

**PRIMARY SOCIALIZATION AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING: WENDING OUR WAY THROUGH
SEMI-CHARTED TERRITORY**

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Introduction

Our attitude towards what we listen to is determined by our habits. We expect things to be said in the way in which we are accustomed to talk ourselves: things that are said some other way do not seem the same at all but seem rather incomprehensible.... thus, one needs already to be have been educated in the way to approach each subject.

Aristotle, Book II, *Metaphysics*. (cited in Scribner, 1979)

Differences in ways in which students from non-western backgrounds approach the task of second language learning, particularly ESL/EFL, have been discussed by a number of writers: Osterloh (1980), Maley (1983, 1984), Matalene (1985), Ramirez (1986), Bassino (1986), Reid (1987), Hinds (1987), Willett (1987), Riley (1988), Tinkham (1989), Burnaby and Yilin (1989), Kumaravadivelu (1991), Scollon (1991), Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1991), Oxford, Hollaway and Horton-Murillo (1992), and Xia Wang (1994). Discussions in literature on learning generally have dealt with the thinking and/or problem-solving processes of non-western and pre-literate cultures (Gladwin, 1964; Cole and Bruner, 1971; Scribner, 1979), the participant structures in societies and in schools (Erikson and Mohatt, 1982; Jordan, 1995; Lipka, 1991), the disjuncture for some between the world of primary socialization and the world of schooling (Phelan, David and Hanh, 1991; Heath, 1982; Au and Jordan, 1981; Au, 1993).

This paper explores the relationships between certain cultural factors related to language use, and attitudes at both micro (classroom) and macro (society) levels and their possible impact

upon ESL learning. Although the primary focus is on ESL learning, the discussion of attitudes at the macrolevel inevitably encompasses academic learning generally. Pedagogical implications will be exemplified with cases of successful incorporation of the understandings and behaviors that learners bring with them to classroom programs and practices. It will also describe how these understandings can be put into effect in the provision of programs that enhance students' chances of academic success. A research agenda is also suggested in order to answer questions of the type that Riley (1988, p. 29) has posed, whether "[cultural variation] is ... important enough to merit taking consideration, or should we bypass it and go straight on to individual variation?"

The difficulties in discussing cultural factors in ESL learning and attitudes globally are that statements relevant in one or more contexts of learning may not be relevant in some other contexts. It is generally believed that most children learning a SL have not developed an attitude - positive or negative - toward the target language (TL) or the TL people (Macnamara, 1973; Genesee and Hamayan, 1980), but the converse is generally true for older learners, especially at the beginning stages of SL learning (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). It must also be acknowledged that within any one cultural group there is variation in behavior, including learning behavior. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern certain patterns of behavior, or primary tendencies, within a cultural or sub-cultural group that permit one to address learners as a group, a point also emphasized by Bennett (1995). This is sometimes regarded as 'stereotyping' and an argument may be dismissed by invoking this word. Behaviors of a particular group of people need to be viewed as a set of data that indicates a primary tendency, the hump on a curve, if you will, with lots of variation on either side of it.

There are many factors that impinge upon second language learning (see, for example, Schumann, 1978; Stern, 1983; Gardner, 1988; Spolsky, 1989). This paper looks at the social context of learning but within that context limits itself to cultural factors and the power relationships that exist in any one social group (microlevel) and the power relationships that exist between a group and another group, usually more dominant (the macrolevel). The discussion of cultural factors in ESL learning focuses on 'language use', that is, the way a group uses language to enact social relationships, enter into exchanges, and to construct reality. Primary socialization enculturates members of a particular group into language use so that some uses and some attitudes to types of language are more salient in their everyday life. This paper will consider how language is used in writing, ways in which texts are used as well as what constitutes legitimate reading in a culture, and the ways in which oral interactions are structured and the purposes they achieve. It reviews research that suggests that these diverse functions of language are dependent upon the investment of legitimacy conferred upon them by the society.

The discussion on attitudes will dwell upon actions that people take in their lives, either at the level of specific interactions in particular contexts (e.g. in classrooms or other contexts of learning - microlevel), or at a more macrolevel where attitudes towards institutions and curricula are made manifest. Both types of attitudes may be moderated by learner personality and background factors and account for attitudinal variation within any socially defined group, but these latter factors will not be discussed.

CULTURAL FACTORS

WRITING

The influence of cultural thought patterns upon writing, especially in academic contexts, was suggested by Kaplan as far back as 1966. He claimed that students from cultures, where the rhetorical features of expository writing were different from those used in English academic writing, had to learn the English patterns if they were to successfully communicate with their professors in English-speaking academic institutions. While his ideas have been questioned since then (see, for example, Mohan and Lo, 1985) and his more recent writings (Kaplan, 1987) have emphasized the complexity of issues involved, his work, nevertheless, has drawn the attention of teachers to the transition that SL learners have to effect if they are to be successful within the norms and requirements of English-speaking academic institutions (something that some native speakers also have to learn in order to be successful in academic contexts (Purves, 1988). Recently, the work of Hinkel (1994) has showed that L1 rhetorical approaches to writing in ESL may still influence writers despite many years of ESL composition instruction.

The hurdle for SL learners in western academic contexts does not, however, simply consist of adopting a new rhetorical pattern of writing but also involves the adoption of an almost new way of thinking, approaching knowledge, and the types of evidence that lend legitimacy to that knowledge. Ballard and Clancy (1988), for example, discuss the case of a graduate Japanese student who had written an essay comparing the ideas of two economists, Friedman and Samuelson. In his writing he talked about the different backgrounds of these two economists and generally tried to explain why two authorities on economics might come to such different conclusions. An interview with the student showed that the student could not bring himself to criticize the ideas of these two renowned writers. He therefore attempted what he considered a more appropriate solution to the task and tried to justify their views through an evaluation of their backgrounds and experiences that might have led them to their

conclusions. For the student both views were legitimate, but the assignment required that he take a stand and argue for one writer's position over the other's or highlight the relative merits and weaknesses of both writers, a requirement that went against the grain of his primary socialization.

Rhetorical styles of writing of a society reflect the values and the ways in which ideas and interactions are perceived in that society and the goals that are achieved through them (Clancy, 1990). In some cultures, direct criticism is regarded as contributing to disharmony and where harmony in the society is highly valued many things remain unsaid or are left at the level of implications which can be denied if they are contested. The academia in the English-speaking world, on the other hand, values authentic voice, self-expression, stylistic innovation, a directness in academic texts which stresses a clear formulation of a case, a stance, and the citation of evidence to prove one's case (Matalene, 1985). The primary responsibility for conveying the information and arguments lie with the writer and therefore a high degree of explicitness is required.

Hinds (1987) has argued that while classical writing in Japanese was indeed "reader responsible", modern writing has become more "writer responsible". Mohan and Lo (1985) make similar claims after analyzing classical and modern Chinese writing: the trend is towards more directness, particularly, it seems, by those who had studied in an English-speaking environment. However, Xia Wang (1994) who examined some Chinese writing instruction booklets found that the pedagogical presentation of writing emphasized implicitness in the introduction and conclusion, the exploration of the theme from multiple perspectives, and comprehension was reader responsibility. Matalene (1985) has argued that Chinese writing incorporates a lot of proverbs, maxims and pieces of folklore and that

‘invention’ for the Chinese generally means doing it the way it has been done before. It would seem, therefore, that in countries like China and Japan there are trends in formal writing towards making it more writer-responsible. In the case of the former, however, it appears that instructional practices at school level may not have caught up with this trend yet, as suggested by the work of Xia Wang (1994).

The difficulties that some ESL learners encounter may be not so much due to the way writing is structured in their society per se but may lie in the more deep-seated values regarding attitudes to ideas and writers (particularly ‘expert’) that are internalized as part of the primary socialization. The Japanese student mentioned above is a case in point. He could not bring himself to be critical of writers who were regarded as experts in their field. Teachers of English for Academic Purposes and university professors remark upon ESL learners’ inability (or unwillingness) to read texts critically (Allan, 1996). Such social values are resistant to easy change and a change in one value may affect a complex of values. For example, it may be that being critical of experts may also be related to attitudes towards older people in one’s culture, so that a change in one area may also have ramifications for another. Frequently the difficulties in the production of academic writing by ESL learners are discussed in terms of expert and novice abilities (Zamel, 1982; Richards, 1990) but do not touch upon cultural patterns of thinking and behavior that underpin ways that ESL learners write. When changes are demanded by changing circumstances or new contexts, the process is a difficult, and often a painful one, as the writer’s own ESL learning attests. Canagarajah (1993), for example, shows how Tamil learners of English experienced a “tension or discomfort in the confrontation between the discourse they preferred and the discourses informing the ESOL course” (p. 621).

Classroom activities which are aimed at ‘surface’ level of organisation of academic texts may not be successful because the underlying social practices in L1 writing are not addressed, or contrasts between the two processes are not made sufficiently explicit. Students, in effect, have to be encouraged to become bicultural and adopt new patterns of behavior in order to operate successfully in the new environment and ways of doing this in classroom have to be addressed.

READING

The literature on reading discusses a number of studies that show that the background knowledge of readers has an influence upon the comprehension and retention of a written text and the type of elaborations that are made by readers as they construct a model of the text (e.g. Steffensen et al., 1979; Pritchard 1990). There has been a considerable amount of discussion on background knowledge (the schema theory) in relation to first language reading (Adams and Collins, 1979; Rumelhart, 1980; Anderson, 1984) as well as second (e.g. Carrell, 1983, 1987; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Prahlad, 1993). This paper will not dwell upon these studies. Instead, it looks at ways in which learners from different social backgrounds approach text. In many cultures the written word, especially if it is written by an ‘expert’, is accepted uncritically because of the respect and high regard that is accorded to such writers (Osterloh, 1980, Maley, 1983; Ozog, 1989; Kwan-Terry, 1994). In Islamic countries Koranic reading does not encourage the questioning of the text because it is accepted as the divine word, “entirely mature, accomplished, and unalterable (Osterloh, 1980, p. 58). Authority is conferred upon a text by the status of the author and readers do not form their own personal opinion but use the “collective opinions that dominated [their] previous social experience” (Osterloh, 1980, p. 80). This type of attitude is further reinforced in those educational systems where reading texts is an exercise in extracting the ideas of the writer but not

necessarily evaluating them critically (see, for example, Kwan-Terry, 1994). A number of texts may be read in which different ideas are discussed, sometimes at variance with one another which readers try to reconcile or accept them as different ways of approaching a topic because of differences in the writers' experiences (as in the example of the Japanese student given previously).

The comprehension of a text involves a process of construction that draws upon the prior knowledge of the reader, as well as the interaction of a number of component skills (Grabe, 1991). But it is also a selective process in that readers focus upon elements of the text that are socially most salient to them, as Pritchard (1990) shows. He got proficient American and Palauan readers at college level to read two texts on funeral arrangements. One text dealt with typical Anglo-American funeral arrangements, the other with Palauan. He found that the Palauan readers tried to relate the unfamiliar text to the type of personalized information they considered foremost. Given below are three examples from the think-aloud protocols of the Palauan subjects.

1. Either her mother or father wrote a letter to her.
2. When did they come ... contact her? Was it her mother's father or her father's father?
3. On Monday they were very busy so maybe ... they couldn't tell her or call her ... so she couldn't ... make it or she was just so far away.

(from Pritchard, 1990, p. 287).

These examples show that the Palauan students, like other readers, relate what is read to their background knowledge. For Paluan readers this means focusing on the relationships of the

people involved in the letters, thus highlighting that reading is driven by what is socially most salient in this Pacific society, the relationships between people and the types of behaviors resulting from them.

The social practices of a group also influence what is read by that group. The texts that are read, in a sense, are socially approved. Heath (1983), for example, discusses the type of reading (religious and non-fiction) that the Rockville parents considered appropriate and valid. Mangubhai, (1986a, 1987), writing about literacy in the South Pacific, discusses the type of reading that is approved in the Fijian society - the reading of the Bible and other religious writings. A literacy event, such as, a young Fijian person in a village sitting down to read stories for leisure would be regarded as evidence of laziness and avoidance of work that needs to be done either in the plantation for boys or in the house for the girls. Reading practices are socially situated in terms of both the meanings that are normally constructed from them and what counts as legitimate reading (see also Kulick and Stroud, 1993).

The practices of writing and reading are, however, not universal and were even less so a mere two hundred years ago. There are still languages in the world for which there are no orthographies. Where such languages are given an orthography it has been suggested that the functions that writing performs initially in these language groups mirrors the functions that are enacted through oral speech (Kulick and Stroud, 1993). The following section discusses the oral use of language and looks at some cultural practices that underpin such use.

INTERACTIONAL FEATURES

In the study of oral interactions, and particularly pragmatic considerations in such interactions, considerable work has been carried out showing misunderstandings in

communication arising from different value systems and perceptions about the topics (e.g. Kasper, 1989, 1992; Richards and Sukwiwat, 1982); misunderstandings arising from the use of L1 intonational patterns in L2 (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; Mishra, 1982); and using L1 thematic structure in L2 (Gumperz et al., 1982). Gumperz (1982), for example, discusses the perception of native English speakers of an East Asian woman serving food in a cafeteria as rude because she asks customers if they wanted gravy with a falling rather than rising intonation - an element in her L1 which had no feature of impoliteness attached to it.

Other studies have gone beyond the language involved in interactions to ways in which oral interactions are structured in a society (Young, 1982; Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Scollon, 1991). Scollon and Scollon (1981) who studied the Athabaskan Indians in Canada found that their conversation practices, including their use of a greater pause before speaking, led the American English speakers to perceive the Athabascans as silent, withdrawn and somewhat hostile, while the Athabascans perceived the Americans as rude, pushy and aggressive. In an interactive context the Americans felt they had to talk because the Athabascans would not say anything. The Athabascans, on the other hand, felt that they were never given an opportunity to speak.¹ (These should properly be regarded as propensities within an American sub-culture because of the multicultural composition of the American population and, as Tannen (1984) shows, even within a subculture, there are differences in speaking styles between males and females.)

¹What Scollon and Scollon found with the Athabaskan Indians is also true in Fiji. When I worked in the Curriculum Development Unit of the Fiji Ministry of Education on occasions I had to chair meetings called to consider changes in curriculum that were advocated by the Minister of Education. Fiji has two major ethnic groups, the indigenous Fijians and the Indians. The latter were a bit like the American English speakers that Scollon and Scollon described and if there was a pause they would begin speaking. In order to ensure that the Fijian members of the staff present at the meeting also had the opportunity to express their views, I frequently had to nominate them and ask them for their opinion. It was usually obvious from their replies that the matter

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Scollon and Scollon (1991) also discuss another aspect of conversations suggested by Schegloff (1972): that the person who begins an exchange has the right to introduce the topic. Such an exchange may begin by the ring of a telephone or the doorbell, or someone putting the head into one's room and saying something like 'Hi Razika' or 'Excuse me, John', or by calling out for someone across the road. In each case it is the person who initiates the conversational exchange who introduces the topic of conversation.² It would be a very odd exchange if the person who is being called to a conversation were to begin to talk about, for example, his or her plans for the coming summer holiday. The expected behaviour is some form of a conventional response, like 'hello' on the phone or a simple 'yes' or a body signal that acknowledges that the call has been heeded.

Using this framework, Scollon and Scollon (1991) find that the Chinese 'callers' frequently do not introduce the topic immediately so that a speaker from an English speaking background is puzzled about the point of the whole conversation. They suggest the pattern for Chinese speakers is not 'call-answer-introduce the topic' but 'call-answer-facework' and in some cases an optional topic. The topic is optional especially when favours are being sought and the supposedly idle chatter is part of 'facework' which allows the initiator to assess the situation for the likely success of the proposed request. Where it is judged that there is a high chance of success in getting what he or she wants, the real topic of the conversation is introduced; where it is judged that the chances of success are very low, then the topic is avoided and thus there is a saving of face, both on the part of the initiator and on the part of the second interactant who now does not have to say 'no' to a request, a point also made by a subject in Young (1982).

under discussion had been given some thought by them and that they had followed the discussions quite closely and made a valuable contribution to the discussions.

²Compare, however, buying an ice-cream, for example, where the topic is introduced immediately 'one rum-and-raisin, please' because the context for the interaction is predetermined and the attention of the seller is automatically expected.

The 'facework' portion of a conversational exchange has ramifications for cross-cultural communication for it is quite likely that a Chinese speaker would not expect his caller to begin immediately with the topic and may therefore pay somewhat less attention to it. Scollon and Scollon (1991) conclude that the consequence of such a difference in expectation is that "both conversationalists may remember exactly the same details from a conversation, but each will ascribe quite different values to the items. This, we think, is the basis of the perennial uneasiness both Asians and Westerners feel in their mutual conversations" (pp 116-117). This is a rather broad generalization but one that is worthy of further investigation. Facework is an element not just in the Chinese conversational structure. It is also found in the writer's own culture (Gujarati) as in the example below.

[At a wedding reception, organised by the bride's family, where guests are seated in rows and served food. The bride's parents or relatives take special care to see that the immediate family and close relatives of the bridegroom are fed well. B represents a person from the bride's side and G from groom's.]

B: Have some more food.

G: No, no, I am full. I have eaten too much.

B: You haven't eaten very much. Have some more (laddling some food, which is countered by B putting his hands over the plate so that food cannot be put onto it).

G: No, no, I have had enough.

B: Only a little.

G: No, no ... (hands moving away from the plate slowly).

B: I'll just give you a little bit.

G: No, no, I have eaten too much (by now hands have moved away from the plate to its side, thus opening up a space for B to give G some more food).

B: There, I'll only put a little on your plate (laddling some food onto the plate).

G: OK, only because you insist.

(Personal observations)

Quite a complex ritual has been enacted in this exchange, with underlying meanings not evident in the actual words used in the moves. For G to have accepted more food as soon as it was offered would have diminished him in the eyes of B, as being a 'khaadro' - a gluttonous person, but the Gujarati word is more pejorative. For B not to have insisted that G have more food would have diminished him in the eyes of G (and G's party). This would be interpreted that the bride's side was being mean in not providing enough food and making sure that guests were fed well. The ritual that is enacted leaves both parties satisfied, with no loss of face.

The notion of face operates a little differently in the case of Nigerians (Igbo) according to Nwoye (1992). He argues that prevention of loss of face for the group - defined as "any social unit larger than the individual; it is constituted concentrically by the nuclear family, the extended family, the clan, the village, the town, and the ethnic group on expanding order" (p. 315) - takes precedent over loss of face for an individual, underscoring the fact that in some communities the group has precedent over the individual or the immediate family.

The discussion above might suggest that facework is not a feature of Anglo-Celtic societies. This is not so. The critical difference, however, is that many Asian societies are, what is termed, 'high-face' societies where loss of face is felt very keenly and has greater social ramifications (see Hofstede, 1986).

The degree of explicitness and control in talk may vary from culture to culture also. Yokota (1994) studied videotapes of Japanese politicians discussing an issue on T.V. and found that question forms which led to 'Yes/No' response were rarely used because such questions reflect a strong degree of turn and topic control. The more common phenomenon was the usage of tag-like constructions which are weak in both turn and topic control. Similarly, Bennett (1995) in discussing an aspect of Nigerian oral interaction pattern claims that explicit speech is directed towards children and that adult talk is more indirect with speakers giving each other sufficiently detailed information for the listener to infer what is intended. To talk directly to an adult Nigerian is to treat the person like a child. The degree of implicitness in some cultures is summed up by Hoshikawa for Japanese (1978, pp 228-229, cited in Hinds, 1987, p. 144) thus:

What is often verbally expressed and what is actually intended are two different things. What is verbally expressed is probably important enough to maintain friendship, and it is generally called *tatemaie* which means simply 'in principle' but what is not verbalized counts most - *honne* which means 'true mind'. Although it is not expressed verbally, you are supposed to know it by *kan* - intuition'.

Another aspect of oral interactions that has a bearing on the development of interactions is the relative statuses of the participants. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) found that Japanese speakers of English in USA included or excluded expressions of apology or regret in refusing invitations depending upon the status of the person who had invited them. This was in contrast to the dominant Anglo-American structure which was guided by the degree of familiarity with the person making the invitation. Similarly, age is an important factor in

many cultures, determining, frequently, the order of speakers (Scollon and Wong-Scollon, 1991).

A feature of oral interactions that reflects a different sociocultural orientation from that in the English-speaking countries is the different ways verbal information is sought. Eades (1993) discusses the way Aboriginal speakers of English use direct questions to seek “orientation information”, such as clarification of topic, background details about people, time, place and setting, generally in the form of a statement with a rising intonation at the end. Where substantial information is sought, such as important personal details or reasons, questions are not used. Instead the person seeking information presents the information he or she has and then becomes silent, with the expectation that the interactant will supply further information on the topic introduced. These modes of verbal behavior reflect the socially constructed and approved modes of behavior.

The patterns of oral interactions discussed above are not simply exchanges about goods and services, to use Halliday’s (1985) terms, but at a cultural level conform to certain expected behaviours, the non-fulfilment of which can result in social disapproval. Interactions in many cultures do not develop according to the Gricean principles of cooperation and the maxims of sincerity, clarity and quantity (see also, Riley, 1988 and Harris, 1995) because other more powerful social values such as face, harmonious relationships, age and status may intervene.

The next section discusses how attitudes of learners can have an impact upon second language learning, and in some cases on learning in school contexts generally.

ATTITUDES I: MICROLEVEL

Attitudes can operate at the level at which learning activities are organised (microlevel) or at the level of society (macrolevel). Attitudes at macrolevel can lead to a rejection of both the content and processes of learning. While there has been much discussion in the literature about attitudes (e.g. Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Oller, Hudson, and Liu, 1977; Gardner, 1985; Spolsky, 1989) this paper does not dwell upon matters such as learners' attitudes to the TL, the TL speakers, the target language culture, or the social value of language (see Tollefson, 1991, and Fairclough, 1989 for a critical discussion of some of these issues). Instead, it looks at attitudes at the level of learning itself, at a microlevel. Such attitudes include, for example, the attitude to the teacher as an authority figure, the attitude to text, criticism of others' ideas, belief about how a SL is learned, and so on. Without going into the social psychology of attitude, a number of general observations about attitudes need to be made (see Ellis, 1994). Attitudes are both cognitive (one can think about them) and affective (have feelings and emotions attached to them). They are on a continuum rather than representing a dichotomy, that is, attitudes about things can be more or less favourable or unfavourable. Attitudes are formed as part of one's socialization and they are persistent though they may be subject to modification through subsequent experience. The point that needs emphasis is that these attitudes are shaped by actions and events experienced as one grows up in a particular culture and have an impact upon the cognitive functioning of an individual, a point emphasized by Geertz (1973, pp 76, 78, cited in Gardner (1991).

The accepted view that mental functioning is essentially an intracerebral process, which can only be secondarily assisted or amplified by the various artificial devices which the process has enabled man to invent, appears to be quite wrong.... Rather than culture acting only to supplement, develop and extend organically based capacities logically and genetically prior to it, it would seem to be ingredient to those capacities

themselves. A cultureless human being would probably turn out to be not an intrinsically talented though unfulfilled ape, but a wholly mindless and consequently unworkable monstrosity.

These attitudes may be of varying strengths depending upon the precise experiences in our lives that have shaped them. In a survey of parental attitudes to the teaching of foreign languages, particularly recently introduced Asian languages like Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian, carried out some years ago in the state of Queensland in Australia, there were quite lengthy comments from a few parents who could not see why the State was making Japanese one of the priority foreign languages (Postle and Mangubhai, 1991). They wrote at length about the role of the Japanese in the second world war. There was no way of exploring further whether these parents were themselves involved in fighting during the war or had lost members of their family, but it seems that the very strong feelings expressed about the teaching of the Japanese language suggest that their personal experience, directly or indirectly, of the war would have shaped their attitudes towards the Japanese and their language.

Another attitude that ESL/EFL learners may bring to their classroom, both in a context where English is spoken as a native tongue and where it is learned as a foreign language, is the high regard in which teachers are held (Ting, 1987; Kwan-Terry, 1994), the socially grounded inability of students to question them, and the reverential attitude towards the printed word. Such ESL learners come from cultures where teachers are held in high regard because traditionally they were the repositories of knowledge. In the Indian tradition, for example, a young man who sought knowledge - and traditionally it was knowledge of religious type - would seek a 'guru' or teacher to whom he would listen and be directed by him. The Hindi

word to describe the 'learner' is *chela* which more properly translates as 'disciple' rather than learner. The relationship between the *guru* and the *chela* is asymmetrical and it is acknowledged *overtly* as such by both parties. It has been socially constituted and thus, in a sense, approved, and has been recreated in each generation right up to the present times. Children growing up within such a culture have abstracted from the multiple instances of teacher-learner events (reinforced by parents) a set of attitudes which determine their behaviour in that particular context.³ They are resistant to easy change and early changes in behaviour can be marked by some discomfort and an acute awareness of the new type of behavior. That some school systems and teachers encourage students to disagree with the teacher (with reasons) in certain contexts can be both a surprise and an initial negative evaluation of the teacher who encourages such behaviour, as shown in this exchange taken from Kumaravadivelu (1991, pp. 105-106):

S3: This is ...

S4: Large

S3: Big size

T2: Too big? Too large? Oh, some thing ...

S3: Big for her ... and uh ...

S4: The price ...

S3: A little costly ...

T2: Too expensive

S4: No ... not ... a little costly

T2: OK, so you won't choose that because it is too expensive ...

S3: I think it's costly.

³Compare the attitude of Chinese towards children's achievement at school Education is regarded as an individual affair by both child and parent. If children do not do well at school, they are blamed, not the school or teachers (Pieke, 1991).

T2: Yeah, in English we say too expensive.

S3: I can't say costly?

T2: Well, ... (a long pause) Costly is OK, yeah, but more often ... probably we say expensive..

S3: OK, you are my teacher ... (laughs)

T2: No, you don't have to agree with me ...

S3: I don't have to?

(pp 105-106 - Kumaravadivelu says that there is an "almost derisive response with a sense of surprise".)

Attitudes at the microlevel do undergo a change, the rate and extent of which is dependent upon whether the SL learners are in a migrant context or in a context of 'short-stay'. Laaksonen (1994) found that while international students (short-stay), under the guidance of the teachers take part in peer assessment, they are initially very reluctant to do this. Using semi-structured interview techniques she collected data that show that some of the students are willing to try out newer approaches to their learning in the new context, but they state that they would revert to previous ways when they returned to their own countries. Given below is a reason by a Laotian student why he was willing to try peer assessment in the context of learning ESL in Australia.

If you express your weak points and somebody knows your weak points then they dislike you ... when I was in our country, I was a bit shy, even though I couldn't or didn't want to express my strengths or weaknesses to my friends or to my parents, but here I think more or less I can express or show other people my weakness or strengths. (Laotian student [F2] male) (p. 220)

In a social context where the effects of self-revelation are minimized and, in a sense, localized, this student is willing to allow other students to make judgements about the strengths or weaknesses of his writing but such behavior back home would, he considers, exact too great a price in terms of his or her standing in the community.

In the same study, other students from Indonesia indicated that they adopted as many of the behaviours suggested by their teachers as they considered might be necessary to achieve their goal of acquiring a qualification from an Australian university but were aware that they would need to go back to their own society and operate according to its norms for them to be successful.

These examples suggest that attitudes at microlevel can undergo a change if the context of learning is conducive to such changes. The teachers need to provide an environment in which learners are willing to undertake newer behaviors, which, in some cases, as described above, may go against the behaviors shaped by primary socialization. It is the sensitivity of the teachers to such potential mismatches between the students' prior learning experiences and their current ones that may lead to a classroom milieu which facilitates the transition that the students may have to make (and in some cases the teacher also).

ATTITUDES 2: MACROLEVEL

We all live in many different 'worlds': the world of our own household, the world of work, the church, sports clubs, women's clubs and so on. Gee (1990) refers to this as participating in different discourses in different settings. The world of the formal school system is a literate

world in which full participation requires one to be initiated into particular literate behaviours that “instill problem-solving abilities and knowledge-creating resources” (Heath, 1987, p.vii) and lie at the other end of the literacy continuum which promotes only basic reading and writing. Schooling requires students to participate in complex forms of academic literacy even though their occurrence may not be widespread in all the communities in which the institutions are set. The sociocultural context of school can be a very different from one they inhabit outside school, with different values and different ways of interacting. In some cases there might be minimal intersection between the two.

For many migrants, especially those who have moved from a less industrialized to a highly industrialized country, the change that is expected to be made is a very marked one and can be very bewildering if the social practices in the two countries are very different. To participate fully in the new environment immigrants have to develop another set of attitudes and values. Depending upon the age of the immigrants at the time of arrival in the new country, the new set of values and attitudes is developed to varying degrees, with some older migrants adopting only those aspects that enable them to operate in the workplace and carry out their daily social needs outside the home and their particular social group.

For many children of migrants the first sustained contact with new values and attitudes occurs when they enter the formal school system, which generally reflects the values and attitudes of the dominant members of that society.

Some migrant groups learn to make changes in their behaviors so that they can take advantage of the perceived benefits that the new country offers them, without feeling that their cultural identity is being threatened. Ogbu (1991, p. 29), for example, says that some “minority children do well in school even though they do not share the language and cultural

backgrounds of the dominant group that are reflected in the curriculum contents, instructional style and other practices of the schools.” He cites examples of Punjabi and other East Asian students’ relatively strong academic achievement in British and Californian school systems resulting from the adoption of a strategy of “accommodating” to a new environment without becoming “assimilated” into it. In other words, they learn to operate in two worlds, the world in which they have been socialised and the new world into which the initiation for non-adults is through the formal school system. In most cases, both worlds are supported by the parents of immigrant children because the second world is seen as an entry into prosperity.

Other groups which have been colonized and are a minority in their own country, as in the case of the Aborigines in Australia and the Indians in America and Canada, do not perform as well in the dominant educational system. These groups do not fully share power with the dominant group and tend to fall into the lower socio-economic groups in the country. They frequently have a history of brutal subjugation and denigration of their way of life. Such groups may reject outright the systems and values of the dominant group. Some Aborigines in Australia react to the dominant group’s education system by resisting it or by ritualizing it (Teasdale, 1990). Such ritualizing is explained by Christie and Harris (1985) below. In their study they found that Aboriginal students exhibited three beliefs about the way they would achieve their education.

Firstly, their mere presence in school ritually endows them with education. Secondly, the careful performance of ritualized classroom activities (copying from the blackboard, reading loudly in chorus, etc.) is efficacious. Thirdly, the age grade stages as they move up through school (rather than by any particular school-learned skill like the ability to read and write). The individual creative and self-directed effort which is

crucial to academic learning, is de-emphasized and, in fact, considered irrelevant. (p. 83).

Attitudes at macro level toward the educational system of the dominant group or culture may result in two forms of actions: an attempt to learn the rules and forms of behaviours to operate in the dominant group while minimizing its effect on their own value systems or an outright rejection of the values of the dominant group and therefore its educational system. Such rejection at the global level results in a rejection also of the new literate behaviors in the second language (or dialect in some cases) that are critical in a formal school system. The choice is not a simple one but as Cole and Bruner (1971) point out that when

cultures are in competition for resources, as they are today, the psychologist's task is to analyse the source of cultural difference so that those of the minority, the less powerful group, may quickly acquire the intellectual instruments necessary for success of the dominant culture, should they so choose (p. 246, emphasis added)

It would seem newer ways to educating the less dominant groups in a society need to be explored (Lucas and Katz, 1994). In the Australian context, for example, two-way schooling has been established for isolated Aboriginal communities, where skills and knowledge from both the Aboriginal communities and the wider community are taught and highly valued. The processes of learning for the two types of knowledge and skills are distinct and relate to respective cultures. Importantly, the whole enterprise is controlled by the Aboriginal people (Harris, 1990).

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The paper has argued that the way and purposes for which language is used in one's primary socialisation may have some impact upon second language learning and use. One pedagogical implication, especially that in relation to language use, is to sensitize teachers to the types of differences rooted in understandings about language use developed during the primary socialization of their learners and brought to the ESL learning task. These differences are more marked for learners from some groups whose primary socialisation instil values and attitudes that are quite different from those of the target language speakers. However, any implications that are drawn have to take into account the precise backgrounds of the learners: (1) whether the SL is being learned in their home countries or in the TL country, (2) the age of the learners, (3) the level of literacy in the L1, (4) the power relations with the dominant group if learners come from a minority group, and so on. As a corollary to the sensitization of language teachers is the need for teachers to reflect upon the ways of learning that students bring to classrooms and consider some of these as strengths upon which future learning can be built (Maley, 1984; Tinkham, 1989; Luke, 1996). Evidence shown by Fillmore (1983) lends support to this. In her study of good language learners she found that 4 of the 18 good language learners were shy and uncommunicative, but very attentive listeners and quite observant. While our current understandings about the role of interaction in the development of second language would lead us to believe that these learners might not have made as much progress as those who participated in classroom activities more actively, this was not the case.

These children tended to pay close attention when their teachers talked to them, and they seemed to be observing, if not participating in, most of the activities that took place in the classroom around them.... Such learners generally gave little evidence

that they were learning anything, at least until they were prodded into making some sort of response to our elicitation efforts. Then they let us know that there is more than one way to learn a new language. (p. 165, emphasis added).

The work of Fillmore and her colleagues is a reminder to the field of second language teachers, especially of English, to reflect on itself to see whether there might not be elements of Euro-centrism in the SL learning and teaching approaches that are advocated and are used in classrooms (see also Riley, 1988; Tinkham, 1989; Maley, 1983; Barnlund, 1987; Oster, 1989; Burnaby and Yilin Sun, 1989; Fairclough, 1989; Holliday, (1994) and Tollefson, 1991).

The type of action that teachers may take in their classrooms depends upon the instructional context. Such action may be more difficult in some contexts than in others. For example, where classes have learners from a variety of backgrounds it may not be possible to devise one pedagogical solution. Teaching strategies that incorporate more group work or ones that make more explicit the demands of the task in a SL (see Oi, 1986; Bassino 1986) need further investigation. On the other hand, there are contexts in which classes are more homogeneous in terms of the background(s) of the students. Two broad types of actions that are possible in such contexts are suggested, exemplified with some successful examples.

The first type of action attempts to incorporate into classroom pedagogy certain aspects of the cultural practices of learners so that there is a greater compatibility between the teaching act and the ways of learning and behaving students bring to the learning environment. One such early experimentation was conducted in Warm Springs Indian Reservation in U.S.A (Phillips, 1972), which showed that changes in the participant structure in class so that the occurrence

of speech was not dictated solely by the teacher resulted in a better learning environment for the students.

Another successful example of culturally sensitive pedagogical modification is the Hawaiian Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) (Au and Jordan, 1981). In this early reading programme, the emphasis in reading was changed from phonics to comprehension. In addition, the classroom organisation was altered so that students were working in small groups (usually three to five students) in what was called 'learning centers'. Direct interaction with the teacher on one-to-one was limited to about 20-25 minutes per day. This approach has produced much better reading results. Au and Jordan, (1981, p. 151) conclude that

a major problem in teaching Hawaiian children to read appears to be that they do not recognize ordinary reading lessons as situations which call for the application of their full range of cognitive and linguistic abilities. The KEEP program seems to be effective at least partly because it employs a special type of reading lesson, one which resembles talk story and storytelling, major speech events in Hawaiian culture.

More recently, Ladson-Billings (1995) studied the pedagogical practices of eight exemplary teachers of Afro-American students and identified three key factors: (1) the conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers, (2) the manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers, and (3) the conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers. Ladson-Billings' work emphasizes the critical role of cultural awareness in both the types of relationships that are established in classroom and in ways that knowledge is constructed.

A similar sympathetic orientation can be seen in the work that is being carried out by the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning in California. Its approach to ESL learning eschews a single model for all LEP students. Instead, it seeks to encourage teachers to adjust curriculum, instruction, and use the L1 to meet the varying needs of students. Such an orientation encourages teachers to guide students towards the discovery of a deeper understanding of the pedagogical material through discussion that takes into account student ideas and background, what Luke (1996) has described as taking into account the “cultural capital” that learners bring to learning.

A somewhat different form of adaptation is suggested by Malcolm (1987), an adaptation that is two way. He suggests that both students and teachers have to change to meet the challenges of a particular classroom, a point not unlike that made by Jordan (1985):

Educational practices must match with the children’s culture in ways which ensure the generation of academically important behaviors. It does not mean that all school practices need be completely congruent with natal cultural practices, in the sense of exactly or even closely matching or agreeing with them. The point of cultural compatibility is that the natal culture is used as a guide in the selection of educational program elements so that academically desired behaviors are produced and undesired behaviors are avoided. (p.110)

The examples given above reflect an understanding of the language and learning practices of a group of students incorporated into pedagogical practices so that the disjuncture between patterns of learning and language use internalized during one’s primary socialization is made

less marked. They do not suggest the transfer of social practices holus-bolus into the classroom because that may be quite inappropriate for the longer term development of academic abilities of students in an institution that is primarily a particular type of literate environment (Olson, 1977)⁴.

The second type of action is exemplified by some work carried out in Fiji. In the Fijian context, particularly in the rural areas, there are very few reading materials in any language available and both the indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian (East Asians) societies generally do not actively encourage wide reading. In the former society a 'legitimate' form of reading involves religious texts while in the latter the texts, for students, are school textbooks. (In urban areas the the range of reading is much wider for both social groups and many tertiary-educated parents do encourage wider reading, but the patterns of interaction based on book reading found in similar homes in English-speaking societies is generally absent (cf Heath, 1982, for example.) In order to bridge the gap between the types of reading activities fostered in schools and in the home communities, it was decided to provide high-interest, well-illustrated story books in English⁵ for students in Grades 4 and 5 in rural areas to read on a regular basis in their classrooms (see Elley and Mangubhai 1981a, 1981b, 1983; Mangubhai 1986b). The Project, called Book Flood, placed about about 250 books into each of Grades 4 and 5 and teachers were asked to provide 20-30 minutes of classroom time for students to

⁴Martin Nakata (1993) has attacked this assumption arguing that the western education system should be problematized vis-a-vis learners from a society that has been colonized. He states that "to represent the [\[Torres Strait\] Islander \[in Australia\]](#) in other thematic schemes without making problematic the policies of "culture" itself would be to accept epistemological schemas already in place, and to accept 'givens' and 'taken-for-grant' apparatuses that constitute fundamental premises between the dominant and the Islander" (p. 342).

⁵[English was chosen because there was little appropriate reading matter for children in the vernaculars. In addition, by Grade 4 students have been learning English for three years and it becomes the language of instruction from Grade 4. In the the first three years the language of instruction is either Fijian or Hindi.](#)

Deleted: ?

read them⁶ The reading activity replaced other activities in the normal structurally-based ESL program.

At the end of the first year the Book Flood classes were significantly better than the Control classes in English reading and listening comprehension, and grammar but not in writing. The experiment was carried on for another year into Grades 5 and 6. At the end of the second year the Book Flood classes continued the gains in reading and listening comprehension, grammar and were significantly better than the Control classes on a writing test. The modal mark in writing for the experimental group was 9 out of 10, while for the Control group it was only 2, a difference that is obvious in the examples below:

Experimental Group

- One morning when Luke's mother was washing, and the men were drinking yagona, Luke was boiling the water.
- One day, Tomasi's mother was washing clothes beside the river, Tomasi's father was drinking yaqona under a shady tree, Tomasi was cooking the food beside their house, and his brother was carrying buckets of water.

Control Group

- Is ther the women in the tree. mothe sitg in the tree there was a looking at hes mother ...
- One day there boy Seru is make the tea to drinking his morth was the colth
- One day morning their were a house any village by the sea ...

Moreover, an analysis of the results of a national examination at Grade 6 that only the indigenous Fijians took showed that students from Book Flood classes outperformed students from the Control classes in Social Studies, Mathematics and even in the Fijian language test.

⁶One half of the experimental group read them silently using USSR method (McCracken, 1971), while the other

This project provided opportunities for students to participate in behaviors in the formal school system that were largely absent in their societies, behaviors that are more critical for academic achievement as one moves up the grades of primary level into high school. It provided what Wells (1981) has suggested:

Where the skills associated with the representation of meaning in written language are not used or valued by the parents and other adults in the home environment, children will be less likely to accept the school's valuation of them, or to receive encouragement to persist with tasks that they may initially find difficult or lacking in meaning. However, even with lack of home support, it should be possible for a child to make progress commensurate with his intellectual potential, if appropriate opportunities are provided at school. (pp. 264-265, emphasis added).

The type of books and the stress-free environment in which reading could be carried out by students made this an enjoyable activity for them and lent legitimacy to this behaviour within the classroom culture.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

The ESL field has not considered whether some approaches to learning that students bring with them can be utilized positively in language classrooms. For example, it is frequently stated in literature that some groups of SL learners are predisposed to rote learn. Can this approach to learning be utilized in order to teach, particularly at lower levels, chunks of languages that would be useful in conversational interactions and encouraging these students later to analyze them so that the resultant linguistic knowledge can be used more creatively.

half spent their allocated time in a Shared Book approach to reading (Holdaway, 1979).

Tinkham (1989), for example, compared attitudes of Japanese and American students towards both rote learning and more creative learning and compared students' performance, given similar rote learning tasks. He found that his Japanese subjects did better at the rote learning task than the American students and suggests that teachers should take advantage of the strengths of students.⁷

Following suggestions made by the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning and that of Lucas and Katz (1994), there is a need for the field of TESOL to look at the place of the first language in second language learning. To take the specific case of translation, we need to determine whether such behaviours assist in language development at some stage of second language learning, possibly at the earlier stages.⁸ Current practices have tended to frown upon translation and have encouraged students to think in the second language as much as possible. In fact, we do not have any research to show at what stage students begin to think more in the second language and resort to translation only when there is a serious problem in communication or understanding. In fact, it may be that translation is not a function of proficiency in the SL per se. Mangubhai (1991) found that one of his subjects tried to comprehend the SL from the very early stages of her learning and resorted to translation of utterances only when comprehension problems were encountered. It is likely that even at more advanced stages certain amount of translation may occur when comprehension difficulties arise. The role of translation in SL learning should become part of our research agenda so that we have a better understanding of the cognitive behaviours of learners at various stages of proficiency in second language (see also Cohen, 1995). If research were to show, for example, that there is a transition to thinking more in the target language at a particular level of proficiency (the definition of which, admittedly, may

⁷Rote learning is a 'dirty' word in education but in certain contexts it may be an appropriate solution. Cole and Scribner (1974) have argued that learning by rote is an efficient way to learn if there are only a few instances of a concept so that searching for the correct attribute may not be possible because of fewer trials.

present another problem to solve), then teachers could begin to give positive encouragement to a shift towards thinking more in the second language for those students who theoretically ought to be able to do so.

A number of recent studies have showed that for some learners writing in L1 and then translating it into English produces a better product than when there is no opportunity to think through and write in the L1 (Kobayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Brooks, 1993). Similarly, Kern (1994) has shown that there is a role for translation in SL reading if it is used sensibly. These studies are an acknowledgment that translation does occur and that research needs to determine the circumstances under which it is most effective.

If research shows that certain approaches brought by learners to the task of learning a SL are an impediment to SL development then we can turn to the problem of the most efficacious ways in which teaching can be organised to take into account the learners' approaches. More importantly, it can begin to investigate effective ways to assist students to make the transition from their ways of learning to other, more efficient, ways of learning, taking into account the important role of affect as it relates to changes that teachers might wish to see in their students (see, for example, Oi and Kamimura, 1995, who use a certain pedagogical strategy to raise the awareness of their students about the requirements of an argumentative essay in English).

Minimally, the research agenda in the area of cultural factors and second language learning should address the following questions:

⁸Translation has been suggested as a positive strategy for, example, Oxford (1990).

- 1 (a) What are the learning approaches and strategies SL learners of different cultures bring to the learning task?
 - (b) Which of these approaches or strategies do not lead to more efficient learning?
 - (c) Which pedagogical (and other) strategies are most effective in helping students to incorporate other approaches and strategies to SLL?
-
- 2 (a) Does a gradual change to other forms of instruction advocated in literature on ESL teaching (for example, interactional) produce a better result than a sharp disjuncture between the instructional and learning modes of the learners and of the classroom?
 - (b) Is this transition tied to the level of proficiency or can it occur at all levels?
-
3. Is there a change in affect, lowering the affective filter (Krashen, 1982), when pedagogical approaches take into account the learners' view of knowledge (and skills) and the manner of their acquisition?

Conclusion

This paper has argued that primary socialization is a process of legitimizing language use in a society so that some uses become more salient and socially approved, while other uses are not given a social value. In learning a second language, learners have to learn to use and value other uses of language, which incorporate attitudes that may be in conflict with those developed during their primary socialization. Such conflicts are not easily resolved by some and require a sensitive approach on the part of the teacher in the classroom. In some instances values of the learner group may be so different, and their experiences at the hands of a dominant group so negative, that there may be a complete rejection of the values of the

dominant group, with the resultant lack of achievement in the educational settings reflecting those values.

The paper also has also discussed selected examples of successful pedagogical approaches which take into account the cultural practices of learners or provide types of experiences which are absent in a social group but which are critical in an English-speaking educational context for success in that system. Through the discussion of the above matters and a suggested agenda for research, the question posed by Riley (1988) at the beginning of this paper is answered in the affirmative: that cultural factors do need to be taken into account when teaching a second language and not be conflated into a factor such as individual difference.