EIL in an Actual Lesson

(Abdullah Coskun, Abant Izzet Baysal University, Turkey. E-mail: coskun_a@ibu.edu.tr)

Abstract

The English as an International Language (EIL) research movement that has appeared due to the increasing number of non-native speakers outnumbering the native English speakers seems to challenge some of the traditional assumptions in ELT. Within the scope of ELT curriculum development, this study aims to argue against two of the traditional assumptions that the goal of English learning is native speaker competence and that native speaker culture should inform instructional materials. By illustrating a lesson plan in which students are familiarized with English speakers from various backgrounds and cultures, the study tries to show how an EIL lesson looks like.

Key Words: EIL, curriculum design

Background to the Study

The status of English as an International Language (EIL) which can be desribed as "a vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a native language" (Mauranen 2003, 513) has appeared as a result of the number of non-native speakers in the world outnumbering the native-speakers. Graddol (1999) claims that the balance between native and non-native speakers of English will shift dramatically in the coming 50 years and the the number of people using English as their second language will grow from 235 million to around 462 million. Looking at the statistics, one can suggest that in today's world, most of the English communications are carried out in non-native contexts by non-native speakers of English and English has become the property of all the English speakers, not only the native-speakers.

The increasing number of non-native speakers has made EIL researchers question some of the traditional assumptions as put forward by McKay(2003):

1. ELT pedagogy should be informed by native speaker models.

2. The cultural content for ELT should be derived from the cultures of native English speakers.

This study has the main objective to review the theoretical background of EIL and to relate McKay's concerns about the model to follow for teaching pronunciation and culture with an EIL lesson plan exemplifying an alternative approach to the native-speaker model. In the lesson about, instructional materials that represent the international culture and different varieties of English has been used so that students can get an awareness about the importance of intercultural communication and the changing status of EIL.

The Native-speaker Model

The appearance of so many different varieties of English has led a number of linguists to question the use of native speaker pronunciation models in the teaching of English and to call for an alternative to the native-speaker model by approaching critically the traditional assumptions that ELT pedagogy should be informed by native speaker models. Monroy (2008), for example, claims that EIL involves the de-prioritization of the classic British-American models and the idea of language ownership, the incorporation of other varieties and standards of English, and the non-rejection of other non-English accents as long as they do not interfere with intelligibility. As an alternative model to the so-called British or American models, Jenkins (2000) argues that a way of speaking English reflecting the linguistic and cultural identities of non-native speakers of English should be adopted. Considering the arguments against the native-speaker model, there seems to be a need to rethink the goals of teaching pronunciation within Jenkins' model. According to the EIL research movement, the goal is to ensure mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers of English, not to help learners to have a native-like accent or to ensure intelligibility to native speakers. Therefore, the term intelligibility and a model describing basic phonological features for EIL intelligibility in designing should be elaborated here.

Intelligibility that is described by Smith and Rafiqzad (1983:61) as "capacity for understanding a word or words when spoken/read in the context of a sentence being spoken/read at natural speed" seems to be an alternative to the native-speaker model. Jenkins' work seems to be the first attempt to describe a much more achievable model in teaching and learning English. These phonological features focus on maintenance of local identity by speakers and mutual intelligibility, especially among non-native speakers, rather than the so-called native speaker models. She argues that certain phonological items have to be kept if non-native speakers wish to remain intelligible among each other. She has two lists of features as lingua franca core (necessary for intelligibility) and non-core (not necessary for

intelligibility). For instance, all the consonants except for 'th' sounds as in 'thin' and 'this' and the contrast between long and short vowels (sit, seat) are under the heading of her lingua franca core while weak forms such as the words 'to', 'of' and 'from' ,word stress and pitch movement are in the non-core list.

The implications of Jenkins' model challenging the traditional goal of pronunciation teaching as native-like accent is that students should be given plenty of exposure in their pronunciation classrooms to other non-native accents of English so that they can understand them easily even if a speaker has not yet managed to acquire the core features. Also, students should be provided with chances to acquire the pronunciation that is more relevant to their linguistic and cultural identities. In the lesson plan at the end of the study, students will listen to how a Japanese, a Spanish and a German speaker of English speak the language.

Cultures of Native-speakers

Teaching culture has always been an important point of discussion among researchers. Deciding on the cultural content of materials and course books has been a much more important area among experts within the framework of EIL. Smith (1976) was one of the first experts who pointed out that if English is an international language used as a tool in cross-cultural situations, there is no reason why the learners of the language should internalize the cultural norms of the native speakers of that language. Similar reflections about the key question of whose culture to teach can also be heard from today's researchers like Alptekin (2002). He points out that in a world where English is taught as a lingua franca whose culture becomes the world itself, students should be exposed to the international culture, not just the native-speaker or the home culture.

Despite most EFL learners' instrumental motivation to learn English as a tool in cross-cultural communication, English course books insists on bombarding the ELT world with culturally-loaded native-speaker themes, such as actors in Hollywood, the history of Coca-Cola, the life of Lady Diana, and what American do on Halloween. Researchers like Prodromou (1988) underlines the issue that most course books include cultural situations that most students will never come across, such as "finding a flat in London, talking to landladies in Bristol, rowing on the river in Cambridge"(p.80). In her book "Teaching English as an International Language", McKay (2002) argues against the idea of teaching the native-speaker culture by claiming that the goal of teaching culture in EIL should be to "help learners develop strategies to achieve friendly relations when English is used with speakers from other

cultures" (p.127) and EIL speakers do not need to "acquire the pragmatic rules of another culture but rather to mutually seek ways to accommodate to diversity" (p.128).

If most of ELT materials and course books still depend mostly on the native-speaker culture and it seems to be a long time for course book writers to develop an EIL-conscious attitude towards cultural content in their books, Seidlhofer (1999) points out that it is the teacher who can adapt texts and books to students' needs. If most students are likely to communicate with non-native speakers and if knowing about one culture will not be enough to interact in cross-cultural encounters, then students should be encouraged to get anawareness of the international culture. This can best be done by encouraging students to reflect on their own culture in relation to others, that is, "establish a sphere of interculturality" (Kramsch, 2001). By giving them the chance to compare cultures, teachers can create students that are more tolerant of the cultural diversity in the world. The activity in the lesson at the end was linked with students' home cultures to establish Kramsch's sphere of intercultuality.

Also, the lesson at the end illustrates the incorporation of different cultural patterns focusing on how the Japanese, Spanish, and German entertain their guests. Their cultural patterns regarding the kind of invitation, the time of day, the preparations that the host or hostess makes, the presents that people take and the food&drinks served make up the main focus of the lesson

Conclusion

It is suggested in the literature above that the native-speaker has lost the battle against the increasing number of non-native speakers and it has become a denationalized language effecting ELT, especially teaching culture and pronunciation. The following lesson plan adapted from New Headway Intermediate (Liz and John Soars,1996, p.42) has the main objective to familiarize students with non-native accents and cultures of non-native speakers of English. Since EIL still seems to be on the theoretical level, it is high time to carry it to our classrooms where English is learned as a tool for intercultural communication mostly with non-native speakers.

Lesson Plan

Topic: Entertaining guests in different cultures   *Level*: Intermediate

Duration: 40 minutes   *Materials*: Tape, whiteboard

Objective: By the end of the lesson the students will be able to speak about how people entertain their guests in different countries including their own.

Enabling Objectives: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to ….
1. list cultural characters of the Japanese, Spanish and German about entertaining guests
2. listen and identify information in listening extracts recorded by a Japanese, a Spanish and a German speaker of English
3. present cultural information describing how guests are entertained in their cultures.

ACTIVITIES

Pre-listening Activities: The teacher asks pairs to brainstorm what they know about Japanese, Spanish and German culture by wiring nouns, phrases, adjectives or even sentences in 5 minutes.

During Listening Activities: The teacher asks students to fill in the chart below while listening. They listen to each speech twice and check their information with their partners at the end by discussing what information they could catch while listening.

	Sumie(Japan)	Rosa(Spain)	Eric(German)
The kind of invitation			
The time of day			
The preparations before guests arrive			
The presents people take			
The food and drink served			

Post-listening Activities: The teacher asks students to compare the information in the chart with similar information about their own cultures by discussing with their partners.

Assignment: Prepare an oral presentation about how you entertain guests in your country. Use a similar format to the ones about Japan, Spain or Germany.

References

Graddol, D. (1999). The Decline of the Native Speaker. In Graddol, D., & Meinhof, U. *English in a Changing World*. *AILA Review 13*, 57-68.

Jenkins, J. (2000). *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: OUP.

McKay, S. (2003). EIL Curriculum Development. *RELC Journal*. 34,1 (2003) 31-47.

Mauranen, A. (2003). The Corpus of English as Lingua Franca in Academic Settings.

TESOL Quarterly 37, 3: 513-527.

Monroy, M. (2008). Speaking English as a Lingua Franca with a Spanish Accent. Desirability vs. Reality ELF Forum 2008. *The First International Conference on English as a Lingua Franca.*

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prodromou, L. (1988). English as Cultural Action. *ELT Journal* 42, 2: 73-83.

Seidlhofer, B. (1999). Double standards: teacher education in the Expanding Circle. *World Englishes, 18*(2), 233-245.

Soars, L. & Soars J. (2003). *New Headway Intermediate Student's Book*, NY Oxford, Oxford University

Smith, L. (1976). English as an international auxiliary language. *RELC Journal*, 7(2), 38-43.

Smith, L. E. and Rafiqzad, K. (1983). English for cross-cultural communication: the question of intelligibility. In L. E. Smith(Ed.), *Readings in English as an International Language* (pp. 59-68). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Transcript

1 Sumie

In my country, Japan, usually we invite guests home at the weekend, in the early evening, about seven o'clock. Before they come, we must tidy the front garden and clean the entrance hall. Then we must spray it all with water to show that we welcome guests with cleanliness. The guests usually bring presents and when they give you the present they say, 'I'm sorry this is such a small present', but in fact they have chosen the present very carefully. When the meal is ready the hostess says, 'We have nothing special for you today but you are welcome to come this way.' You can see that in Japan you should try to be modest and you should not show off too much. If you don't understand our culture you will think this is very strange. When we have foreign guests we try to serve traditional Japanese meals like *sushi*, *tempura*, or *sukiyaki* but when we have Japanese guests, we serve all kinds of food such as spaghetti, Chinese food, or steaks. When guests leave, the host and hostess see them out of the house and wait until their car turns the corner of the street; they wait until they can't see them any more.

2 Rosa

I come from Spain. At home what we love most is going out to eat in bars and restaurants. There is a big choice and we can go from one bar to another trying different things and having a few drinks, usually wine or beer. But sometimes we also like to invite people to our home. I usually invite my friends for an informal meal. I cook Spanish omelette, which is made with potatoes, onions and eggs, fried in olive oil. Then we have things like cheese, ham – Spanish ham is very different from English ham, and if you buy the best, one called *Jabugo* is something delicious, worth trying. And then things like olives, anchovies, mussels. We drink

wine or beer. Some people may bring a bottle of wine or something for pudding. We usually meet late in the evening, about eight thirty or nine. Of course we dress casually; we just want to be relaxed and comfortable and talk and laugh together.

3. Eric

I am from Germany. We like eating together with our family but sometimes we eat out in restaurants. Our meals at home include lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and also exotic dishes from the Mediterranean area. We usually invite our guests to restaurants for an informal dinner or sometimes to our home. When we invite guests, we expect them to stay for the whole evening. Before the guests arrive, we clean the sidewalks, pavements, corridors and steps in the apartment. When they arrive, we escort them to their seats. We serve some of the traditional German food like "wiener schnitzel". It consists of a thin slice of veal coated in breadcrumbs and fried. We do not begin eating until the host starts or someone says "guten appetit". We mostly drink beer and the host raises his glass first so that everybody can start drinking. Guests always bring a small gift such as give books, bourbon, whiskey or classical music. American-made gifts are very valuable. Sometimes, yellow roses or tea roses are also given as presents. We usually dress formally but it really depends who your guest is. Guests send a handwritten thank you note or call the host to thank for the hospitality.