



Decolonising the educational curriculum

Barry Tomalin

Visiting Lecturer

Glasgow Caledonian University London

Our agenda

- Introductory comments
 - Curriculum and Assessment
 - Materials
 - Pedagogy
 - International languages
 - International relevance?
- Or:
- Relevance to context?



Introductory comments

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Identity recognition

- *Ever since I emigrated with my parents, I longed for little signs of my native Hong Kong.*
- *When wins like this happen, it's a step forward. You suddenly don't feel as foreign, as much of an outsider.*
- *Films like Everything Everywhere All at Once don't buck the trend, they are the trend. They reflect the right-thinking majority and the fact that they don't see us as "others".*
- *It's a valuable reminder of the positive direction that society wishes for and naturally wants for everyone, regardless of creed or colour, especially in confusing times where there are so many forces working against us all.*

(Jack Yan, Founder and Publisher of Lucire) **The global fashion magazine** March 14, 2023



Rwanda changes from French to English



Official Languages

- Kinyarwanda
- English
- French
- Swahili

Major World Languages

Native language speakers

- Chinese (1,000 m)
- English (350-400 m)
- Spanish (250 m)
- Hindi (200 m)
- Arabic (150 m)
- Bengali (150 m)
- Russian (150 m)
- Portuguese (135 m)
- Japanese (120 m)

Official languages

- English (1400m)
- Chinese (1,100 m)
- Hindi (700 m)
- Spanish (280 m)
- Russian (270 m)
- French (220m)
- Arabic (170m)
- Malay (160m)

UN Languages

UN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

- Arabic
- Chinese
- English
- French
- Russian
- Spanish

UN WORKING LANGUAGES

- English
- French
- Spanish

Economic and Social Council

The three above plus: -

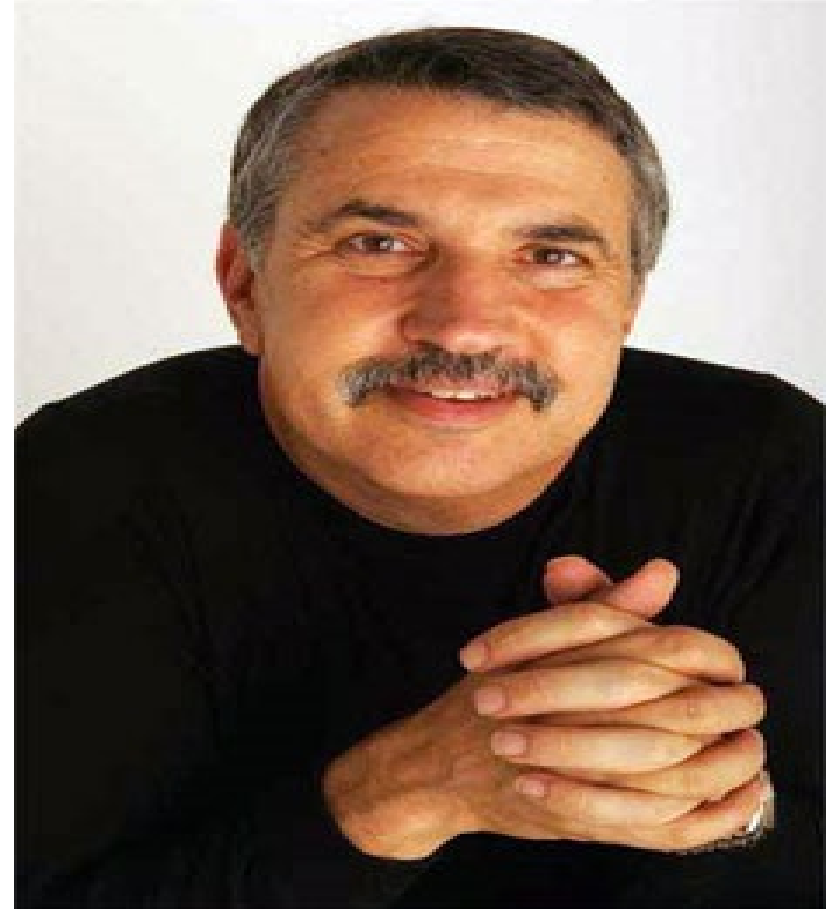
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Russian

GLOBALISATION What is it?

‘Anything that can be produced
cheaper

anywhere else in the world
will be.’

Thomas Friedman ‘The World
is Flat.’



What we notice 1

Loanwords in English

- Loanwords into English:
 - Verandah
 - Bungalow. (bangla/ Bengal)
 - a cushy job – (Khushi = comfort)
 - Pyjama (pay jang =leg clothing)

Anglicising names:

- Margaret Chan (Singapore)
- Philip Wu (Taiwan)

WHAT WE NOTICE

Speakers of English

- English: 1.5 billion speakers worldwide
- China: 1.1 billion speakers
- Hindi: 602 million speakers
- Spanish: 548 million speakers
- French: 274.1 million speakers
- Arabic: 274 million speakers

(Statista 2022)

Disappearing languages

- One fifth of world languages will disappear by 2100.
- 7,000 languages spoken in the world.
- 40% are endangered.

However in India . . . (Nikhil Pradhan, Freo)

- 11% of the population speaks English (130 million)
- 88% live in cities
- English the lingua franca for urban businesses.
- India the second largest English speaking community behind the USA.
- English dominates but regional languages important
- Smartphones and new technologies
- Multi-lingual apps and websites (EUX writing – User Experience)
- Media outreach – e-commerce, press releases, blogs, articles in languages of the regions.
- Documentation and compliance
- Translation



CURRICULUM and ASSESSMENT

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CEFR Council of Europe Framework of Reference

- Although it originated in Europe, CEFR is recognised in more than **40 countries** and is now used in countries far beyond Europe, including Mexico, Canada, Japan, China., Malaysia and Vietnam. Many international high-stakes tests such as IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC are aligned to CEFR.
- Overall, CEFR supports tests in **40 languages**.
- Arabic, Albanian, Armenian, Basque, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Estonian, Finnish, French, Friulian, Galician, Georgian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Moldovan, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian (Iekavian version), Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Ukrainian.

Adapting the curriculum to the class

- You're not teaching 'correct English', you're teaching international English.
- Craft learning outcomes at module level to help you design activities and assessment methods that fit your context, but will also enable you and your colleagues to approach internationalisation of the curriculum systematically.

The three curricula

- International level CEFR
- State level
- School/ local authority level

Decolonising the curriculum in class

- **Examining** the impact of colonialism on disciplinary norms, aesthetics and representations of the 'other'
- **Exploring** the politics of cultural appropriation/ representation as well as burdens of representation, and the politics of production (sustainability)
- **Drawing** on the lived experience of students and centering on contemporary issues of relevance to students
- **Working** in partnership with students to develop curriculum content
- **Embedding** non-Western histories, perspectives and contributions to disciplines

(University of the Arts London: 'Decolonising pedagogy and curriculum' The Exchange)



ASSESSMENT

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Key English language assessments

- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), Princeton University, US. – American English
- IELTS (International English Language Testing System), Australia and UK – British English
- Cambridge Exams (First Certificate, Advanced, Proficiency) Cambridge, UK – British English
- International Baccalaureat

All considered essential or important for studying or working internationally.

All commercially important examinations.

All universal tests.

All developed in the 'Global North'

Problems with assessment for foreign students (Rudi Camerer, Director, ELC–Consult.com)

- 400,000 foreign students studying at university in Germany
- 50% give up before completing their first degree.
- 30% of foreign students in Germany are from Asia.
- We, the West, define the standards.
- China outnumbers the number of native English speakers EVERY YEAR.
- Need to stop a monolithic view of language being taught around the world.
- South East Asian universities have a different tradition in academic writing.
- Need to adapt the monolithic approach to local styles.
- Goes deep into **Identity**. (Michael Byram)
- Context relevance not international relevance.



MATERIALS

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The European Colonial period

The Traditional Approach

(language learning topics focus on life in the 'mother country')

- Snow in France
- Learn about French life
- No relationship to Africa

The 'Local' approach

Language learning topics focus on life in the regional community

- English for French Speaking Africa
- Armand Colin – Longman (First series focusing on life in Africa, not France or UK)

12

Lesson 2 They used to celebrate N

You first! Do you have a favourite festival?



A



C

B

Didi El-Behaidi Wadi al-Hitan (Valley of the whales)

“You lift the heads of Egypt,” one Primary 5 girl—filled with pride—told [National Geographic](#) Explorer Didi El-Behaedi at today’s Explorer Classroom experience.

[National Geographic Learning ELT](#) is proud to partner with [Sphinx Publishing Company](#) to showcase Didi’s archaeology in our books, including her work in the ancient Valley of the Whales as seen through 3D modelling and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software.



13 Think of a friend. Write questions, then ask and answer with a partner.

- 1 How long / you / know / them?
- 2 How / you / meet / them?
- 3 When / you / see / them / again?
- 4 When / you / next / speak / them, / what / you / say?
- 5 If / you / see / them / soon, / what / you / do together?
- 6 If / you / be / extremely rich, / what present / you / give your friend?

WRITING AND SPEAKING

14 Write a paragraph about a special person from your past who you still know.

Describe their appearance.

Say why and how you first met them.

Say how long you've known them.

Say when you are next seeing them.

Say why they are special for you.

15 Share information about the person you described with a partner. Find out if there are any similarities.

‘I met Tia when I was 11.’

‘That’s interesting. I met my friend when I was 11 too!’

- you / say?
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‘I met Tia when I was 11.’

‘That’s interesting. I met my friend when I was 10 too!’



PEDAGOGY

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Personalisation

- Engage learners personally.
- Encourage them to apply the topic of the lesson to their own lives.
- Encourage them to think about (maybe write down) their own thoughts.
- Encourage them to share their thoughts in pairs or groups and with the class.
- Their lifestyle
- Their feelings
- Their interests and hobbies
- Their experience
- Their likes and dislikes
- Things they have done
- Things they they would like to do in the future.

Techniques for the classroom

(Tanja Reiffenrath, Uni. Gottingen, 2021)

- Get to know your group and use the diversity in the room as a resource by inviting students to contribute knowledge about local contexts and share their experiences.
- Have your students work in teams during a part of the course and design assignments in such a way that the diversity of the perspectives in the group contributes to the solution of the task.
- Ask your students to consider a question in their discipline from a comparative perspective.
- set up or have your students join a simulation game that requires them to take on different roles and points of view.

Techniques for the classroom

(Tanja Reiffenrath, Uni. Gottingen, 2021)

- Collaboration with other skills in an international network (e.g. The British Council).
- Get students to post on the classroom board, participate in a student conference or an online exhibition, contribute to a student journal.
- Aim to develop important international and intercultural competences – regardless of international mobility.

The problem

- I don't have time.
- I don't have the authority to change the curriculum to suit my class.
- I don't have time to complete the lessons in the textbook as it is, let alone get more student interaction.
- My school is lowering the class contact hours. Even less time!

The role of technology and hybrid learning

- HYBRID LEARNING: effective in giving learners a local voice?
- AI AIDS: Chatbots- AG
- USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY to analyse differences in English used in different world countries according to linguistic and cultural differences.



Conclusions

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David Graddol

The Future of English (British Council 1998)

- Educational provision in a child's mother tongue should be regarded as a basic human right.
- Debate the future of English.
- Build better forecasting models
- Build scenarios for English in different parts of the world.



The future of English

- “A more sensitive approach will be needed in the future which recognizes that English is not a universal panacea for social and economic ills and that teaching methods and materials need to be adapted for local contexts.”
- “The world is becoming aware of the fate of endangered languages and more anxious over the long-term impact of English on world cultures.”
- “The English language will have to respond to changing international values.”

Questions for teachers and researchers *(Irene Macias 'The Linguist Spring 2023)*

- Can we overhaul syllabi to reflect the diversity and complexity of our students?
- Can we design more inclusive syllabi?
- Can we unpick the economic, cultural and systemic features that ensure our hegemony?
- Can we encourage 'local' languages to stop them dying?
- Can we assess students by other than criteria developed in the 'global north'?
- Can we move beyond the notion of uni. degrees as entry to postgraduate job?
- Can we personalise our teaching to engage our students?

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The future?

- **CURRICULUM**

- Plurilingualism – Create space for local languages/ more than one language
- Develop a new CEFR developed by international experts from the Global South as well as the Global North.

- **ASSESSMENT**

- Review key assessment tools.
- Examine how to localize and internationalise them.

- **MATERIALS**

- Adapt to local environment.
- Deal with broader international topics than British/US etc. life.

- **PERSONALISATION**

- Appeal to personal experience and background
- Connect the learners to their own experience
- Train teachers to be sensitive to the language used in the local context.

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Thank you.

(E) barrytomalin@aol.com

