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Regionally Specific Tasks of Non-Western English Language Use

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Abstract

Many English tests based on Western culture are inappropriate for regions where English use differs from that of Europe and North America. In these non-Western settings, it is desirable that English assessments be based on real-world English use. Therefore, identifying tasks of non-Western English language use is a beginning step in developing culturally appropriate English language tests. This cross-cultural sociolinguistic research is part of a larger project involving semi-structured interviews with twenty-nine English teachers from Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, the Arabian Gulf, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, India, Singapore, and the Philippines. In this report three task descriptions of non-Western English language use are identified, categorized by domain, setting, and language skill, based on Baine's (1988) ecological inventory. A confirmation survey was utilized to identify three tasks of non-Western English language use (in home, work, and community domains) that are culturally appropriate for assessment in some non-Western regions. Informants' comments from the interviews address reasons for considering these tasks as culturally inappropriate in other non-Western regions and thus give insight as to how they may be reworded to be appropriate in those regions. "Culturally inappropriate" in this research refers to offensiveness as well as being outside of established sociopragmatic use.

Introduction

This research project was stimulated by my observation that English teaching tests based on aspects of US/UK culture can be unsuitable for classroom/program level English language assessment in non-Western developing countries. When interviewing students in the Arabian Gulf for placement into English classes, I asked a simple question, "Where's a good place to go for lunch?" (Linse, 1995). This question is quite ordinary in North America or Europe, but in the desert summer of the Arabian Gulf, it was a very strange question because many people do not go out at noontime, which is the hottest time of the day. A more appropriate wording would have been "Where is a good place to go to eat?" because people do go out to eat but they do so in the cooler evening hours. Thus, the wording of this question made it inappropriate for placement assessment in this particular region. However, recognizing climate as a crucial factor made it possible to adapt the question to a more culturally appropriate form. "Culturally inappropriate" in this research refers to offensiveness as well as being outside of established sociopragmatic use.

The primary focus of this research is culturally appropriate English language placement assessment in developing countries. An overall goal of language instruction is to enable language learners to use the language being studied in actual communication with people in real-life situations; thus one objective of placement assessment is to evaluate students' English level with regard to their ability in the specific English language use targeted in the curriculum of the specific program where instruction takes place. In order to measure students' ability in regionally appropriate English language use in developing countries, it is first necessary to identify what that language use is, use which may differ among various non-Western regions.

This article reports one aspect of a much larger project investigating non-Western English language use, and the focus here is on:

1. Identifying descriptions of three *tasks* (instances of real life communication involving the use of English in home, work, and community domains) representative of this research that were considered appropriate for English assessment by some of the informants; and then
2. Discovering why these three tasks were deemed inappropriate in the view of the majority of the informants (29 English teachers from the Phillipines, India, Singapore, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Arabian Gulf, Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan). "Tasks" will be explained more fully below. Analysis reveals cultural differences that explain why these three tasks are considered appropriate in some regions yet inappropriate in others, and suggests ways of rewording the task descriptions that would make them appropriate and thus suitable for English assessment in other regions. Such adaptation of test content is often necessary for teachers of English as a foreign language in non-Western regions whose use of English differs from that of North American and Europe.

Language Testing

In language assessment, particular language tests are designed for particular purposes (i.e., proficiency, diagnosis, placement, and progress), and if applied to other purposes, may result in inappropriate evaluations of students' language ability (Alderson, Krahnke, & Stansfield, 1987; Messick, 1996). Tests have specific uses, and classroom tests can be used to evaluate specific curricula (Brown, 2004). Gronlund (1998) says that validity is "the extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment" (p. 226). Language proficiency tests and diagnostic tests are not specific to any one curriculum, but on the other hand, progress assessments should evaluate students' ability to implement the language knowledge and skills that they have learned through their studies in a particular course, and placement assessment seeks to determine the level of students' knowledge/skill with reference to placement within a particular curriculum (Brown, 2004). With respect to assessment to place students into a specific curriculum, test content needs to be based on the material presented in the curriculum, which in turn should be based upon real-world tasks of English language use. Bailey (1998) says, "Since the purpose of a placement test is to assign students to particular levels of a program, then it makes sense that the content of the test should be related to the curricula of those levels" (p. 38).

Thus, the purposes of program level placement tests in non-Western developing countries differ from those of high-stakes international tests (such as the Test of English for International Communication - TOEIC or International English Language Testing System -- IELTS), which evaluate general English language proficiency. But often such general proficiency tests are used

for placement purposes in developing countries simply because they are readily available and have high face validity (Brown, 2004). This practice can be a problem because these standardized tests are not meant to evaluate specific curricular content (Cronbach, 1990). In fact, they are designed to lessen cultural bias by removing explicit cultural references - references that are the regional uses of English that the language learners in particular regions do in fact need to know.

Educational Testing Service and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the developers of two widely used, high stakes tests (the TOEIC and IELTS), have taken considerable measures to exclude content that could be offensive or highly inappropriate for test takers world-wide who are from extremely diverse cultural backgrounds. Green and Jay (2005), in discussing quality control for IELTS content, explain efforts "to ensure that all material is culturally appropriate and accessible world-wide" (Quality Control 1, Section, 2). The *TOEIC Technical Manual* (n.d.) states "every effort is made to ensure that the test is unbiased and culturally relevant to our many candidates worldwide" (Section II, p. 1). Also, the Association of Language Testers in Europe (2005) recommends avoiding cultural bias in choosing texts for assessment, citing problematic materials such as local newspapers, or texts referring to war, death, politics, or religion (p. 55).

Despite increased awareness of issues of culturally inappropriate content in English materials, culturally inappropriate content is still a problem. (See Canagarajah, 1999; Gray, 2000; Holliday, 1994; McKay, 2002; Modiano, 2001; "Paperback Writer," 2006; Phillipson, 1992; Zaid, 1999). While it can be argued that inappropriate use of tests is the responsibility of the users (Messick, 1996), that is, ministries of education and/or school administrators, test users in developing countries may have few options when the only tests available are designed for other contexts.

Yet by eliminating problematic culturally explicit content (a practice appropriate for large-scale international tests), the ability to evaluate accurately real-world English language use in specific regions is lessened. Invalid testing due to cultural differences between test maker and test taker is a form of test bias, known as cultural bias (Anastasi, 1976). In language assessment, Bachman and Palmer (1996) consider the effect of cultural bias in second/foreign language testing, including assessing cultural bias as part of evaluation of the test's usefulness. They note the possibility of decreased reliability in the sense that test takers would not be able to perform to the best of their ability as would be possible for them in their own cultural setting, and the consequently different test results would be a manifestation of the testing procedure instead of the students' ability (Messick, 1996). Palomba and Banta (1999) point out that test "data are unreliable to the extent that score variance is due to measurement error" (p. 88). If measurement error were to result from cultural bias, it would decrease test reliability.

In addition to affecting reliability in assessment, cultural bias impacts construct validity. In other words, a test does not actually measure the construct that it was designed to evaluate (Messick, 1996) if it is distorted by cultural bias. Culturally biased test content is a threat to validity (Anastasi, 1976) through construct under-representation or construct-irrelevant variance (Messick, 1989, 1996), meaning that the attribute in question is not being fully evaluated and that factors unrelated to that attribute may affect the outcome of the evaluation. If a developing nation's department of education desires its citizens to learn English as a lingua franca within the national sociocultural context, yet language assessment is based on Western sociocultural norms, then questions of construct underrepresentation and construct-irrelevant variance in the assessment may legitimately be raised.

Real World English Language Use in Non-Western Regions

If we are to measure real-world uses of English in non-Western regions, we need to know how English is used in such communities. Bachman and Palmer (1996) say, "In order for a particular language test to be useful for its intended purposes, test performance must correspond in demonstrable ways to language use in non-test situations" (p. 9), in this case, non-Western English use in developing nations, that is, in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Research into non-Western English language use reveals diverse needs among different regions of the world. Kharma (1998) mentions social and educational needs of English learners in the Arabian Gulf countries in international communication (business, diplomacy, and travel; air traffic control; science and technology; and books and entertainment). In Asia, Indonesian uses of English are identified by Winter, Inkiriwang, and Senduk (1996) as including university studies and tests, employment, entertainment, interaction with English-speaking people, and overseas travel. Not only is English used in international business with native-English speakers, but it is also used in many non-Western countries as a lingua franca for local communication needs (Kachru, 1992), as in India and the Philippines. Other non-Western uses of English are seen in countries with large expatriate populations that use English as the language of communication, such as in the Arabian Gulf, or when people from nations with several regional languages may use English as an intranational language to communicate with others from their own country, as in India (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004) and the Philippines (Lowenberg, 1992). Often the English used in these non-Western settings, by necessity, is different from the English of the USA, UK, or Canada (Crystal, 2005).

Real World Language Use, Language Instruction, and Language Assessment

Recognizing the importance of correspondence between target language use, instruction, and assessment is an important step in finding a solution to the problem of inappropriate language instruction and testing, particularly when it stems from sociocultural bias from the use of Western tests in non-Western regions. Bachman and Palmer (1996) state that testers want to "make inferences about test takers' ability to use language in a target language use domain ... a set of specific use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside of the test itself" (p. 44). Brown (2004) and Bailey (1998), among other assessment experts, suggest that placement test content be based upon the instructional content of the curriculum into which students are to be placed. Thus we see in task-based assessment a three-fold relationship between tasks of real-world English language use, tasks for English instruction, and tasks for English language placement (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Bachman, 2002). Figure 1, The Connecting Point between Teachers, Testers, and Learners, illustrates the centrality of real-world English language use tasks to language instruction and assessment.

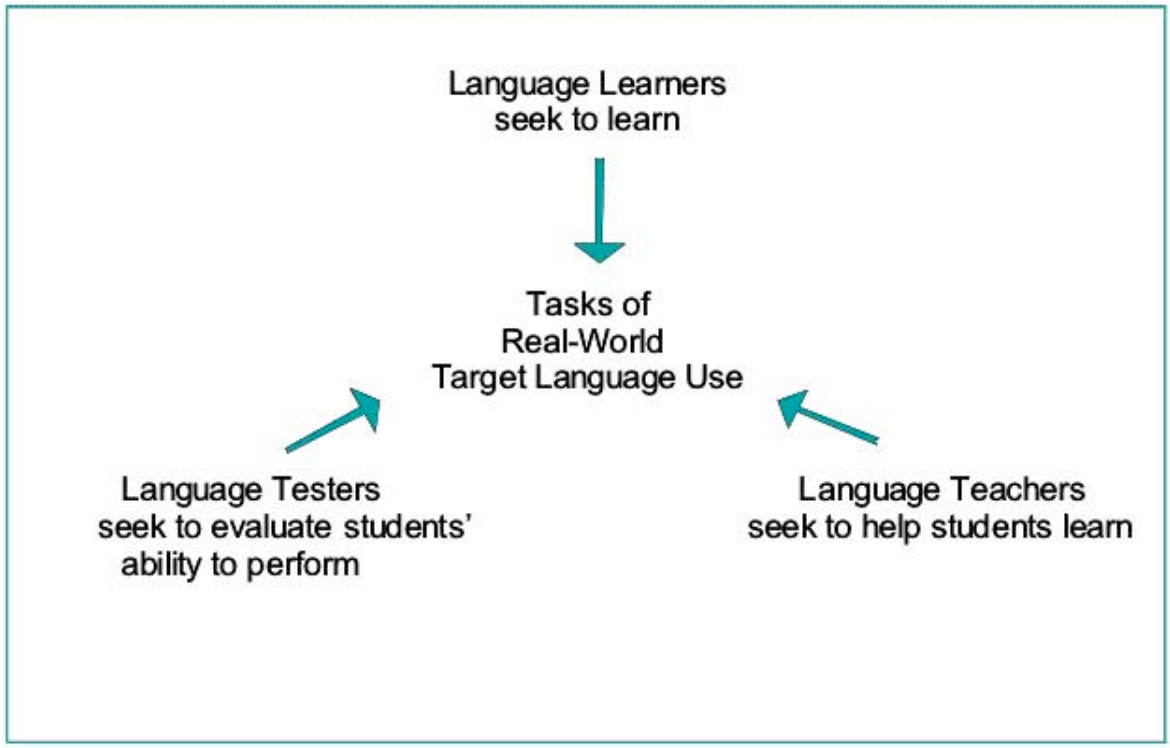

Figure 1. The Connecting Point between Teachers, Testers, and Learners

In developing countries, there is a need for culturally appropriate tests of real world non-Western English language use to place students into language programs which are seeking to instruct them in the English that they need in their specific region. If the purpose of language assessment is to measure the practical language ability of students in real-life settings, then language assessment must correspond to tasks of target language use in authentic contexts. Assessment based on such real-world use of English language use has the advantage of being culturally specific, thus removing culturally inappropriate content.

Brown, Hudson, Norris and Bonk (2002) suggest that, although there are challenges yet to be overcome, task-based language performance assessment offers a considerable advantage in evaluating test takers' ability to use the target language (i.e., English) in real-world communication. Such task-based language performance assessment would be based on needs analysis of daily tasks in real-world settings that require the use of English in actual communication. Once tasks of real-world English language use are identified, test items can be developed for placement testing. But first it is necessary to identify how the target language is used in daily life (i.e., what are tasks of non-Western English).

Tasks

Various writers have defined task differently (i.e., Crookes, 1986; Long, 1985; Nunan, 1989; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996), and in this report, "task" focuses on authentic language use tasks accomplishing a real-world goal. In developing placement tests, language teachers and school administrators ultimately want to know if their students are able to use the target language in real-life communication (which ideally are addressed by the curriculum). Referring to tasks to be used in language assessment, Bachman (2002) says, "Task specifications

constitute the definition of the content domain to which our assessment-based inferences about ability extrapolate or the domain of real-life tasks which we want to predict" (p. 459).

Such tasks can be identified through sociolinguistic research investigating how language is used in social interaction. Specifically, this research investigates task descriptions of non-Western English language use, utilizing Bachman and Palmer's (1996) definition: "an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation" (p. 44). In particular, this project identifies three tasks of non-Western English language use that are culturally appropriate in some regions but inappropriate in others. The resulting task descriptions are the informants' accounts of regionally specific uses of English explained in their own words.

A Needs Analysis Instrument for Developing Countries

Baine (1988), in the field of special education, observed the same problem of Western-designed tests being culturally inappropriate and irrelevant for use in developing countries. He describes his ecological inventory as a needs analysis instrument that he specifically designed for use in developing countries. This ecological inventory surveys activities of daily life in home, work, school, and community domains (see Appendix A, General Interview Content). Baine proposed using this inventory to identify tasks for instruction and assessment to address special education needs in developing regions. Tasks identified using the inventory are then to be used to develop criterion-referenced tests appropriate for specific regions to evaluate students' ability to carry out the targeted daily life activities. Although Baine's inventory is designed for special education purposes, it provides an excellent instrument for sociolinguistic research into tasks of non-Western English language use.

Research Questions

Research Question #1 seeks to discover three tasks that are considered inappropriate by the majority of informants yet which are deemed appropriate by some of the informants, specifically:

1. What are three tasks of non-Western English language use (in home, work, and community domains) that were rated as culturally appropriate/somewhat appropriate for assessment in by informants from some non-Western regions but were rated as inappropriate by the majority of the informants?

The wording of a test task makes a difference in its effectiveness in assessment for many reasons, but pertinent to this research is that wording reflecting cultural bias can decrease the task's validity. Thus it is helpful to know why a test task is inappropriate in specific regions, so that appropriate changes can be made if or when that task is to be used in other regions, changes that are often required to adapt content for use in testing English as a foreign language in non-Western regions. Therefore, Research Question #2 addresses the issue of why these three tasks were rated as culturally inappropriate by the majority of the informants, specifically:

2. What are factors that could cause these three tasks to be culturally inappropriate in some non-Western regions?

Method

This research project utilized a reiterative process that gathered data in two phases: (1) semi-structured interviews with the 29 informants, resulting in a data base of task descriptions of non-Western English language use; and (2) a confirmation survey, based on the collective task descriptions, which gave the informants the opportunity to evaluate each other's task descriptions for appropriateness in their home regions.

Methodology of the Interviews

Time, place, and setting. This research took place in three different countries in the Arabian Gulf region from August, 2002 to January, 2004. The Arabian Gulf region was chosen because, in this non-Western setting, there are people of many different nationalities working and living there with their families, and thus their children attend their respective national schools (which employ English teachers). This factor made it relatively easy to locate English teachers from 10 different non-Western countries in one non-Western location.

The informants. Participating in this research were 29 English teachers from 10 different countries who provided information about the use of English in their home regions (English teachers were chosen because of their professional awareness of language use.). There were 3 men and 26 women. Two of the men were from Sudan (Sudan 1 and 2), and the third was from the Philippines (Philippines 3). The women were Sudan 3, 4, and 5; Uganda/Kenya 1; Arabian Gulf 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12; Jordan 1, Lebanon 1, Palestine 1, India 1, 2, 3, 4, and India 5/Singapore; and Philippines 1 and 2. Uganda/Kenya 1 lived in both Uganda and Kenya, and so she spoke about both countries, as did India 5/Singapore. The Filipino, Jordanian, and Ugandan/Kenyan informants were Christians; and the Sudanese, Arabian Gulf, Lebanese, and Palestinian informants, and two of the Indian informants (India 2 and 4) were Muslim. The remaining three Indian informants (India 1, 3 and India 5/Singapore) were Hindu. All of the informants taught English in their national schools, at either elementary, middle or secondary levels, or in private colleges.

Contacting the informants. Obtaining permission from gatekeepers (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984) was the first step in contacting the informants. It was necessary to meet with and obtain approval from school principals, English department heads, and ministry of education officials before I could contact the English teachers. Locating informants was most effective through personal referrals, which is typical of any successful business connection in the Arabian Gulf. For example, I was introduced to a teacher at the Indian school who introduced me to the principal who introduced me to the vice-principal who introduced me to the English department chair who explained my project to the English teachers and asked if any would like to participate. Five teachers from the Indian school agreed to participate. Similar scenarios occurred in contacting the other informants.

Interviewing the informants. Once I explained the purpose of the research and obtained the informants' consent, I began interviewing the teachers, following Baine's (1988) ecological inventory, a needs analysis tool used in special education to identify tasks of daily life for development of culturally appropriate instructional materials and assessment instruments in developing countries (see Appendix A). I used Baine's inventory to identify tasks of English (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in home, work, school, and community domains. The semi-structured interviews ranged from 30 to 180 minutes. There were two group interviews (with Arabian Gulf 2 - 6 and Arabian Gulf 7 - 11) instead of individual interviews with these

informants. In the individual and group interviews the informants described non-Western English language use in their respective regions.

Results of the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo (QSR International Pty. Ltd., 2003-2006) qualitative research software, I identified all of the informants' task descriptions and categorized them by language skill, domain, and setting. NVivo qualitative research software creates a hierarchy of categories that can be applied to any documents, such as interview transcripts and field notes. Categorization of the task descriptions followed Baine's (1988) ecological inventory categories. To promote internal consistency, categorization of the task descriptions was reviewed by three outside observers. The tasks in each domain were grouped by language skill (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and then further categorized according to similar settings. For example, in the community domain, Baine's suggested settings included transportation (local and long distance), shopping, business establishments, service establishments, community assemblies, health care, public gatherings, schools, worship areas, recreation areas, social interaction, emergency situations, and communication centers. In analyzing and coding the interview transcripts I identified tasks that involved the same setting.

For example, some informants described six tasks in the community domain of reading in the transportation setting. Thus these six tasks were categorized as Community (domain) - Reading (language skill) - Transportation (setting).Tasks categorized under this were:

- the number which is given in the local buses, in one particular city, or it could go from one city to other city
- booking for tickets, airplane, train tickets, bus tickets
- seating arrangement, the bus
- reservations
- number of gate
- buying magazines while they are riding a bus.

Once all of the task descriptions were coded by domain, language skill, and setting, I grouped them into the appropriate categories, thus creating a data base of 1,042 task descriptions of non-Western English language use (see Appendix B for a sample page). The resulting data base of task descriptions of non-Western English language use provided the answer to part of Research Question #1.

Development and administration of the confirmation survey. The data base of the informants' task descriptions of non-Western English language use then became the basis for the confirmation survey, which was used as a member check (Schwandt, 2001), giving the informants an opportunity to respond to their own task descriptions as well as to evaluate all of the collected task descriptions for cultural appropriateness in their home regions. In order to have the informants rate the task descriptions as either appropriate or inappropriate while at the same giving them some leeway in indicating degrees of appropriateness, I used an ordered category scale (Dunn-Rankin & Zhang, 1997) with four categories: culturally appropriate, somewhat appropriate, somewhat inappropriate, and very inappropriate. For example, taking the Community-Reading-Transportation section described above, the four rating categories are added, resulting in the format used in the confirmation survey. See Table 1 below:

Table 1

Sample Confirmation Survey

Community-reading-transportation	Culturally appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate
The number which is given in the local buses, in one particular city, or it could go from one city to other city				
Booking for tickets, airplane, train tickets, bus tickets				
Seating arrangement, the bus				
Reservation				
Number of gate				
People buy magazines while they are riding a bus.				

Once the informants had completed the confirmation surveys, their ratings for each task were recorded and analyzed. In many cases, informants indicated on the confirmation survey that some tasks were appropriate for English assessment in their home regions, yet they had not listed those tasks in their individual interviews. In effect, the confirmation survey created a brainstorming opportunity for all of the informants, as well as giving them opportunity to indicate which tasks were appropriate/inappropriate in their home regions.

Results and Discussion

Addressing Research Question #1, I present here three tasks (in the home, work, and community domains) that were deemed to be appropriate in one or more regions yet were rated as inappropriate by the majority (more than half) of the informants. These three tasks illustrate issues of cultural appropriateness that would need to be addressed if they were to be used for English assessment in other non-Western regions, an issue raised by Research Question #2.

Each task is categorized by domain, language skill, and setting. They are listed here as described in the informants' own words (mistakes included). See Table 2 below:

Table 2

Tasks Selected for Analysis in This Study

- Task 1 -- Home-Writing-Food Preparation: "I make all recipes in English."
- Task 2 -- Work-Speaking-Tourism: "Girl Relation Officer. They are the ones entertaining the American men [in] nightclubs."
- Task 3 -- Community-Speaking-Public Assemblies: "If there is an upcoming elections, there will be these campaigns, so these politicians sometimes speak in English."

Task 1: "I make all recipes in English." This task was initially described by one of the Arabian Gulf informants who was referring to working with a domestic servant in food preparation, but it was also considered appropriate by 11 other informants (from India, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Uganda/Kenya and the Arabian Gulf. However, 13 informants (from Sudan, India, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Arabian Gulf) considered Task 1 inappropriate for English assessment in their home regions. See Table 3 below:

Table 3

Informants Who Rated Task 1 Culturally Appropriate/Somewhat Appropriate

- Sudan 1,
- India 2, 4, 5
- Palestine 1
- Philippines 1, 2, 3,
- Uganda/Kenya 1
- Lebanon 1
- Arabian Gulf 2, 11

Informants Who Rated Task 1 Somewhat Inappropriate/Very Inappropriate

- Sudan 2, 4, 5
- India 1, 3
- Jordan 1
- Arabian Gulf 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,10, 12

These results indicate that the task of having domestic servants write all recipes in English, as described here, would be problematic for English assessment in some non-Western regions while appropriate in others. One issue raised by the informants was socioeconomic. In the Arabian Gulf,

household servants are often from India and the Philippines, countries where English is widely spoken but Arabic is not. In fact, some of the Arabian Gulf informants mentioned that they specifically hire English-speaking servants so that their children will have greater exposure to English. In such instances, the cook/maid would only know English and would have to read/write recipes in English. Arabian Gulf 2-6 said, "Remember we usually choose educated maids, housemaids, for this work, to communicate in English." In contrast, Philippines 3 explained that domestic servants in the Philippines were mostly uneducated and did not know English. In the wealthy petroleum-producing countries of the Arabian Gulf, the local population hires educated, English-speaking domestic servants from other countries. However, in a country such as the Philippines, domestic servants are local people who have less education. Clearly, this socioeconomic difference would make writing recipes in English culturally inappropriate in some regions. One way to make this task of writing recipes more appropriate in various regions is simply to remove the reference to domestic servants. Several informants mentioned that they used English cookbooks, which could be the basis for tasks of non-Western English language use totally separate from interaction with domestic servants. A more universal wording of this task's description could include "write recipes from cookbooks in English," i.e., as if to give to a friend or relative.

Task 2: "Girl Relation Officer. They are the ones entertaining the American men [in] nightclubs." This task in the work domain was originally described by Philippines 2, and it was the task that received the greatest number of negative evaluations (19) of all of the task descriptions. (See Table 4.)

Table 4

Informants Who Rated Task 2 Culturally Appropriate/Somewhat Appropriate

- India 3, 4, 5
- Arabian Gulf 2
- Philippines 2
- Sudan 1

Informants Who Rated Task 2 Somewhat Inappropriate/Very Inappropriate

- India 1, 2
- Sudan 4, 5
- Arabian Gulf 3-7, 10-12
- Philippines 1
- Uganda/Kenya 1
- Jordan 1
- Palestine 1
- Lebanon 1

In the confirmation survey this task received comments such as "Grr" and frowning faces written next to it by some of the Arabian Gulf informants, indicating strong disapproval of this task, very likely because of its violation of conservative moral values. Informants responding negatively to Task 2 were Muslim (India 2, Sudan 4 & 5, Arabian Gulf 3-7, 10 & 12, Palestine 1, Lebanon 1), Christian (Philippines 1, Uganda/Kenya 1, Jordan 1) and Hindu (India 1). Even Philippines 2, who described this use of English in her interview, did not like the fact that young Filipino girls worked in nightclubs entertaining American soldiers. She said, "We would teach them to speak the English language but not how they work. Of course we do not want them to be GRO. It is not a noble profession." But their use of conversational English in nightclubs was a reality, and they did in fact need to learn how to use it in such a setting. As such it was a real-world use of English that was deemed appropriate for English instruction and assessment by some of the informants but not by others. Changing this task to one appropriate in other regions would necessitate removing the reference to nightclubs and focusing instead on social conversation in initial encounters between strangers. Less culturally offensive settings for such conversation include business negotiations, social gatherings for business purposes, traveling, visiting, etc. Adaptation of this task's description could include wording such as "getting to know new business contacts," "entertaining business clients," " talking to someone on an airplane," or "meeting a friend's family from another country."

Task 3: "If there is an upcoming elections, there will be these campaigns, so these politicians sometimes speak in English." This task in a public speaking setting in the community domain was referring to political speeches during elections and was initially described by Philippines 3. This task was viewed as appropriate by 8 informants but inappropriate by 15 informants. See Table 5 below:

Table 5

Informants Who Rated Task 3 Culturally Appropriate/Somewhat Appropriate

- Sudan 1
- India 2 & 4
- Philippines 1, 2, 3
- Arabian Gulf 2 & 3

Informants Who Rated Task 3 Somewhat Inappropriate/Very Inappropriate

- Sudan 2
- India 1,3, 5
- Lebanon 1
- Arabian Gulf 4, 5, 6, 7,10, 11, 12
- Palestine 1
- Uganda/Kenya 1
- Jordan 1

Analysis of this task and the regions where it was considered appropriate points to the issue of the role of English in politics, which is related to government language policy. In the Philippines, India, Uganda, Kenya, and Singapore, English has status as some kind of official language (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003), and the informants from these regions reported that English is often used in government communication. On the other hand, the informants from Arab countries (Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Arabian Gulf) said that the official language in their countries was Arabic, which is used in national government communication, an observation also made by *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2003). Philippines 1 commented on the importance of demonstration of English ability for national politicians, saying that "[the people] will think, 'Oh, our international means of communication is the universal languageÉ is English É so how can we vote for them if they do not know how to speak or write in English or read in English?'"

But in other regions language identity was an issue. Edwards (2004) mentions "the power association between language and nationalism," and says that because nationalism "is, among other things, a pronounced and often mobilizing sense of groupness, it follows that any language component will be carefully delineated" (p. 28). For some of these multilingual informants, particularly in intranational political communication, group identification was crucial, and choice of language was an indication of group identification. India 5, who rated Task 3 as inappropriate, said that government forms would use English in southern India, but she emphasized the importance of the Tamil language in her state in India, viewing it as a way to assert Tamil identity in opposition to the dominance of Hindi. Uganda/Kenya 1, who also rated Task 3 as inappropriate, said that in Kenya "even those who speak Swahili, they will do their paperwork in English." But in terms of public speaking, she said, "you go by your audience. If most of them are Swahili-speaking, then you speak Swahili, because those who speak English, they know Swahili." Lebanon 1 said that even though her country is multilingual (Arabic, English, French, and Armenian), it is an Arabic country, and she emphasized the importance of Arabic identity. For these informants, language identity was more important than official government language policy, and for India 5 and Uganda/Kenya 1 the official language did not automatically determine the choice of language in political campaign speeches.

One way to make this task of political speeches appropriate in more regions is to change the setting from speaking to local people to addressing a multinational audience where English would be the common language, either intranationally or internationally. Such a focus could make the use of English in speeches a real-world use of English appropriate in many non-Western regions. Adjusting this task to be appropriate in other regions could result in wording such as "make speeches to an international audience" or "make speeches for the international news media."

Conclusion

In researching task descriptions of non-Western English language use appropriate for specific regions in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, this research identified three task descriptions that were considered appropriate in some regions but were deemed inappropriate by informants from other regions because of differences in socioeconomic status, social values, politics/language identity. These findings indicate that these culturally specific tasks need to be evaluated for cultural appropriateness in non-Western regions where they might be considered for English assessment. Appropriate rewording of culturally inappropriate task descriptions can make them appropriate for a greater number of non-Western regions, yet still maintain the specificity needed for evaluation of real-world English language use in specific regions. As Gray (2000) points out,

English teachers need to be aware of local community culture in selecting and/or redesigning the content of classroom instruction and assessment material.

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Appendix A

General Interview Content

Demographic information: Name, position, nationality, living situation in native country, English teaching experience.

What are English use tasks in each person's country? What settings are they used in (i.e., school, community, work)? What are English reading, writing, and/or speaking/listening tasks in each person's country?

Suggested areas for tasks in a home setting include the following:

- In personal areas?
- In food preparation?
- In food production?
- In obtaining and/or storing water?
- In dining?
- In sleeping?
- In taking care of animals?
- In family activities?
- In family worship activities?
- In studying at home?

Suggested areas for tasks in a community setting include the following:

- In transportation (local and long-distance)?
- In shopping?
- In business establishments?
- In service establishments?
- In community assemblies?
- In health care establishments?
- In public gathering places?
- In schools?
- In worship areas?
- In areas of recreation?
- In social interaction?
- In emergency situations?
- In communication centers?

Suggested areas for tasks in work settings include the following.

- Agriculture?
- Crafts production?
- Skilled trades?
- Market centers?

Suggested areas for tasks in a school setting include the following.

- In the classroom?
- Academic subjects?
- Academic activities?

- In the offices?
- In assemblies?
- In play areas?
- In job training?

(Based on Baine, 1988.)

Appendix B

Page 1 from the Data Base of Task Descriptions of Non-Western English Language Use

Home-reading	
Home-personal	
	read books
	the abridged versions of Gulliver's Travels, and Jason and the Golden Fleece
	all instruction books on space travel
	all my comic books
	my story books
	short novels
read magazines	
	about pop stars, about lives of actors and actress and singers
	the satellite one, programs
	the tourist guides
	the Friday magazine, which comes with Khaleej Times
	Woman
daily newspapers	
the Internet website, surfing the Internet	
Home	
	Food recipes
Home-studying	
	story books
	recognition of words and colors, foods
	the school books that they give us
	women's magazines
	Reader's Digest
	English pocket books
	If they are in KG, they do reading all the alphabet, foods, numbers.
	They just go home and read the story.
	work in the dictionaries
	reading aloud
Home-instructions	
	With washing machines, the catalogue, the manual, is in

	English, so we have to read to know how to operate the machine.
	medicine
	cameras
	prescriptions
	make-up
Home-servants	
	Sometimes they leave notes in writing next to the phone.
	They get phone messages in English, and they give it to me in English, too.

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