

## FACULTATEA LIMBI ȘI LITERATURI STRĂINE

### A REFLECTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

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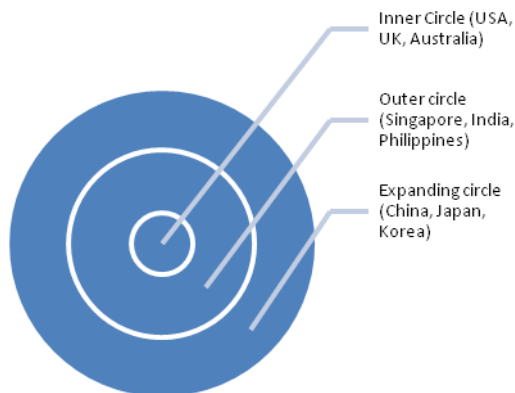
#### *Summary*

*Limba Engleză este o limbă internațională care are un număr mare de vorbitori nativi. O limbă atinge un statut global atunci când este abordată ca o limbă care joacă un rol special recunoscut în fiecare țară. În acest articol se subliniază trei cercuri concentrice: 1. Cercul Interior (limba engleză este limbă primară), 2. Cercul exterior (limba engleză este a doua limbă într-o țară multilingvă), 3. Cercul de extindere (Limba engleză este studiată ca o limbă străină și nu are statut administrativ special). În articol se accentuează termenul imperialism lingvistic, ceea ce înseamnă că dominația limbii engleze este susținută și menținută de instituirea și reconstituirea continuă a inegalităților structurale și culturale dintre limba engleză și alte limbi.*

English is an international language that has a large number of native speakers. The most widely spoken mother tongues in the world are Mandarin, English, Spanish, Hindi and Arabic. McKay (2002) suggested that English is an international language par excellence because of wider communication among individuals from different countries and between individuals from one country [7, p.5]. Crystal (1997) maintains that a language achieves a global status when it is approached as a language that plays “a special role that is recognized in every country”[5, p. 2]; there are approximately 70 countries on the globe that give a special place to English demanding to study it as a foreign language.

Crystal (1997) explains this concept in Figure 1.1. as countries that display a special status for English and gives an approximate number of English speakers: 1. The Inner Circle (English is the primary language), 2. The Outer Circle (English is a second language

in a multilingual country), 3. The Expanding circle (English is studied as a foreign language and has no special administrative status).



***Fig. 1.1. The Concentric Circles of the English Speaking Countries***

The labels “inner”, “outer”, and “expanding circles” help understand the patterns of acquisition and the functional distribution of the English language in diverse cultural contexts.

Kachru’s Model shows the development of English and national variety in the countries from the globe, the spread of English as a result of colonization (elite second language), the transition from EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to ESL (English as a Second Language: Norway, Denmark, Nepal, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland...) [cited in, 5, 1997].

According to Smith (1976) international language has the following features: native speakers do not need to internalize the cultural norms, the ownership becomes “de-nationalized”, learning English means to communicate.

Brutt-Griffler (2002) advocates that there are 4 features that belong to international language: 1. It is the product of development of a world – econocultural system i.e market, business, science,

culture, 2. It establishes itself among the native languages, 3. It is learned by different cultural groups of the society and 4. It is not *lingua franca* [cited in, 7, p.12-13].

At the same time the spread of the English language has negative impact on the local languages and is a threat to national identity, loss of national values, national heritage, and replacement of national holidays with the English ones. It leads to the association of the English language to the elite cultural groups of the society and outlining the social inequalities [7, p.21-23].

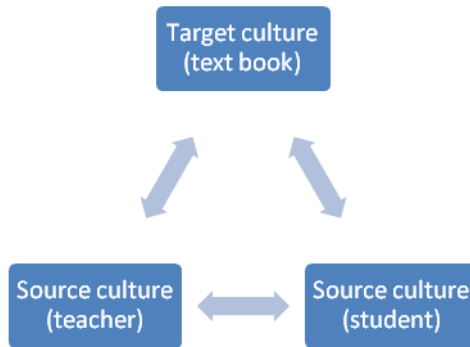
Phillipson (1992) has introduced the term linguistic imperialism which means that “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” [8, p .47]. The dominance of English can be varied: function of the language itself, active financial, technological promotion, conscious choice of the speakers of another languages, global communication, mass media, and control over the mental flow.

Atkinson (1999) introduced a new concept of “received view of culture...all-encompassing systems of rules or norms that substantially determine personal behavior” [1, p. 626]. According to the author, the teacher must be aware of that there are no two different individuals who would share the same experiences and knowledge or generally saying the same culture [1, p. 625-654]. Though Gonzales considers that teaching English is nothing but teaching English for specific purposes.

On the process of teaching and learning culture it must be approached as two major issues: the cultural content and culture materials. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) state that there are three types of cultural information that can be used in language curriculum: 1. “source culture materials” oriented towards the native culture; 2. “target culture materials” oriented towards the target culture; 3. “international target culture materials” oriented towards a large range

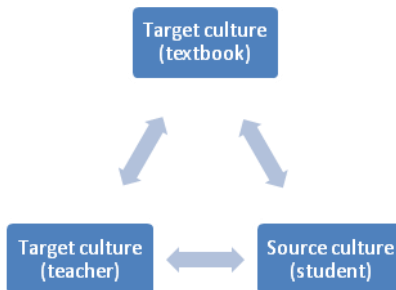
of cultures. As it was mentioned, the culture teaching is not just a gathering of data but must supply reflections on the cross-cultural encounters.

McKay illustrates two types of contexts in which target culture content can be introduced: 1. When the teacher and the student belong to the same cultural framework, but the materials display the contents from target culture.



***Fig. 1.2. Teacher- Student: The Same Cultural Framework***

2. When the students are from the source culture and the teacher is from the target culture [7, p.88-89].



***Fig. 1.3. Teacher – Student: The Varied Cultural Frameworks***

Exploring culture in foreign language studies requires students to engage in authentic contexts in order to develop their ability to live in a variety of cultures. This intercultural ability can be resolved through the means of learning English as an international language.

Learning English as an international language opens the gates towards globalization, communication and mobility that promote infinite perspectives of experiences. It also gives answers to the questions like network society and communication/information society on geographical frameworks through cultural comprehension.

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