.,

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they never had the benefits of group forces to teach them culture) so, in spite of the fact that they are often born with perfect control of their faculties, they never become human. The most telling feature of their state is their inability to learn languages. It has been conclusively proven that "neither feral nor isolated man creates his own language" (Brown, R. 1958, 192). But, when removed from isolation at an early enough age and brought into society, these individuals make amazing progress and, within a very short time, create utterances and demonstrate linguistic ability on a par with other children of the same age. On the other hand, numerous examples of people denied the ability to see or hear (abilities commonly thought of as necessary for language) have been able to exist as complete human beings. For example, Helen Keller, born deaf and blind, eventually learned enough language to express herself so eloquently that she has served as a role model for thousands of others who have overcome what are normally seen as severely limiting disabilities. It is interesting to note that the one question discussed when academics consider the case of Helen Keller or *les enfants sauvages* is whether they are able to communicate with their fellow and sister human beings (see Sattuck 1980). In other words, language is one of the most significant factors which bind us as human beings.

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From all the examples, it is obvious that the physical

properties[2] of a human are only the most basic of the

components which define a being as human. Or, "Man is human

only when he is civilized, as we commonly say, or when he is

acculturated and enculturated, as the anthropologist says"

(Landees 1965, 36). In other words, humans, by nature, are

a societal animal. Only by working together in groups

(including but not limited to families, tribes, nations,

religious denomination, language speakers) does one become a

human being. That which makes us human is that which

enculturates us.

> Although culture constrains individuals, participation
> in a sociocultural system is what allows us to develop
> our human qualities and abilities. The price we pay
> for being human is that we become human in a culturally
> specific way (Gregg 1985, 5).

The connection between all of this and the topic may

not be entirely clear at first until one thinks in the

concrete terms of the classroom. If one imagines a picture

of a typical ESL classroom in the United States, one can see

a number of cultures represented. The teacher herself may

be a member of any ethnic group, sexual orientation and

religious background. With the constant influx of

immigrants from the countries of Latin America, one can

imagine a number of students of Hispanic origin. In the

image, let us place some refugees from Haiti and Cambodia as

well as the children of some Vietnamese refugees. This

class, like many throughout the world, would be considered

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multi-cultural. The students themselves would be, needless
to say, all human. And therein lies the beauty of the human
species. None of the students are without *their* own native
language and culture. Each of them has been taught a method
of communicating with other members of certain groups. All
of them are in the process of learning another language and
adapting to the changes of another society. It is the role
of ESL/EFL teachers to find out what it is that makes them
different from one another and why these things are
important to them.

Linguistic Universals

> No matter how intercultural attitudes come into an EFL
> course, all of those professionals concerned--teachers
> and administrators--must possess *certain basic*
> *understandings about language and culture*. If they
> have this awareness, the programs they plan, the
> courses they create, the syllabi they construct and the
> materials they write can foster an intercultural point
> of view (Dunnett, Dubin and Lezberg 1981 148--emphasis
> mine).

In order to safeguard against the feeling that English or
any other language is superior to the language spoken by
their students, ESL/EFL teachers must understand the
linguistic and extra-linguistic features which are present
in all languages.[3]

First, because of the universal presence of idiomatic
expressions, word-for-word translation is impossible.
Second, spoken language is rich with non-verbal cues, unique
to the language: Intonation, gestures, body movement and
proxemics being but some of them. Third, all languages use

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different grammatical elements for describing the physical
world. Next, all languages, depending on the culture in
which they are spoken, have issues which are discussed less
freely and openly than other topics. These subjects often
have two or more lexical entries (ways of referring) used to
express the same action, thing or idea. Fifth, all
languages have register differences. These differences can
be very distinct, marking the speaker as a member of a
certain class. (Chapter 7 briefly considers the topic of
Standard American English.) Sixth, every language has a
perfectly adequate and developed set of phonology,
morphology, syntax, lexicon and system of semantics. This
is not to say that languages are invariable, exactly the
contrary. In fact they are completely flexible. This sixth
point means just that they are *rule-governed*. No language
works without constraints. A working hypothesis with which
many descriptive grammarians approach the study of languages
is that no syntactic or semantic choice is arbitrary
(Larsen-Freeman 1992). People speak in certain ways based
on accepted (but often implicit) rules. By recognizing that
every language has certain universal features, ESL/EFL
teachers necessarily realize that every language is equally
suited to the situation out of which it grew.

A final linguistic universal that deserves attention is
the idea that all languages are in a state of flux, changing
to meet the needs of the society in which the language is

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spoken. It is clear that no language is unable to express a topic. When a society is invaded or through another means encounters new concepts or objects that need to be articulated, the language spoken by that society adapts to that idea (Boas 1911).

Cultural Universals

> We can at least suggest that a basic course in cultural change and cultural universals would be of most use to the second language teacher. (Hughes 1986, 168).

In the same sense that every language has a number of features which correspond to every other language, so too are there certain features of culture which apply to every known human society. Further, just as an understanding of language universals makes an ESL/EFL teacher sensitive to the linguistic aspects of her students' cultural development, so too does an understanding of cultural universals sensitize her to other important aspects of their developing inter-cultural being. Murdock cites seven universal characteristics of cultural behaviors:

> (1) they originate in the human mind;
>
> (2) they facilitate human and environmental interactions;
>
> (3) they satisfy basic human needs; [Enumerated by Kohls (1979) as: food, clothing, shelter, family organization, social organization, government, defense, arts/crafts, knowledge/science, religion (19)]
>
> (4) they are cumulative and adjust to changes in external internal conditions; [in the same sense that languages adjust effortlessly to account for new concepts.]

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(5) they tend to form a consistent structure;

(6) they are learned [but not necessarily followed, see the section on the role of intercultural experience and second language acquisition] and shared by all the members of a society;

(7) they are transmitted to new generations (1961, 45-54).

From this, it is clear that human beings are similar in many important ways. This is why the model in Chapter 2 presents "humanity" as the all-encompassing force. In that framework, the largest disc of all is that for humanity, the aspect of existence that every human shares completely with every other. It clarifies the forces which unite teachers to their students. When ESL/EFL teachers think of how different their students are, they need only pause to consider the linguistic and cultural universals which bind all humans as a unique and distinct species.

Culture, Race and Language

The stench of racism permeates the societies which produce ESL/EFL teachers to such an extent that it is only the rare individual who has no vestiges of it. A consideration of the essential distinguishing characteristics of the human species would remain incomplete without a mention of the differentiation among race, language and culture. Racism and linguistic chauvinism in the classroom can be combatted by education and awareness. Both the teacher and her students need to work together to combat the oppression of racism. It will be shown that because culture, race and

language are only arbitrarily related, students must be
understood on their own terms.

> Remove the new-born individual from the social
> environment into which he has come and transplant him
> to an utterly alien one. He will develop the art of
> walking in his new environment very much as he would
> have developed it in the old (Sapir 1921, 4).

Languages have settings. In other words, at one time,
centuries ago, they (languages) evolved, within a given
group of people (part of a race), to meet the needs of a
given society (culture). But circumstances in which these
three entities could develop in isolation simply do not
exist. From prehistoric times, languages mixed, races
intermarried, and cultures invaded each other. For this
reason, science has proven that race is a fiction.
Biologically and anthropologically, human beings cannot be
classified into groups according to skin color and other
physical characteristics. In spite of this fact, prejudice,
discrimination and oppression continue to stand in the way
of certain groups of people. Therefore, the terms "race,"
"racial groups" and "racism" are still used to describe
problems in the United States and other societies. Another
early pioneer in cultural anthropology, Franz Boas gives
many examples of how, over history, the three factors have
become completely independent of one another. He then goes
on to state an underlying truth of the discipline:

> The assumption that a certain definite people whose
> members have always been related by blood must have
> been the carriers of this language throughout history;
> and the other assumption, that a certain cultural type

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must have always belonged to this people--are purely
arbitrary ones and not in accord with the observed
facts (1913, 6).

Sapir echoes Boas: "Language, race, and culture are not
necessarily correlated" (1921, 215).

In short, students can be of any race, speak any
language, and be raised by any culture. Knowing one of the
three does not predict the others. A student with coffee-
colored skin could be a Portuguese speaker from Brazil while
a person with much lighter skin could be a Swahili speaker
from Tanzania. The sooner the ESL/EFL teacher comes to her
own realization of the relationship among the three, the
sooner she will be able to consider her students as products
of their culture, not their color. She will be able to
realize that the language or languages they speak or learn
are no more or less intrinsically valuable than any other.
An understanding of the spurious basis of the disease of
racism is the first step in cleansing the soul of it, thus
permitting each student to be treated as a human first and a
speaker of a certain language and member of a certain
culture later.

NOTES

1. At the time of this writing, for example, the largest gathering of heads of states for many years is happening in Rio de Janeiro. They have gathered for the "Earth Summit." With the exception of George Bush, every one of the over 100 national delegations has agreed to sign a strongly-worded pledge directed at maintaining bio-diversity.

2. Neither should one overestimate the extent to which physical properties are innate. R. Brown (1958) shows that such aspects of human existence as sexual desire are probably developed by association with others. Further, Shattuck (1980) found that certain senses of humans raised outside of human society are dulled, demonstrating again the fact that much of what is considered "natural" is probably a result of contact with human society.

3. The linguistic universals cited in this section are adapted from Dunnet, Dubin and Lezberg (1981), Fromkin and Rodman (1988), and R. Brown (1958).

Chapter 4: Two Factors to be Considered in the Emerging Intercultural Identity of ESL/EFL Students

The previous chapter examined a number of universals common to groups within the human race which the multi-culturally sensitive teacher must be aware of in order to appreciate the integrity of our species. In this chapter emphasis will be placed on that which creates the amazing cultural diversity present throughout the world and in ESL/EFL classrooms. An understanding of the varying cultural backgrounds possible and the basis of these variations is necessary for the teacher to recognize how students might react differently to the same material. Further, it will explain many conflicts within the classroom, allowing the teacher to teach more effectively, building a strong sense of community.

At times, cultural differences can be as seemingly innocuous as differences between certain towns within the same region of the same nation. Other times, cultural chasms may separate the students, as in the case of a class in New England where great challenges were created by persistent conflict between a German-speaking Swiss visitor and an Arabic-speaking refugee from rural Yemen. In many instances, however, cultural differences can provide the impetus for enlivened class discussion that the students invest themselves in, thus accomplishing one of the main goals of any ESL/EFL classroom--improving English proficiency. The possible ways in which classrooms can

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benefit by multi-cultural diversity will be discussed later. The present chapter discusses another essential understanding: How ESL/EFL students become so different. It is hoped that the forces present in a developing cultural identity (including the varying situational needs which cultural universals must adapt to) have been developed sufficiently in the preceding chapters. Now, by concentrating on two specific forces that change the culture of ESL/EFL students, two more understandings will be developed for the multiculturally sensitive teacher. First, we will briefly consider the classroom as culture. Then we will attempt to understand the effects of second language acquisition on one's culture.

The Classroom as Culture

As recently as the 1960's, it was seen that the role of education in the United States was to eliminate the so-called subcultures in favor of the middle class. Throughout a rather didactic book entitled Cultural Patterns in Urban Schools: A Manual for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators, disparaging comments are made about the general values, assumptions and IQ levels of students who represent the various cultures in classrooms. These students are consistently referred to as "culturally deprived," "disadvantaged," and "alienated" (Lohman 1967, xii). Those teachers who attempt to implement a multi-cultural focus into their classroom, thus recognizing the

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worth and contributions provided by various cultures are
castigated and held up for ridicule.

In spite of all this, the authors pledge allegiance to
the idea that students "must be understood by an increasing
number of teachers" (x). Then, the authors go on to
present a typically ethnocentric and blind view of the
subcultures, one so commonly promulgated by the white, male,
middle-class:

> By "middle class" we mean the mass of American society
> that places a high value on a stable family life,
> regular employment, education, and social and
> professional achievement. We will speak of the "lower
> class" as that population group which is made up of
> semi-skilled or unskilled workers, if they are employed
> at all, and which frequently exhibits an unstable
> family life or commonly mother-centered family with no
> stable male present. In such contexts, importance is
> often attached to toughness, excitement, and the
> ability to "con" or outsmart others (Lohman, 1967, 2).

For those inclined to agree with the viewpoint
presented in the above manual, the obvious solution would be
to view the classroom as a civilizing force. According to
this view, the role of teachers towards their students of
different cultures would be to inculcate them with the solid
middle-class values of which, after all, they have been
hopelessly deprived.

But whether or not one feels that homogenizing is a
viable option, it should be made clear that options other
than standardization exist. Other educators, even in the
early sixties, took a much more humanistic and interested
approach. In a book which describes an experiment which

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combined cultural anthropology and education, Landes
describes an approach which "stresses the mental gifts and
social heritages of human groups rather than their physical
appearances and test ratings" (1965, i). Her entire book is
dedicated to the importance of understanding and learning
from the students in the classroom. According to Landes,
using such racist terms as "minorities" only serves to
perpetuate the stereotypical and prejudiced categories and
distinctions of our students, thus stunting their
intellectual growth and personal development. Fantini
(1988) is also convinced that positive solutions to
diversity are possible. Indeed, they are happening
throughout the world. Cultural differences in the classroom
can be recognized as a positive force. Students can learn
from one another, expand their world view, discover
alternative solutions to the common challenges present in
their lives, and develop an appreciation for diversity
necessary in today's world. Buchanan (1990), among many
others, sees the ESL/EFL classroom as a new culture (neither
their own nor that of the teacher but a synthesis of the
two) to be entered by students.

One effective method of developing a positive attitude
towards this culture is recognizing the common educational
attitudes of teachers from the United States. The following
attitudes are often present in the ESL/EFL classroom:

> 1) Independence and individual work are considered
> necessary components in order to assess learning.

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2) Certain rules of turn taking are demanded. Hands must be raised and students called upon.

3) Group work is encouraged, demanding skills of cooperation.

4) Deadlines are made, formalized and largely static. If they are not met, harsh judgements are often made on the intellectual merits of the student.

5) Students are encouraged to ask questions in order to prove that they are paying attention and to learn (adapted from Buchanan 1990).

Teachers should recognize that these values are often in conflict with those of the students and develop curricula and activities which reflect diverse cultural backgrounds. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to suggest specific classroom teaching techniques that would address various learning styles, emphasizing a variety of activities would seem to be an appropriate consideration.

Learning Another Language

Language . . . defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience (Sapir 1931).

Whorf (1956) showed that every culture has its own way in which it uses language to describe and interpret reality. According to the famous hypothesis he developed along with Sapir, these differences can be used to grasp cultural differences. Because the culture of ESL/EFL teachers is so often different from that of their students, their ways of interpreting reality and expressing these interpretations are also different. These modes of expression are not

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wrong, just different. It is the role of the teacher to

discover the differences and then profit from them.

Fantini (1983) presents a clear and helpful picture of

the importance of language in relationship to the culture of

our students. By understanding this relationship, the

ESL/EFL teacher can gain greater appreciation of how her

students are being affected by learning English

```
                        Speakers
                (social organization/Sociofact)
              *                             *
                **                       **
                  **                     **
                   **                   **
                    **      VIEW OF      **
                     **    THE WORLD     **
                    **                   **
                   **                   **
                  **                   **
                 *                       *
Symbols            ****************************          Meaning
(artifact)         ******************************        (mentifact)
```
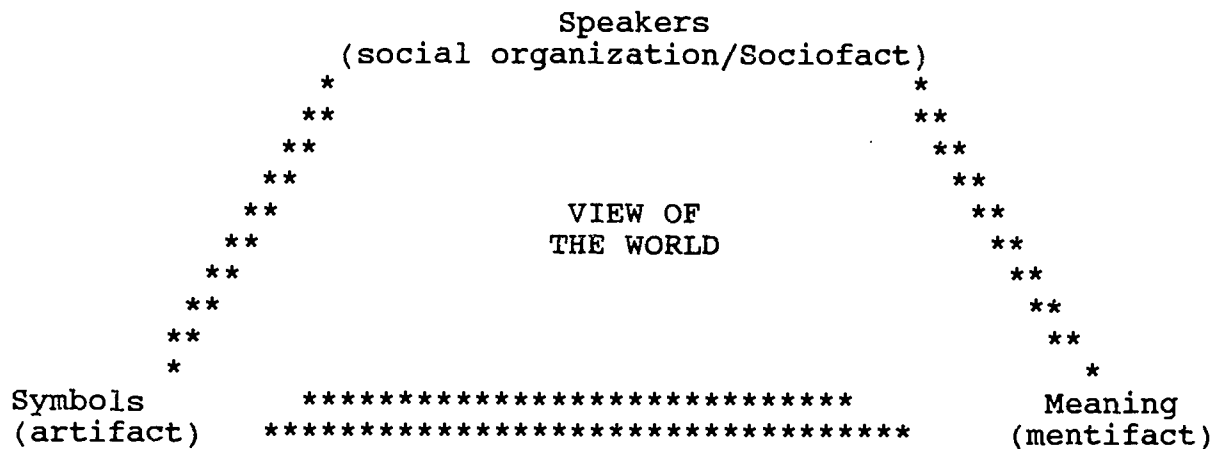
    In other words, what we think about something (meaning)
we express by way of a symbol. Conversely, once
acquired, that symbol also influences how we think
about the world. The way we organize ourselves
socially and what we consider important aspects of our
social organization (e.g., sexual differences, age,
role, status, etc.) affect the way we speak about
things. Different speakers often have different ways
of expressing the same thing. All people do not speak
alike nor do the same persons speak in the same ways
all of the time in all situations. The social
circumstances of the speech act affect the way
something is communicated.
(Reprinted from A Guide & Workbook to Field Language
Acquisition and Cultural Exploration [1983], with the
kind permission of Dr. Alvino E. Fantini)

Fantini's description can also be seen to support the

author's model of cultural understanding which was developed

at the end of Chapter 2. By using the disc framework

throughout the course or term, teachers can take into account the way in which the factors Fantini discusses affect their students. As students learn new and different ways to express themselves, so too can they learn new things about themselves. With the help of their teacher, they can incorporate these revelations into their personal system of discs. Not only will this help them ground their experiences in a image more permanent than thoughts, but it can serve the of developing proficiency with the language as well.

Chapter 5: The Importance of ESL/EFL Teachers Coming to Terms With Themselves as Cultural Beings

> An individual cannot through introspection and self-examination understand himself or the forces that mold his life, without understanding his culture (Hall 1976, 281).

If teachers are to understand the cultural forces at play in the varied lives of their students, it is first necessary to develop an understanding of themselves as cultural beings. The process that teachers can go through in developing their own identity can be as simple as posing a series of questions such as, Who am I? Where do I come from? What forces have created me? Where am I going? Why? What life experiences have led me to my place and direction? How am I different than others who come from families of similar background? As simple as these questions appear, they are not easily answered. Too often, people fail to reflect deeply, considering only the superficial aspects of society, not the driving forces that have formed them. The identity being considered here is not "a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors" (Baldwin 1988, 9). It is a deep and meaningful introspection.

The Importance of Multicultural and Multilingual Experiences

In this section, it will be argued that in order to see oneself clearly and understand that all humans are products of a culture, teachers need to learn other languages and exist in other cultures. Hall (1976), speaks eloquently of this need:

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1) People are unaware of the culture that controls them.

2) People spend their life managing their inputs.

3) When learning a new culture, one's own culture is produced only in bits and pieces.

4) Trying to understand one's own culture by studying the behavior of others to whom one is close is largely futile. One is reminded of the old parable, "if you want to know about water, don't ask a fish."

5) Because of the constantly shrinking world, man must transcend his own culture, and this can be done only by making explicit the rules by which it operates (adapted from Hall 1976, 55).

To avoid superficiality, it is extremely helpful to have learned languages other than one's native tongue and appreciated other cultures than the one in which one was born. Without the alterations in world view gained by intercultural experiences, it is only too easy to fall into the trap of using the limited perspective of one's own culture as the sole lens through which to view other cultures.

But three concessions should be made to Hall's dictums. First, the culture which one experiences may not be in another country. Within the United States, for instance, avenues for intercultural exploration are nearly limitless. The partitioning of the Native American nations into reservations provide excellent opportunities for work and learning. Immigrant communities in urban areas supply similar situations. Each of these situations can be as or more distant and equally complex as another country.

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Second, one must take on the appropriate mindset of the intercultural student. A culture cannot be adequately understood when approached as something exotic, thus reducing the experience to romanticism at best and voyeurism at worst. In order to accomplish true understanding, the commitment to learn must be present. The third concession to Hall's suggestions is that breadth as well as depth is advised:

> [The study of other cultures] opens great vistas for the teacher and provides a basis for better understanding of persons from other backgrounds, as well as supplying new insights into approaches to teaching a second language. Obviously no one can learn everything about all cultures--no one knows everything about one's own culture . . . [But] a knowledge of many cultures, superficial as it must be for the layman, is essential to the acceptance of those who have grown up in different environments (Valdes 1986, 49-51).

When Valdes speaks of the study of other cultures, I believe she means more than just reading about them in books. The kind of study which is necessary is a non-judgmental attempt at understanding. It involves the desire to learn about and appreciate the ways of life of other people.

After ESL/EFL teachers have experienced these other cultures, what can they do with what they have learned? An attempt at applying intercultural experience is the point at which many teachers fail. After learning a few things about their own culture, they think that they can now predict potential problems in the classroom and thereby control classroom dynamics. It is an oft-stated premise that, for a person who is entering another culture or trying to

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communicate with another culture, problems will arise where
the areas of greatest differences lie (see Kohls 1979). But
this prediction is as obsolete as the contrastive analysis
(CA) theory of second language acquisition. The primary
flaw in the CA theory is the same as the flaw in the
cultural differences theory: Where the areas of greatest
difference lie, that is where the problems will arise. For
instance, CA theory would predict that the English
copulative verb "to be" would be an extremely difficult
learning point for speakers of Swahili, Zulu and other
African languages in the Bantu family because those
languages have no copulative. In fact, however, the
copulative presents learners with a much smaller obstacle
than areas in which the Bantu languages are similar to but
not the same as English. In linguistic studies, the CA
theory has not been proven to any degree (Larsen-Freeman and
Long 1991, 56).

In the same sense, knowing where cultural differences
among an ESL/EFL teacher and her students lie does not
predict the areas where conflict will arise. The simplicity
of such an argument destines it for failure in the face of
the complexities and diversities of the world's cultures.
If, for example, Yolanda, who is originally from the
Yucatan, teaches a group of Japanese students, it is
impossible to predict that the problems in the classroom
will arise out of time concerns. As in the example of the

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copulative presented above, the main challenge for the class

may not be the consideration of time, where a great

difference exists between the teacher's culture and the

students' culture.

The case for ESL/EFL teachers learning other languages

is a commonly accepted suggestion that has been well made in

other literature. At the School for International Training,

for example, teacher trainees are required to undergo a

"shock language" week in which they study a new language,

thus creating empathy for the language learner. Dunnet,

Dubin and Lezberg (1981) actually recommend that all ESL/EFL

teachers have learned a language which is not of the Indo-

European family. Learning, or even attempting to learn, a

variety of second languages in formal and informal

situations can increase sensitivity towards ESL/EFL

students, develop different approaches, and alert teachers

to the learning styles shown by her co-learners and,

eventually, her students. Clearly these recommendations

about language learning represent the ideal situation. It

is recognized that few teachers will be able to enjoy such a

multitude of intercultural experiences. However, since it

is an ideal, it is meant to be strived for.

Universals Versus Culture

[The goal of experiencing other languages and cultures
is] having a reasonably accurate set of ideas on which
to interpret the behavior they see (Althen 1983, ix).

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The person who can enter a given culture, explore it, work to understand it and then accept everything in it is rare, if such an individual exists at all. But the goal of interculturalism is not acceptance but understanding, not adoption but appreciation. This goal is echoed in most publications of interculturalism including Hall (1976), Althen (1983), Benjamin (1985), Fantini (1983), and Kearny (1984).

With appreciation as the ultimate goal, one important method of meeting the demands of the multicultural classroom is for EFL/ESL teachers to develop a dynamic but explicit understanding of their own beliefs. They must decide what, if anything, is universally right and wrong for themselves. What are they going to tolerate in the classroom? What defines a racist comment or act? How does one decide what qualifies as sexist speech or behavior? What religion-inspired conflicts will be encountered? What about instances in which nationalism or ethnic pride creates conflict? When are specific instances of behavior deemed "inappropriate," and how will the teacher explain this to her students? By delineating what is believed and valued, one can become better able to serve the needs of multicultural classes. Further, potentially troublesome areas should be considered *before* the ESL/EFL teacher enters the classroom, thus enabling her to deal with value and behavior conflicts as they arise.

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In order to create an understanding of this topic, two personal components of my development in this area will be examined. The first describes a position which is dangerously close to ethnocentrism. In the second, I will describe a series of common experiences where good intentions have been frittered away because of ethnocentric attitudes.

Every month, as a member of Amnesty International, I write a series of letters to heads of state, attorneys general, dictators and armed forces officials of governments throughout the world. Through this correspondence, I plead for the release of political captives, beg for the sparing of condemned prisoners, and remind powerful people of the universal applicability of certain rights. I tell them that, in spite of cultural differences, certain rights are inalienable—those we call "human rights." I ask them to remember that we all belong to the same fellowship of humanity and it is their responsibility, be they Ethiopians, Chinese, French, Argentinean or of the United States of America, to respect and enforce these rights. The raison d'etre of organizations like Amnesty is that there are universals to be applied across cultures. This position is seen by many to be ethnocentric.

Another set of experiences has created stress with the above set of behaviors. When working, living or travelling in developing countries, I constantly encounter

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tourists who refuse to adopt the forms of address required
by the culture because they are "undemocratic." They reject
protocol and suggestions for working within the system,
admonishing others to "go right to the guy who holds the
reins and shoot for the bottom line." I see millions of
dollars being wasted on development projects that will, for
example, create convenience in the lives of thousands of
overworked women by providing them with a bridge over a
small chasm. Then, a very short time later, after the
foreign "expert" has left, I see the bridge, irrigation
project, latrine, school, clinic, court, community center,
farm, airport or dormitory in a state of disrepair.
Community members, the very people the expert had selflessly
devoted his time to serve, have destroyed the facility,
looted the valuables. All that remains of the project is
squandered good intentions and wasted hopes. Once, while
living in a small nation in southern Africa, I saw a group
of high-minded Danish doctors and health workers come into a
village--their pockets bulging with dollars--ready to save
the natives from easily-prevented communicable diseases.

The tourists and workers, all of whom came from
different cultures, thought that what was of critical
importance to them was naturally of critical importance to
the people they were trying to develop. The tourists could
not comprehend that a culture can waste so much time and
attention on something as insignificant (to them) as

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honorifics, register differences and rank. The bridge
builders did not consider the fact that the chasm
represented a lesser god that should not be crossed, only
circumvented. The health-care providers never believed that
people would actually refuse free services, even if they had
failed to secure clearance with the appropriate traditional
healers. In each case, the new entrants to the culture
failed to consider significant cultural differences between
their native culture and that of the culture which they had
entered.

The two sets of experiences outlined above represent
essential (but conflicting) ingredients in my developing
intercultural identity. I believe that pure relativism (the
belief that all behavior sanctioned by a given culture
should be accepted) is not possible for me. Although not
perfectly confident in the limitations of my set of human
universals, there are some that I am sure that do exist.
Some cultures practice certain behaviors, like the excision
of women, which are accepted by the majority within that
culture; I nevertheless refuse to accept them. And, if
there is a significant group of individuals within that
culture working to change that aspect of their world, I will
join them in fighting that behavior.

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PART III: IN THE ESL/EFL CLASSROOM

Part II presented some of the understandings that I believe
a teacher should develop before entering the classroom. It
was advanced that a personal but comprehensive concept of
culture should be developed. Then, the essential components
of the human species were delineated. Third, the potential
enculturating effects of the classroom and of learning
another language were looked at. Finally, it was advised
that teachers should examine themselves as intercultural
beings.

Here in Part III, three chapters will explore methods
by which the teacher who has committed herself to
multicultural sensitivity can take advantage of her
awareness. In Chapter 6, the stages of acculturation will
be examined. In Chapter 7, the role of Standard American
English will be discussed. Finally, Chapter 8 will present
some practical methods to implement to maintain and develop
the emerging cultural identity of the students.

Chapter 6: Stages of Acculturation and Two Skills to Work with the Emerging Identity of ESL/EFL Students

> Learning another culture, especially the spiritual
> matters within it, is most effective when it is
> internalized, when it is brought inside the person.
> When it is a coat that a person takes on and off, one
> day he will fail to put it on. Over the twenty years
> that my husband and I have been married, we have
> constantly become more and more comfortable with our
> bi-lingual, bi-cultural self. (Kepner 1992).

Originally a Spanish speaker from Peru, the woman quoted
above married an English speaker from the United States.

Together they have worked, travelled, studied and lived

throughout Latin and North America. Together, too, they

have learned some Native American languages, thus increasing

their multiculturalism. Ms. Kepner and her husband have

both reached the most advanced stage of acculturation. Both

are perfectly able to function in the original culture of

the other, at times presenting themselves as virtually

indistinguishable from natives of that culture. The ESL/EFL

teacher who encounters students at this advanced stage of

acculturation is rare. Most students are just beginning to

form their new intercultural identity.

"ESL and bilingual education classrooms are populated

almost solely by students who each day increase their skill

in functioning appropriately in diverse cultural setting"

(Seelye 1984, 191). Therefore, it is helpful to consider

their development in the basic terms of the following model

which I have adapted from Brown (1987). When considering

the framework, it is vital to understand that the model of

acculturation is not a static thing. A student's

development can be arrested or reach a plateau at any stage.

Conversely, students can go through a stage so quickly that

it appears not to have happened at all. Furthermore,

students might have reached higher stages in some situations

but lower in others.

Stage one: Initial excitement/enchantment. The first

stage is familiar to many ESL/EFL teachers who are attracted

to the profession because it allows them to visit exotic
places. ESL/EFL teachers from the United States, as
products of that society, are encouraged to "collect"
experiences (Anderson 1992). This leads them to be
especially susceptible to the first stage, when the initial
excitement engendered by the new surroundings is still
strong. At this level, because everything is fresh and
quaint (but not yet inconvenient), negative judgements are
limited.

Stage two: Growing frustration. The second stage
occurs when the visitor to the new culture feels threatened
by the differences. One might fight this threat by seeking
out sisters and fellows from one's own culture. Conversely,
one might flee it by isolating oneself as much as possible.
Another common reaction to the second stage is the search
for "sameness" (Kohls 1979, 64). Those who insist that all
world faiths are, in their essence, monotheistic would
probably be examples of someone who has failed to pass this
stage.

Stage three: Growing understanding. The third stage
is the one in which people begin learning about the new
culture. While certain problems persist, other problems are
solved and the individual develops empathy.

Stage four: Bi- or multi-culturalism. The final stage
represents the final and healthy goal. At this point, the
individual is equally comfortable in either culture,

speaking either language. Avoidance, substitution,
addition, synthesis and resynthesis are basic coping
strategies for dealing with intercultural stress that
students may apply throughout the stages of acculturation
(Seelye 1984).

Ambiguity, Generalities and Stereotypes

All of the skills, attributes and understandings
discussed throughout the first five chapters of this paper
represent necessary ingredients in the development of this
ability. As demanding as they are, however, the skill of
productive, sensitive and effective communication with
ESL/EFL students demands an even greater commitment.
Dealing effectively with classroom challenges, finding
solutions to common problems and maintaining one's sanity,
make a tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to generalize
without stereotyping two additional and essential skills.

One of the most common attributes of the teacher who
has made a great deal of progress in this field is a
tolerance for ambiguity. In the classroom, as in any
multicultural situation, conflicts arise and things are said
that cause concern. There often exists a multitude of
possible causes and meanings, all of which may be part of
the "right" answer. Even more frequently, however, the
answer is never clear; the teacher never does quite
understand why Carlos walked out on Sanae's presentation on
Japan's electoral system. Even after individual sessions

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with both students, questions remain. Could it have resulted from his distress about the lack of democracy in his country? A personality conflict between the two of them? A simple misunderstanding, or something else entirely? As Halverson (1989) says, "A good tolerance of [this] ambiguity helps the multicultural teacher cope with the unavoidable stress of the intercultural setting" (60).

Generalizations, as a form of input management, are a healthy method of avoiding information overload. Without some way to categorize and sort information, people in today's world would be overwhelmed. Because teachers are consistently subjected to new and different cultures, it is impossible to understand all of them perfectly. For this reason, "Even rather sweeping generalities, so long as they are not false, may be a help, if one avoids the pitfall of stereotyping and does not expect all members of a culture to fit the generality" (Valdes 1986, 49).

Besides providing a means by which ESL/EFL teachers can develop an understanding of their own identity of cultural beings, the skills discussed in the fifth chapter also ensure empathy for the students. My experience in Africa, for example, has proven invaluable in realizing the challenges that studying a new language and culture create. There, I studied two widely varying languages taught by native speakers who used indigenous approaches and methods. As a result of this, I am better able to understand how it

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must feel for my students when I get up in front of the class with my alien ideas. When discussing this topic with others, it became clear that effective ESL/EFL teachers are able to generalize and learn from intercultural experiences.

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Chapter 7: Variations Within a Language

This chapter will briefly consider an essential issue which faces all ESL/EFL teachers. Of the many dialects of English, which should be chosen to be taught? If the teacher chooses a certain dialect, what attention will she pay to the other dialects?

In France, an academy of esteemed scholars determine and preach the "proper" way in which their language should be spoken. In Quebec, "language cops" enforce laws against invasions of foreign languages and modified forms. For years, the standard in Britain was what was spoken on the national broadcasting organization, commonly referred to as "BBC" or "the Queen's English." In the United States, self-appointed guardians like William Safire tell other native speakers how not to use the language. In each of these instances, a group of conservative-minded people, linguists and lay people among them, attempt to fight the inevitable evolution of languages.

English, with the most non-native speakers of any language in addition to millions of native speakers around the world, enjoys more dialects, additions and revisions than any other language. In countries where English is taught as a second language, students are sure to encounter many ways of speaking, probably only one of which is accepted for use in the corporate and business world. Often, they will want to learn this standard form as a means

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of empowerment. Similarly, many students in countries like India, Nigeria, and the Philippines enter the classroom with a good command of the local variety of English. The goal of these students is mastery of the nuances of standard British English or so-called Standard American English (SAE).

Characteristics of individuals which determine the language they speak are divided into two groups: ascribed and acquired. The former include those features that are given to the individual by birth and the early years of formation. These ascribed characteristics include age, sex, nativeness, ethnicity and region. The latter group develop as the individual grows and experiences other features of existence. In most but not all cases, acquired implies that their has been a degree of choice involved in those aspects. Acquired characteristics include role, specialization, status, fluency and individuality (Preston 1989).

Developing an understanding of how languages vary according to the above characteristics is critical in developing one's skills as an interculturally sensitive teacher. When one teaches English to a group of immigrants, refugees, travelers or even technical workers, one must make a conscious choice of what language is going to be taught. In Britain, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, and Canada, the sociolinguistic factors determining the variety of English spoken vary widely. The English which is generally taught is what is quaintly

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referred to as standard. "Standard American English is a
dialect that many Americans *almost* speak" (Fromkin and
Rodman 261). In other words, it is an idealized language
which nobody speaks. Actually, SAE is English which is
accepted by white, male, middle-class, natives, those in the
power positions.

It is a fact that many if not most ESL/EFL students
encounter people who speak non-standard varieties of
English. In the United States, at least, immigrants and
refugees may be living with speakers of a variety of the
English that is quite distinct from SAE. In recognition of
this, ESL/EFL teachers should recognize that their
impressions of their neighbors can be easily affected by
what goes on in the classroom. If an ESL/EFL teacher
continually disparages the English varieties that the
students acquire on the streets and in their homes, she
risks severely damaging the developing interculture of her
students. On the other hand, a teacher who refuses to
acknowledge that sociolinguistic factors in the United
States dictate the use of SAE in formal situations risks
eliminating the chance for her students to ever enter the
mainstream of society--a goal of cultural development often
highly coveted by students. In sum, it is essential for the
interculturally sensitive teacher to recognize the
sociolinguistic variations in English. By combining this
knowledge with an understanding of the way in which her

students' interculture is developing and their wishes for
how it continues to develop, she can develop their English
language skills to effectively meet their needs and desires.

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Chapter 8: Maintaining Students' Cultural Identity

> The sophisticated EFL teacher, while introducing
> foreign students to some aspects of American culture,
> must also encourage students to maintain their own
> cultural identity. . . . The teacher should guide
> cultural discussions so that they do not become
> judgmental and lead to conclusions that some cultures
> are superior or inferior (Dunnett, Dubin, and Lezberg
> 1981, 158).

This chapter is dedicated mainly to the needs of teachers
who work with students who learn English in cultures other
than their native one. Students in these situations
confront challenges of intercultural adaptation on a daily
basis. If they are refugees or immigrants they will
probably never regain the opportunity to exist solely in
their native culture, speaking only their native language.
By participating in an English education program, they have
chosen (although it may have been virtually the only option
available) to adapt, in some manner, to the culture of the
dominant society. These students are in a transition phase.
But the transition need not be a painful and dehumanizing
shift from one culture to another. Instead, it can be an
uplifting growth from monoculturalism to bi- or multi-
culturalism. If ESL/EFL teachers hope to contribute to a
psychologically healthy transition and thereby ensure
student interest and investment in their learning, they will
recognize the worth of the native cultures of their
students.

Freire (1972) complains that "almost never do
[teachers] realize that [students], too, 'know things' they

have learned in their relations with the world and with other men" (49-50). But this need not be the case: "An intercultural ethos can be brought into any classroom when teachers stop to consider their students' values and attitudes towards topics under discussion" (Dunnett, Dubin and Lezberg 1981, 156). Both teachers and students can profit from discovering and exploring new ways of thinking and alternative methods to use to confront challenges.

Newcomers to all societies often find themselves being discriminated against and attacked at worst, patronized and ignored at best. Immigrants and refugees have left the symbols, accoutrements of role, people, places, family and physical landmarks that constantly remind them of their rightful place in society (Kohls 1979). They have left the things which validate their existence. But English educators in the societies which accept newcomers enjoy a special position. It can be argued that students have come to them for guidance. Does the ESL teacher function as a mere extension of the society, stepping on the psyche of her students? Or does she sincerely commit herself to developing their individual identities, skills and confidence in their abilities? The ESL classroom, instead of being a foreboding place where unrealistic demands are placed on students, can become a place of refuge, where students know that their culture and their individualism will not only be accepted but valued.

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Using the Author's Model

For those ESL/EFL teachers who were able to fit the system of discs into their own system of cultural understanding, the "alternative framework" presented in Chapter 2 can be an effective means by which the individual cultures of students are evaluated. There are numerous ways that this can be done. One of the most effective was suggested by a person familiar with the cultural inventory survey. The problem with the written survey as a method of understanding students' culture is that it demands a considerable proficiency with English. The advantage of the disc system is that regardless of their level of English, students can create their own scenarios. Through the use of examples and modelling, teachers can help students understand that they should draw discs of forces that have influenced their lives. This task could be introduced at the beginning of the course. After working alone, students could share their models with other people who shared linguistic backgrounds and, eventually, with the class as a whole. As the course continued, the students' models could be brought out periodically as the students' cultural identity developed and as their proficiency with the language improved. Naturally, the teacher would encourage her students to value both the changes they make as well as their original perceptions as equally important.

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The use of the models in the classroom would serve a number ends. First, the teacher could better understand what experiences and aspects of existence are important in the lives of her students. Second, the goal of this section of the paper, maintaining students' identity, would be met. By returning to the model throughout the course or term, students will be reminded of both their past and the changes which they are undergoing. Third, students would develop a sensitivity to the ongoing needs and cultural backgrounds of other students in the classroom. Thus, they would realize that their needs (while different) are neither less nor more significant than those of their classmates. Finally, an adoption of this technique would improve learning. By creating a secure environment in which the students are encouraged to share that which is critical to them, the investment in learning, and thereby the ultimate rewards, are higher.

Working with students to find solutions

A problem-posing approach, originated by Freire (1972) developed by others and refined by Wallerstein (1983) will be advocated in this chapter. This approach is based on the premise that students lack power. It takes the needs of the students and works with them. Instead of dictating the issues and prescribing solutions, it works with the challenges, skills and abilities of the students.

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Throughout <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, Freire sees education as empowerment. The abysmal socio-economic status of immigrant groups and the fact that a huge percentage of Hispanics are employed in menial labor are but two examples of features inherent in the state of ESL education. Given these characteristics, Freire's words about liberation as a *mutual process* ring even truer today than twenty years ago. Only by close cooperation with their students can teachers improve the situation of immigrants and society. If ESL teachers wish to avoid the trap of cultural oppression and allow their students' culture to be valued as highly as Anglophone culture, they must follow Freire's advice. A sensitivity to students' cultural distinctions and values must be developed. This sensitivity must become a central component of how the curriculum is developed and what is included in the curriculum. As the class works together to learn communicative strategies and other functional skills to master the ways of the students' new society, teachers and students can profit from learning about other cultures.

The present situation of ESL in the United States has improved considerably in the past thirty years. Educators are realizing the continuing value of contributions from other cultures. The more helpful and realistic image of a mixed salad (co-existence without destruction of cultural identity) is replacing the old melting-pot image. The students' identities and needs are still oppressed by the

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rush to assimilate. In the first chapter, it was mentioned
that the overwhelming majority of articles, texts and
research on culture in the ESL/EFL field concentrate on how
to *teach culture*. They present ways to work with Anglophone
culture in the classroom. The movement towards functional
syllabi and survival English--although, perhaps, noble in
intention--actually perpetuates the long term predicament
immigrants and refugees face. By concentrating exclusively
on the immediate situation, teachers who follow these
curricula create skills directed towards obtaining
necessities like basic health and staying out of jail, not
towards the achievement of higher goals like self-
fulfillment, political action and higher education.
Furthermore, the situations publications of this nature
choose are generally unrealistic. Caricatures of English
learners are shown dealing with polite, understanding, and
helpful service people. In many dialogues presented in
books that adopt these syllabi, daily problems are
consistently and easily overcome, much to the delight of the
ESL student pictured in the text.

So then, the ultimate question is raised: Considering
the challenges commonly faced by the ESL community, what can
ESL teachers do about them? I believe the answer lies in a
problem-posing approach:

> [This approach] takes these conflicts--the difficulties
> students have in living in the US, their feelings of
> vulnerability, and their desire to learn English while
> maintaining their own culture--as the center of the

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curriculum. Written dialogues and role-plays based on
problem situations generate motivational energy, and
students are inspired to work hard to speak English.
They also reduce their anxieties by enacting
troublesome situations, changing the plots, and finding
more satisfying endings (Wallerstein 1983, 10)

Wallerstein explains some of the principles on which this

approach is based. An ESL teacher should approach her task

in a systematic manner, similar to field research conducted

by anthropologists. While this may sound like a difficult

task, the teacher who is committed to intercultural

understanding must realize that she is working with the

students to discover the issues that are important to them.

This cross-cultural understanding can emerge most easily out

of an interaction among all the people in the community.

Books

I have recommended a number of books which value the

students' culture (listed and briefly discussed in Appendix

B). While ESL/EFL teachers can be better armed with these

books, they often find themselves in situations where the

curriculum, methods and texts are determined by the

administration or a group of teachers. Even in the most

rigid of systems, however, the interculturally committed

teacher can work with her students. Dunnett, Dubin and

Lezberg suggest seven ways to select and work with

textbooks:

1) Examine each new textbook carefully to determine
whether it takes an intercultural point of view.

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2) Try to identify the cultural aspects inherent in the textbook and list them by chapter or units. Are they positive or negative? Mixed?

3) Examine the exercises carefully. Determine if they will assist you in drawing students into intercultural activities.

4) Check to see if the vocabulary items, examples, grammar structures, drills, etc., are placed in some meaningful cultural context.

5) Examine photographs and illustrations, if any, to see if they are culturally related.

6) Carefully examine dialogues, if any, for their cultural content.

7) Go back and re-examine those textbooks which take a strong intercultural point of view for possible bias. are they objective? Do they stereotype or overgeneralize about U.S. or foreign cultures? (1981, 160)

Conclusion

In the past few years, diversity has become an increasingly popular buzzword. But, like many words of this nature, more people use the word than understand its significance. Even fewer **do** anything about it. Throughout the preceding paper, but especially in Part I, it has been argued that something *must* be done about diversity. Because of increasing influxes of refugees, changing immigration patterns, varying birthrates, global media, widespread tourism, and improved modes of travel, demographics are shifting. Those groups who represented the majority of the population in many English-speaking countries will soon be vastly outnumbered by other groups who were traditionally referred to as "minorities." In addition to this shift, the world's

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societies are experiencing increasing contact with each other, causing not only greater chances for conflict but also greater opportunities for learning.

We ESL/EFL teachers who come from countries in which English is widely spoken are confronted with two basic choices. On the one hand, we can reinforce the arrangement of power and class in our societies, ensuring that immigrant populations remain in the lower socio-economic groups. On the other hand, we can choose to cooperate with our students in their own intellectual, social and cultural development. Creating a classroom environment which values the various contributions provided by diverse cultures will not only increase student security but it will also enhance learning. We can encourage students to grow into powerful multicultural women and men who will realize the strengths of their own cultural backgrounds, allowing them to progress towards self-fulfillment, and, eventually, to improve the societies in which they live.

Of the two choices presented above, it is my firm conviction that the latter choice is the right one. In Part II of this paper, a number of skills and attributes were developed that I feel are necessary for the teacher who chooses to allow her students to empower themselves. Throughout the paper, a great deal has been demanded of the teacher; prescriptive measures, which would be easier to follow but much less helpful, were avoided. The issues

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discussed here are not concrete or mathematical. No formula
for success exists. Dicating the methods which have worked
for me would be ethnocentric and presumptuous, no better
than the books of cultural "do's and don'ts" referred to
earlier.

In the second chapter, I expressed the hope that the
idea of culture will be considered so deeply that the
teacher will develop her own personal understanding of the
topic. Then, the essential features which distinguish human
beings from other animals were examined. In the fourth
chapter, I showed how the classroom can be seen as a culture
of its own, especially when the effects of second-language
acquisition are considered. One of the most difficult and
potentially painful understandings was developed in Chapter
5. Here, I pled for teachers to develop an understanding of
themselves as cultural beings. Multicultural experiences
and multilingualism were seen as ideal aids in this process.

Part III gave my point of view that the teacher who
chooses to cooperate with her students should understand the
stages of acculturation, be able to generalize without
stereotyping, and develop a tolerance for ambiguity.
Furthermore, it was shown that many equally complex versions
of English exist. It was argued that the good ESL/FFL
teacher should **consciously** decide which variety to teach,
basing such a decision on the social, economic and other
needs and desires of the students. Finally, three methods

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by which teachers can help their students maintain and develop a strong and healthy intercultural identity were developed. It bears repeating that, although the suggestions are mine, the onus of responsibility for action is to be borne by the teacher.

But this responsibility need not be a burden. The interculturally-sensitive teacher can be refreshed by the promise of a just and productive society in her classroom. Many teachers are exhilarated by numerous examples of how their classroom has developed into a secure learning environment in which various native cultures are maintained and strengthened.

I too am thrilled by the prospect of classrooms of this sort. I see students of English on a voyage. Traditionally, the teacher has acted as captain and cruisemaster of a ship--preparing the passengers for their destination without regard for the significance and value provided by the passengers' point of embarkment. The destination has been the rejection of the cultural heritage of the passengers and an adoption of Anglophone culture. But with a new awareness about her students' culture, the teacher can crew the ship, with the students having equal share in guiding the voyage. Together, it is their responsibility to cooperate to make the voyage as secure as possible, working closely with the needs of the entire community. Both the destination and point of embarkment are essential components of the voyage.
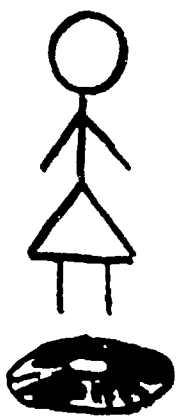
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The new destination is one in which the cultural heritage of
the students contributes to a healthy pluralistic society.
A good voyage is designed to serve the crew--allowing them
to develop into powerful multicultural women and men who
work to improve society.

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HUMANITY
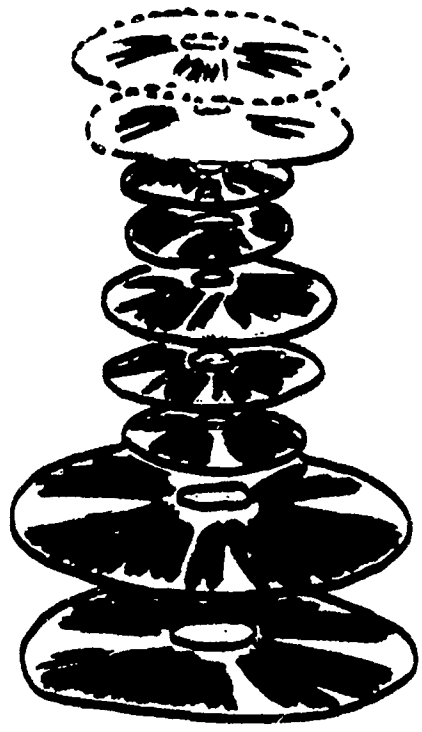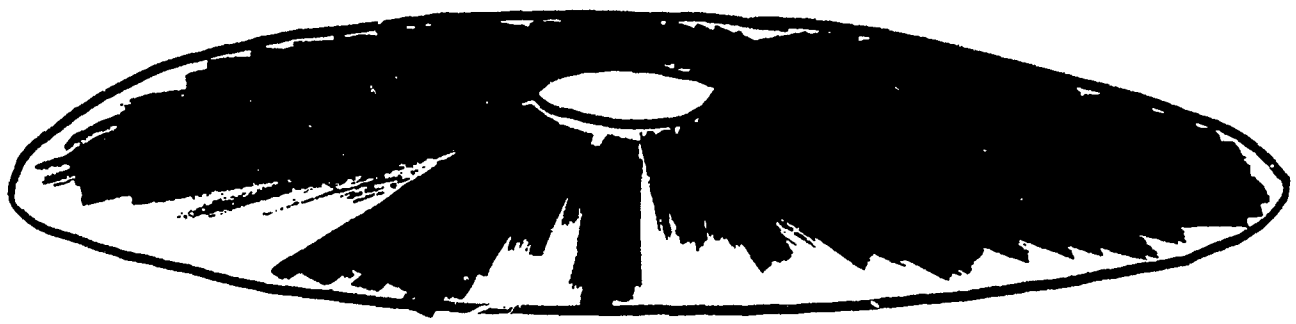
Race
Social status
Religion
Nationality

Language

Family

I. D.

APPENDIX B

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ESL/EFL TEACHERS

As has been repeated throughout the preceding text, the
resources for the teaching of culture are many and varied.
Within some of these, a brief chapter or a small part is
dedicated to the understanding of their students' culture.
Although many of these materials are, of course, better
designed than others, it is not within the intentions of
this paper to recommend selections of text and guide books.
The seven guidelines in the final chapter should be followed
in all cases.

Considering the scope of the paper, however, I feel the
following five books are absolutely essential. I have
chosen them on the grounds that what a teacher needs is
understanding, not gimmicks.

Boas, Franz. 1913. Introduction to the handbook of
    American Indian languages. Washington, DC: Georgetown
    University Press.

    A pioneering work which opened new vistas in cultural
    anthropology. Provides excellent examples which show
    the relationship of aspects of humanity like race,
    language, culture, region and type. A good reference.

Freire, Paulo. 1972. Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York:
    Herder and Herder.

    One of the first works dedicated to education as
    empowerment. A classic whose powerful calling
    reverberates today, calling on the oppressed and those
    who oppress them to change the system, humanizing
    education and creating a better society. Asks teachers
    to do more than teach; inspires them to cooperate, as
    Freire did, with the oppressed.

Hall, Edward T. 1976. Beyond Culture. New York: Anchor
    Books/Doubleday.

    This, or another of the major works by Hall develop a
    clear understanding of the essential processes behind
    behavior, values and other aspects of culture.
    Provides a good basis on which the teacher can develop
    her own understanding of culture.

Valdes, Joyce Merril, ed. 1986. <u>Culture Bound: Bridging
    the Cultural Gap in Language Teaching</u>. New York:
    Cambridge University Press.

    A well-presented and organized compilation of essays
    concerning various aspects of culture and language
    teaching. Especially applicable in the classroom.

Wallerstein, Nina. 1983. <u>Language and Culture in Conflict:
    Problem-posing in the ESL Classroom</u>. Reading, .
    Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

    Carefully following the well-marked path blazed by
    Freire, Wallerstein argues eloquently for a curriculum
    which values the individual worth of ESL students.
    Provides actual lessons and concrete suggestions for
    steps to be taken in the problem-posing approach.

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