

INTRODUCTION

Today in classrooms around the world young people and adults are involved in the study of English. Indeed this interest in the learning of English has increased to such an extent that English is now considered by many to be an international language. The central argument of this book is that the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second or foreign language. The purpose of this book is to clarify these assumptions and advocate that they be considered in the design of English as an international language (EIL) teaching methods and materials.

There are a variety of factors that warrant a book that thoroughly examines the implications of the teaching and learning of EIL. These factors arise from three sources: the character of current users of EIL, the changes that have accompanied the spread of English, and the relationship that exists between culture and an international language.

Whereas today there are more native than non-native speakers of English, in the coming decades, more and more users of EIL will be bilingual speakers of English who use English for a variety of specific purposes, often for cross-cultural communication. Some of these bilingual speakers will use English on a daily basis within their own country, at times for cross-cultural communication within their own borders. Others will have more restricted purposes in using English, often for accessing and sharing information. Given the great diversity of users of EIL, it is imperative we examine what goals and approaches in English language teaching (ELT) are appropriate for these various kinds of EIL users.

A second impetus for this exploration of the teaching of EIL comes from current changes in the language. The use of English as an international language has been brought about by the continuing spread of English. This spread has resulted in a variety of changes in English on grammatical, lexical, and phonological levels. Some contend that such changes will eventually lead to the varieties of English spoken today becoming mutually unintelligible. Hence, it is important to examine what kinds of changes are occurring in the use of English today and how these changes may affect intelligibility.

Finally, to be considered an international language, a language cannot be linked to any one country or culture; rather it must belong to those who use it. Hence, the typical relationship that exists between culture and

language needs to be re-examined. This relationship needs to be examined with reference to three areas of language learning and teaching: the teaching of discourse competence, the use of cultural materials in the classroom, and the cultural assumptions that inform teaching methods. To the extent that appropriateness of language use is based on culturally influenced rules of discourse, the question of whose discourse rules to apply in the use of EIL will be problematic. Should those who use EIL be asked to acquire native speakers' standards of discourse use in both spoken and written interactions, or should they employ standards of appropriateness consistent with their own culture? The link between language and culture also has important implications for the choice of teaching materials. Currently, many ELT materials use cultural topics related to native English-speaking countries on the grounds that learning English should entail knowledge of native English-speaking cultures. Is such an approach appropriate in the teaching of an international language? Finally, to the extent that prevalent English teaching methodologies reflect the culture of learning of western English-speaking countries, if English is approached as an international language, whose culture of learning should be used? These are some of the central issues that arise in the teaching and learning of EIL and are examined in this text.

The book begins by defining the essential characteristics of an international language. The opening chapter, 'English as an international language', explores why English has developed as an international language, what factors might impede the continued spread of English, and what dangers are involved in the development of an international language. The chapter also includes current demographics regarding the number of English language users. These figures clearly demonstrate that in this century the number of bilingual users of English will far surpass the number of native speakers.

Chapter 2, 'Bilingual users of English', explores the pedagogical and research implications of the growing number of bilingual users of English. The chapter begins by examining the various meanings of the term 'native speaker' and argues that, given the difficulty of defining the term, native speaker competence should not be used as a standard in language learning and pedagogy. The chapter then describes various types of bilingual users of English and outlines some of the research that is needed to arrive at a fuller understanding of present-day bilingual users of EIL. I argue that to be productive this research cannot be based on native speaker models. The chapter ends by discussing the important role that bilingual teachers of English have in the teaching of EIL and points out the negative effects of using a native speaker model to assess such teachers.

Chapter 3, 'Standards for English as an international language', grapples with the complex issue of what standards should be promoted in the

teaching of EIL on both a structural and discourse level. The first section of the chapter discusses the notion of standards in relation to EIL. Next, the chapter explores lexical innovation in specific varieties of English, noting how a good deal of this innovation has been accepted as a consequence of language change. This acceptance is contrasted with the debate that surrounds the issue of grammatical and phonological standards in the teaching of EIL. Finally, the chapter questions the use of native speaker models in the teaching of discourse competence in the use of EIL.

Chapter 4, 'Culture in teaching English as an international language', opens with a discussion of the relationship between language learning and culture and examines various rationales for giving attention to culture in language teaching. The chapter then delineates three primary sources of content for language teaching materials—cultural content from English-speaking countries, local cultural content, and international cultural content. Next the chapter explores the advantages and disadvantages of each type of content for the teaching of an international language and argues for a reflective approach to cultural content in EIL classes. The chapter ends with an examination of the cultural basis of discourse communities.

Chapter 5, 'Teaching methods and English as an international language', begins with a discussion of the concept of a culture of learning and challenges some of the generalizations made regarding so-called eastern and western cultures of learning. This is followed by an assessment of the appropriateness of a communicative language teaching (CLT) method for the teaching of EIL. The chapter ends by emphasizing the need to implement methods that are consistent with the local culture of learning.

Each chapter in the book ends with a list of suggested reading that provides the reader with sources for additional information on specific topics introduced in the chapter. There is also a glossary at the end of the book, containing terms that are central to an understanding of English as an international language.

This book is addressed to those who teach or will be teaching English to individuals who are learning the language alongside one or more other languages they speak to communicate with those from another culture and to participate in a growing global community. Because the book examines the assumptions that are involved in teaching an international language it will also be useful to individuals in English language curriculum and materials development and to those involved in English language acquisition research.