Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL)

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Abstract: This article reports on a study that explored teachers' perceptions of teaching English as an international language (TEIL) vis-à-vis their reported classroom practices. It is a small scale exploratory study which is based on an open-ended questionnaire adapted from McKay's (2012) TEIL principles. It was conducted during summer of 2013 and spring of 2014 at the foundation program of Qatar University. Following a standard qualitative coding technique and cross-case analysis, the findings revealed that although the teachers were aware of and incorporate some principles of TEIL, such as the use of the first language (L1) and promoting multiculturalism, they still follow native speaker models of teaching mainly due to the teachers' personal beliefs as well as the influence of the course books they use. These findings are not meant to be generalizable because of obvious study limitations such as the lack of prolonged engagement and data triangulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language has become an international means of communication due to the British and American colonization, the British industrial revolution, as well as the recent globalization process represented in the technological and digital revolutions. For purposes of travel, business, education, and the like, more and more people from different sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds are using English as the language of communication or, to put it in Jenkin's (2000) and Seidlhofer's (2005) terms, as a *lingua franca*. This unparalleled use of the English language has direct implications on the ways in which it is taught and learned, especially in the Expanding Circles (Kachru, 1990).

Kachru (1990) provides a framework for understanding the use of English around the world through three concentric circles: The Expanding, Outer, and Inner Circles. The Expanding Circle countries refer to the contexts in which English does not have any official status but is relegated to and often mandated for study as a foreign language. The Outer Circle countries include former British and American colonies, where English is used as an additional institutionalized language alongside other national languages. The Inner Circle countries (USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada) are the contexts in which English is formally used and recognized as a national language. People from Inner Circle countries have traditionally been referred to as native speakers (NSs) of English whereas those from the Outer and Expanding circles are called non-native speakers (NNSs) of English.

The forms of English found in the Outer Circles and some countries in the Expanding Circles have come to be known as World Englishes or localized varieties of English (Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1990). In addition, scholars have argued that these concentric circles can no longer capture the complexity of the use of the English language in today's postmodern world whereby many factors, such as human migration, have enabled people to travel across these circles (Graddol, 1997). However, the pressing question that needs to be answered is the nature of pedagogy for these emergent and diverse conceptualizations of the English language. In response to this concern, many TESOL scholars argue for the pressing demand of teaching English as an international language (TEIL).

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

English as an International Language (EIL)

What constitutes an international language might not be as straightforward a process as many would think. In order for a language to become international, for McKay (2002), it is not only the number of people who speak it or have familiarity with it but also the ability for the language to exemplify certain features, such as dominating different economic and cultural aspects. It is clear that English permeated international travel, international relations, tourism, communication, education, mass media, and socioeconomic and cultural arenas, and as such it can be classified as an international language.

In his seminal work, Graddol (2006) warned us against the possible demise of the use of English as a foreign language (EFL). What he meant was that "EFL [has] roots in the 19th century". However, he observes that this is changing rapidly because "in the last few years[,] pedagogic practices have rapidly evolved to meet the needs of the rather different world in which global English is learned and used" (p. 85). Among these practices, Graddol identifies English as a lingua franca (ELF) as a direct response to the increase in the use of English by non-native speakers to communicate with each other. However, EIL scholars recognize the use of English by NNSs not only for purposes of communication among themselves but also with their native speakers' counterparts. Thus, EIL (and ELF) scholars postulate that the nature of this communication should no longer hinge upon 19th century practices which exalt the NS as a target for learning the language. Instead, the focus needs to be more on mutual intelligibility, strategies for interpretation and accommodation, and recognizing and appreciating language variation. These recommendations stem from the demographic changes in the profile of English users (Graddol, 2006) as well as everyday interactions carried out in English by NNSs (cf. VOICE- Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English).

Two famous corpuses have emerged from the discussions over the nature and use of the English language as a means of wider communication. VOICE is a compilation of naturally occurring, non-scripted interactions taking place face-to-face between speakers of English who share different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Another corpus with similar objective, but involves different users' profile, is that of the Asian Corpus of English (ACE). Both corpuses were initiated in the beginning of the second millennia and have showed the variability of the English language use among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. This line of research suggests a reconsideration of the objectives of teaching English as well as a reexamination of the assumptions underlying mainstream TESOL teaching methodology (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

After the inception of the above mentioned corpuses, several studies have been undertaken in order to investigate the attitudes and beliefs about teaching EIL. In the Gulf region, Ali (2009) interviewed teachers from the Outer Circle in a Gulf Cooperation Country (GCC) about the hiring practices in the GCC. The teachers expressed concerns about these practices and felt discriminated against because there is a favorable tendency toward hiring and privileging teachers from the Inner Circle. She also surveyed 31 students about the difference between NS teachers and NNS teachers. However, her findings showed that the students did not articulate any clear difference between the two. In addition, none of the students referred to western teachers when Ali discussed with them the desirable qualities in an English language teacher. While acknowledging the limitations of her study as well as calling for further research, Ali's findings suggest a re-examination of the notion of qualified teachers along the EIL principles discussed below.

In her seminal work, Jenkins (2007) cogently shows that the attitudes held by English language teachers, especially NNS teachers, are far from being positive. Some researchers attribute this negative attitude to the tendency that teachers are less comfortable with including cultural material in their classroom which does not conform to Inner Circle cultures (Llurda, 2009). Against this backdrop, Brown (2012) suggests that curriculum developers should learn from comparing the assumptions of traditional English language curricula with those of EIL's. In particular, when it comes to culture, the needs of the students should be taken into consideration as to which culture(s) best suits their leaning goals.

In Malaysia, Ali (2014) has interviewed experienced and novice English language educators about their views and attitudes toward EIL. Her findings indicate positive and negative attitudes toward implementing a curriculum based on the principles of EIL in her native country of Malaysia. On the one hand, the practitioners appreciated the notion of EIL as it relates to globalization. Ali interprets this as a paradigm shift representing a move away from traditional native speaker model of teaching English. In addition, her participants recognized the importance and relevance of the goals and assumptions of EIL in preparing future generations of Malaysia as well as equipping them with skills necessary to function as

competent international users of English. The participants have also recounted that they used some elements of EIL in their classrooms without being aware of this fact. On the other hand, Ali's participants have been resistant to pedagogical changes in the light of EIL principles because they still favor and depend on native speaker varieties as a model of teaching in their classrooms.

3. PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING EIL

Based on the discussion of the status of EIL, a number of scholars have recently joined efforts in edited books (e.g., Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, & Renandya, 2012; Marlina, R. & Giri, R. A., 2014; Sharifian, 2009) in order to "share ideas and principles to guide critical and informed practice and reflection in teaching" (Alsagoff, p. 5). It is clear that the intention of the authors is not to dictate certain teaching methodologies, as it was the practice in the past. However, there are certain principles emanating from the theoretical and practical discussion of EIL that can be helpful in thinking about classroom teaching. McKay (2012) articulates seven guiding principles for classroom teaching. In this article, I highlight three of them based on the themes that emerged from the findings of the study described below.

A respect for and promotion of multilingualism

This is based on the realization that the majority of those who use English for communication purposes come from different linguistic backgrounds. The different languages used by these users of English serve as a valuable source of personal and social identity. Therefore, educators need to observe this fact and work toward helping the learners to preserve and promote their different languages alongside the English language. In the study described below, this meant the pedagogical use of Arabic since it is the first language (L1) of the students at Qatar University.

A pedagogy that resonates with the local linguistic landscape

Educators agree that English is learned to achieve different purposes, such as access to higher education, acquisition of scholarly knowledge, employment opportunities, travel and tourism, etc. It is not, therefore, conceivable to develop a pedagogy by which all of the different purposes are met. Pedagogical decisions made by the teachers should take certain factors into consideration: the different languages used in the local context, the learners' beliefs about and attitude toward these languages, the main purposes for which the learners are learning English, the local culture of learning and its nuances, such as valuing teacher-fronted activities, and etc. Following these example shows that taking the local context into consideration can have implications on both the language that educators choose to teach as well as their choice of the specific English variety to be emphasized.

Curricula that promotes cross-cultural awareness

It is logical to think that, if English is used for cross-cultural communication, the English language curricula should reflect this aspect. That is, students would need to learn about different cultures in order to reflect on their own cultural values and norms. This will not be attained by learning about the target language culture (the English-speaking countries) alone. Other cultures must concomitantly feature in the curricula so that the learners can increase their knowledge and sensitivity as well as appreciate cross-cultural differences.

The EIL principles and theoretical discussions can also be seen through the lens of socio-cultural theory. This theory views language as a situated practice and embedded in sociocultural and political contexts (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Vygotsky, 1987). Since the principles described above are fairly grounded in these larger contexts, it can be argued that following them would enable teachers to situate their pedagogical practices in the realities of the classrooms in which they teach. In addition, there is little research investigating the view of both NS and NNS teachers about EIL in general. In particular, there seems to be a lack of studies that examine these views in the Middle East where the native speaker models are often accepted at face value not only in ELT curricula and classroom practices, which is the focus of the current study, but also in the hiring practices which seem to give NS teachers an added advantage (Ali, 2009).

4. ELT IN QATAR

The history of the English language in the Gulf Cooperation Council (henceforth GCC) countries can be traced to the role of Britain in protecting their British India trade route, curbing piracy on the Atlantic Ocean, and halting the skirmishes of the Ottoman empire. Thus, the British government signed Trucial Agreements with Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The US, however, dominated the scene soon after. The discovery of oil in the 1930's through the 1980's gave the US the upper hand, as their transnational corporations controlled the GCC oil industry. This period was followed by the post-oil era in which the GCC countries sought a knowledge-based economy. As a result, by the mid 1990's and early 2000's, many American (and other western-based) universities opened branch campuses in the GCC countries. In Qatar, a prime example of this was the establishment of the Education City which hosts branch campuses from six renowned American universities. Needless to say, the medium of instruction

in these universities (and a host of other private universities and international schools) is English.

The discovery of oil and its concomitant initiative of the knowledge-based economy attracted a lot of expatriate and migrant workers to the extent that this work force is outnumbering the local population at a ratio of 5 to 1. While Arabic is the official language, English is the language of business as well as intranational communication. Urdu is also used along with Hindi, Tagalog, and other languages. Although this sociolinguistic and cultural diversity is the backdrop against which human and infrastructural development rest in the state of Qatar, there has been an increased sense of a need to preserve the local culture and tradition. This is not only evident in the debates on the local media but also the nationalistic and cultural projects the country is engaged in such as the establishment of a national museum, promotion of the Islamic museum of arts, the Arabization of Qatar University, and other initiatives. A prime example for the resistance of the hegemony of English in the media comes from a caricature in Al-Raya, a leading local Arabic newspaper, (August 13, 2014). The caricaturist depicted a teacher handing a local student his TOEFL passing score congratulating him and saying "you passed! Now you can go to any store or restaurant in Doha (the capital of Qatar) and fend for yourself". At the bottom of the caricature, the following expression is written in English: "No English .. No shopping!!"

5. THE STUDY

The aim of the current study is to explore teachers' perceptions of TEIL vis-à-vis their reported classroom practices. Since the study is driven by this objective, it does not seek to answer preset research questions. It is a small scale exploratory study which is based on an open-ended questionnaire. It was conducted during summer of 2013 and spring of 2014 at the foundation program of Qatar University. The findings reported in this study are not meant to be generalizable because of obvious study limitations such as the lack of prolonged engagement and data triangulation.

The context

Established in 1973, Qatar University is the only national university in the state of Qatar. Up to 2011, there were about 8000 students and the medium of instruction was English. In 2012, however, the Supreme Education Council (SEC), the body responsible for higher education, issued a decree whereby Arabic language would become the medium of instruction in the colleges of arts, business and economics, law, and primary education. The colleges of science, pharmacy, and engineering retained their English medium status. As a

result of this decree, admission to the university reached about 13000 students in 2012 and kept on growing in subsequent years. The current enrollment at the university is over 14000 students, according to the university's website (http://www.qu.edu.qa/theuniversity/history.php).

The Foundation Program

Before the decree of the SEC, students with low English proficiency level entering the university had to go through the foundation program before matriculating in their colleges in order to fulfill the English language, math, and computer skills requirements. After the decree, however, only those who are in the English stream go through the foundation program if they test into it. Those who finish or are exempted from the foundation program take two sequenced courses referred to as post-foundation. They mainly aim at equipping students with advanced academic skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Arabic stream students are required to take four new sequenced courses referred to as embedded courses. They aim at developing their English language for academic and workplace purposes. Some majors, such as Sharia (Islamic law), are exempted from the English courses described above, but they must take a two-course series to develop their basic communication skills in English. The curriculum of the programs (foundation and post-foundation) follows a traditional set of assumptions underpinning much of EFL/ESL curricula. This exemplified in the use of imported textbooks from western publishing companies, such Cengage Learning and National Geographic.

6. METHODOLOGY

The Questionnaire

Using an adapted version of McKay's (2012) principles, I designed a questionnaire consisting of five open-ended questions (see appendix A). The questions prompted the teachers to comment on their classroom practices vis-à-vis intercultural/cross cultural awareness, world Englishes or English varieties, the use of the students' L1, cultural representations of course books, and teacher-centered versus student-centered approaches. Following a simple coding technique, the responses of the participants were categorized based on the survey questions and cross-case analysis is also provided.

The participants

Twelve teachers were selected to participate in the study following a purposeful sampling approach. I first approached them in person to ask if they would be

willing to participate. Then I e-mailed the consent form and questionnaire to be completed at their earliest convenience. They were completed by 10 teachers, and for the purposes of this article, I include data from seven participants. This is mainly because three participants did not provide rich data in response to the questionnaires.

All the participants are experienced EFL teachers with over five years of teaching experience. Three of them are males while the other four are females. In addition, three of them are NSs (Edward, Joe, and Trish) and four are NNSs (Ashraf, Dalia, Jasmine, and Judi). The names are pseudonyms selected by the researcher to protect the privacy of the participants. The participants' variables (gender and NS vs. NNS) were purposefully chosen in order to facilitate the process of cross case analysis. At the time of the questionnaire, they were teaching at different programs inside the foundation English department. Ashraf, Edward, and Joe teach in the post foundation program while the rest teach in the foundation program. It should also be noted that I sought follow up interviews with Trish and Judi to clarify some of their questionnaire responses. The rest of the participants were either not reachable or follow up questions to their responses was not seeing as necessary.

7. FINDINGS

Promotion of multicultural understanding

All the teachers exhibited a high understanding of the inclusion of more than one culture in their classroom practices. That is, emphasizing not only the target language culture but also other cultures including that of the students. Some of them, however, placed more emphasis on bicultural issues rather than multicultural ones.

> Most if not all units/themes we start off or don't go far before asking for an open sharing of theme aspects from their cultures' perspective, some of the youth in their culture's perspective, author's perspective, textbook's perspective, (and mine if helpful to the situation)… Grammar, writing etc are often explained through contrastive rhetoric.[1]

The extract above is from Trish who implicitly lauded the course textbook for inspiring the students to reflect on different cultures. While she did not elaborate on what she meant by contrastive rhetoric, it is a concept

[1] Participants' quotes that are 40 words and longer stand alone and are indented while quotes that are less than 40 words are incorporated within their respective paragraphs.

that usually engenders the comparison between two cultures which has traditionally been understood as target culture versus local culture. Trish's perspective is also shared by Dalia who had the following to say when asked the same question:

> I do believe that in order for students to better understand how a certain language works and maximize the process of learning it, they need to be more aware of how it works in context. Hence, whenever possible, I try to encourage students to find points of similarities and contrast between the uses of the two languages in their different cultural contexts.

Unlike Trish, however, Dalia did not seem to rely on the textbook to bring about discussion and inclusion of different cultural understanding. It appears that she would provide such an opportunity as a supplement to her teaching because she went on to give specific examples of how she could help the students compare between the two languages, such as in teaching them "expressions used for greeting, congratulating or condoling people: the length, variety and necessity of usage".

Awareness of different varieties

It is interesting to see that NS participants did not place a lot of emphasis on raising their students' awareness of the different varieties of English for different reasons. For Edward, "it is not a learning objective in the syllabus and I don't have time". As for Joe, he does not talk about this in his classes because he mainly teaches "a writing course which adheres to academic formal writing" and to be able to raise his students' awareness of different varieties, "would be off task and only confuse the students, thereby negatively influencing their grades". It is worth noting that both Edward and Joe teach the same course, so it is interesting how they share similar reasoning for not raising their students' awareness of the different varieties. In order to do this, according to their reasoning, it would have to be spelt out in the syllabus, so it is not considered off task.

On the contrary, Ashraf, a NNS teacher who teaches similar writing courses to Edward and Joe, acknowledged the role of different varieties in his practice.

> I think in today's global environment it is an automatic topic of discussion in a language classroom. English today has many varieties and at least the two most popular ones, British and AmE are always present as two distinct set or rules of spelling in my writing classes. I found out that whenever I highlight any example related to two different varieties of English language students are really interested in such topics.

He pointed to the saliency of the topic in language classrooms as well as the fact that there are myriad varieties of the English language. However, he would emphasize inner circle varieties as opposed to other varieties from the outer or expanding circles (Kachru, 1990) because that is what he thinks would be of interest to his students. His view is also shared by Trish, a NS teacher, who, although teaches in a different program, which is the foundation program mentioned earlier, thought that British and American varieties are more suitable in her classroom. This is why she emphasizes "British and American spelling and pronunciation since [they] can be confusing to [the students]".

In examining the views and practices of NNS teachers, it can be seen that they also give precedence to inner circle varieties, namely American and British. For example, Judi stated that she raises her students' awareness "about British and American language … in the context of the lesson". She used the example of sports to demonstrate this, "I point the difference in vocabulary – you say football in Europe, but you say soccer in the US". When teaching listening, however, she stated that she "raise[s] their attention that there are different accents and different varieties of English". In a follow up interview, she explained her reasoning behind focusing on these two varieties. She attributed it to the widespread of these varieties especially in course textbooks.

Jasmine cogently argued for the importance of highlighting different varieties in the classroom. She maintained that

> Part of my job is to make sure that my students acquire a basic understanding of the fact that English is an evolving language, one of the most dynamic languages in the world; an international language which is open to constant change and modifications. I strive to make students understand that there exist different varieties of English language with specific syntactic, morphological and phonemic characteristics. The message I try to convey is that no variety is better than another.

She saw her role or identity as an EFL teacher as bringing to her students' attention how languages work when used in global contexts. In other words, her teaching involves raising the students' critical language awareness, especially when pointing to the fact that there is no superior or inferior variety. It seems, however, that she does so in the context of inner circle varieties only because she stated that she "focus[es] briefly on teaching students the differences between British and American

English: differences in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and usage".

It might be argued that course textbooks conditioned the teachers' attitude and practice toward the varieties of English in a certain way leading them to mainly emphasize British and American models. However, there is an exception. Dalia stated that she sometimes raises her students' awareness of the different varieties of English because "[t]he multicultural nature of… Qatar means that students are, or might in [the] future be, exposed to more than one version of English. Bringing their attention to the different varieties of English will help facilitate their learning process". She did not seem to be influenced by course textbooks but rather a sense of the local context or, to put it in McKay's (2012) words, she drew from the local linguistic landscape. Therefore, she connected the emphasizing the different varieties in the classroom with helping the students in their learning endeavors.

Use of L1

The teachers in the study accepted and, at times, adopted the use of L1 in their classroom practices although only one teacher, Dalia, spoke the same L1 (Arabic) with the students. She noted that "mostly all lower-level students resort to speaking Arabic in English classes when asked to work in pairs/groups…[because] of many factors: lack of confidence in their English, shyness, habit, [and] comfort". Although she did not draw directly from her practice because she used a generalized language to articulate her perspective, this might also be true for her classes. In addition, she provided specific contexts in which low-level students employ the use of L1, such as in pair/group work. Edward provided a crucial reasoning behind students' use of Arabic that Dalia did not explicate. For him, "students use Arabic to clarify teacher instructions and to discuss the content of the lesson". However, it should be noted that he, unlike Dalia, teaches advanced students. Despite this, he is aware of the critical need of allowing students to use their L1 irrespective of their proficiency level (Auerbach, 1993) when he stated "I do not make my students only speak in English".

Unlike Edward, while she endorsed and preached the use of L1 in her classroom for different linguistic reasons, Trish stated that: "Nevertheless, regularly I issue 'only English' with your partner times for shorter interactions, if particular vocab/grammar or presentation is the focus". This might either be attributed to the difference in proficiency level between the two teachers' students or a difference in teaching styles and beliefs. While Joe also shared similar attitudes and rationales for the use of L1 in his classroom, he added a behavioral aspect to the experience. He maintained that "the less

serious minded students casually use their mother tongue". What is more interesting is that both Joe and Trish would encourage the use of L1 by higher level students in order to help their low level counterparts. Trish maintained "strong students might help weaker students by translating a word during a class activity and whole concepts might be talked about in Arabic for group work". Similarly, Joe stated that "I find that many students with low L2 proficiency revert to their mother tongue as a way of questioning and understanding the material". The only difference between the two teachers lies in the articulation of the specific functions or activities of L1 use.

Ashraf provided more specific practices for his use of L1 in the classroom. His statements not only agreed with the rest of the teachers in terms of the need to use L1 with low-level students, but he also pointed to specific activities. For him, "In a class of beginners, I allow them to use bilingual dictionaries. I also give such students time to translate the words or vocabulary items in their own language". However, he did not see a pedagogical value in allowing high level students to use the L1 when he stated that he does not "allow too much interference of the native language in an advanced level classroom".

Acknowledging its positive role in L2 learning, Jasmine called for a balanced use of L1 in the classroom. She believed that

> Students should receive sufficient input in the target language and since teachers are the main source of the target language in the classroom, they should use L1 carefully…the use of L1 in the language classroom should be kept at a minimum.

Using a language reminiscent of Krashen's (1982) theory of comprehensible input, she believes that too much reliance on L1 would preclude teachers from providing L2 input and consequently hindering the learning process. Her recommendation therefore is a frugal use of L1, a position that Phillipson (1992, 2009) and other critical language theorists would interpret as imperialistic. Judi also shares similar beliefs and practices to that of Jasmine about L1 use. On the one hand, she believes that "students shouldn't be using their first language in the classroom". On the other hand, she claimed that she "allows them to use their first language at the elementary level when some students didn't [sic] understand the concept and other students are helping them". The incongruence between beliefs and practices is visible here, but at a follow up interview the beliefs of Judi are different. She endorsed the use of L1 but was not sure if her administration would, a tension that hinges on

the political ramifications of L1 use in the language classroom (see Auerbach, 1993 for a discussion of using L1 in the foreign/second language classroom).

Cultural representation in the course books

With the exception of Joe and Dalia, all the participants stated that the culture represented in their course books is mainly western. However, they differed in terms of how they feel and deal with it. The following extract demonstrates Ashraf's take on the topic:

> Unfortunately, the materials I am currently using represent the western culture. Most of the items I have to deal with things which are foreign to students or they are not considered respectable. I have to come up with my own examples to deal with such items. I create my handouts with examples and explanations from local cultures when such lessons or pictures from the foreign culture come my way. Some examples are examples of girlfriend-boyfriend, drinking, dating, etc. These are some items which are not considered as positive in the local culture. I have to replace them with ideas and concepts which are local.

Noting the use of the word "unfortunately", it is obvious that Ashraf is not in favor of western cultural representation in the course books. This is likely due to the topics that are not considered appropriate and in line with local sentiments and traditions. As an aware teacher, who is cognizant of the local culture, he takes certain measures to address the inappropriacy by drawing from more acceptable resources from the local context.

Unlike Ashraf, Judi, who is also a NNES, lauds the use of western culture, especially American culture. She maintained that the program uses "both American and British books, so consequently American and British cultures are represented there…I love American culture and I want to share it with students". In a follow up interview, I asked her about the students' reaction to American culture and she stated that the students "like learning about American culture" because it is "a place they want to go". Jasmine also shares similar views when she acknowledged the saliency of both American and British cultures in the course books.

> Most of the materials that I am currently using represent either American or British culture, which is quite understandable as culture is an essential feature of English language teaching. Since culture and language are two aspects closely intertwined, it would be quite difficult to teach English without relating it to its

culture…In order to overcome such difficulties, I often rely on warm-up activities which provide students with some background information and at the same time I try to create cross-cultural bridges asking students to compare and contrast both cultures.

Jasmine's rationale for the inclusion of western culture comes from a widespread understanding within mainstream applied linguistics which depicts the interconnectedness of language and culture. This culture is always thought of to be the target language culture, which, in this case, American or British. This seems to be Jasmine's theoretical orientation that shapes her beliefs and practices. However, this approach, for Jasmine, is not without shortcomings. Unlike Ashraf, who adapts and replaces alien or inappropriate cultural materials with local ones, Jasmine aspires to provide cross-cultural awareness.

While stating that the course books she uses include cultures from different countries, Dalia also concurs that teaching alien culture can be cumbersome.

The materials try to cover a wide range of well-known topics from various cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, American, etc.). I feel good about the various cultures students are exposed to as this can enrich their knowledge and entice them to learn more. However, discussing topics which may be completely foreign to students in a foreign language may sometimes prove to be hard and time consuming for both students as well as teachers.

It is obvious that she lauds the multicultural aspect of the textbooks because of her belief that it contributes positively to the learning process. However, her perspective regarding the appropriacy of these diverse topics to the local context remains to be missing. Moreover, while Jasmine and Ashraf stressed the difficulty encountered by students in comprehending foreign cultural material, Dalia added that teachers may also find it uneasy to prepare and teach such materials.

Two of the NS teachers thought that the material in the course books represented western culture. Edward put it blatantly that it is "western centric neoliberalism with a strong focus on progress and modernism". Trish stated that "many cultures are represented. We often discuss different perspectives". In a follow up interview, however, she explained that the material mainly focuses on native speaker models and that she would refrain from discussing topics that students do not view as appropriate. Interestingly, Joe did not think that the material represented any particular culture although he teaches the same course as Edward.

In the context that I am presently teaching in the material being used is adaptable and relative to all cultures of context; Technology and Globalization. It is universally specific, but one can maybe say that it targets a higher academically educated culture.

Joe did not relate the material to a specific culture and saw it as relating to different cultural backgrounds. This might be due to the technical nature of the courses he teaches which focus on writing research papers and teaching APA style. This does not, however, mean that the material is not western. These topics are also not culturally neutral and could be used to facilitate cross-cultural communication. For example, Ashraf who also teaches in the post foundation program recognized this and would assign his students research topics that drew from their culture or that of his.

8. CONCLUSION

This section attempts to summarize and examine the findings of the current study. As mentioned above, one of the goals of EIL curricula is to promote cross (and multi) cultural awareness. This can be achieved not by learning the culture of the English-speaking or Inner Circle countries only but also the inclusion of different cultures from Outer and Expanding circles in order to increase the students' knowledge and sensitivity to multicultural and cross-cultural differences (McKacy, 2012). The teachers in this study understood this goal very well and aspired to increase their students' awareness of different cultures, especially when the cultural content of the textbooks does not suit the local context. Most of the teachers thought that the textbooks they use draw heavily from Inner Circle countries' cultural norms. The response from the teachers to this content, however, differed from one teacher to the other. They were divided along the lines of emphasizing cross-cultural and multicultural awareness. This means that while some teachers were content with foregrounding English-speaking culture along with some comparison and reflection on the local culture, others, such as Dalia, Ashraf, and Trish aspired to introduce the students to many other cultures including that of the students' as well as the teachers'.

What is critical in this study is the unanimous understanding, acceptance and embracing of an L1 pedagogy by all the teachers. This represents a move away and a critique of the view that English is best taught monolingually (Auerbach, 1993; Phillipson, 1992, 2009), a view that is not only based on ideological grounds but also hinges on unexamined assumptions about the nature

of language learning and teaching. Through the lens of socio-cultural theories of language learning, we have come to know that, unlike mainstream SLA research, language teaching learning is about identity formation and negotiation (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Therefore, both languages (L1 and L2) are considered rich resources for the construction of learners' identity. The participants in this study seem to understand this and therefore did not deny the learners the right to use their first language to aid in the process of learning their L2 as many studies in the field recommend (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Cook, 2001, 2008; Harmer, 2007; Wells, 1999). In so doing, the participants have also encouraged and fostered a sense of bilingualism in their classrooms, a critical practice which is also in line with the principles of EIL discussed above.

A related theme to the use of L1 in fostering and raising awareness of multilingualism in the EIL classroom is the degree to which teachers use and bring to their students' attention the role played by the different varieties of English. Although there have been numerous studies critiquing the hegemony of native speaker models (Canajaragah, 1999; Holliday, 1994, 2005; Jenkins, 2000, Kirkpatrick, 2011; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992), there are still negative attitudes toward the use and incorporation of non-native varieties or world Englishes in the EFL classroom (Jenkins, 2007, 2014; McKenzie, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2005). The teachers in the current study confirm this latter attitude because they all, with the exception of Dalia, embraced and unconsciously placed a heightened importance of the varieties of inner circle countries. As mentioned earlier, this might be due to the pedagogical decisions represented in the course books used by the teachers.

9. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the current study is limited in a number of ways (small sample, lack of data triangulation, prolonged engagement, etc), there are certain pedagogical implications that can be drawn from it. The first and most obvious one is the recognition and use of the students' first language to aid not only in the understanding of the English language but also in reinforcing and heightening the learners' sense of their national and cultural identities. One tension that needs to be resolved is to gain institutional support regarding using the L1 since some teachers may not resort to it because the administration does not encourage it. It is also vital to use the L1 judiciously as has previously been documented in the literature (Auerbach, 1993; Brooks-Lewis, 2009). However, this use should not be limited to purposes of facilitating the learning of the L2 with low proficienct students only. It should be used because it is a valuable source of asserting the learners' sense of self.

Since Qatar is diverse and the students encounter different varieties of English from the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles for different communicative purposes (shopping, education, dinning, etc), the students would benefit from an awareness and tolerance of these different varieties. The teachers, for example, could bring to their students' attention, through classroom activities (e.g., videos, worksheets, personal anecdotes, etc), how these varieties work and what the students can do in order to understand and respond to them. A practical example comes from a story shared with me by Joe. Upon calling a restaurant in Qatar to order pizza, Joe (who is a NS) ordered cheese and mushroom pizza. The person who took the order was a NNS and obviously wrote it down as two separate pizzas (one mushroom and one cheese), but Joe asked for one pizza with mushroom and cheese toppings. Therefore, negotiation of meaning and asking for clarification are important skills to emphasize in the language classroom in order to prepare the students for such interactions.

Although teachers may think that the students prefer Inner Circle varieties only, research shows that many EFL students do not actually make any differentiation between NS and NNS of English teachers (Ali, 2009). Therefore, the teachers should critically examine the textbooks they use in order to bring about and facilitate cross-cultural understanding and communication as opposed to emphasizing the assumptions of imported textbooks that usually hinge upon Inner Circle cultures and varieties. In addition, examining the learners' needs and finding out their local learning culture would enable the teachers to better enhance their pedagogical practices. For example, if the local culture of learning values teacher intervention and teacher-led activities, which is often the case in the Arab culture, this aspect should be examined and incorporated into teachers' practices as opposed to relying on student-centered activities which emanate from Inner Circle countries' assumptions of learning and knowledge construction.

In summary, if we accept the fact that the English language is globally-diffused and thus used in diverse communicative contexts, this may negate the notion that it is a monolithic language with discrete varieties. As Canagarajah (2013) observed, this new conceptualization of the English language would mean that heightened emphasis should be placed on pragmatics (as opposed to grammar) and social context (as opposed to cognition) in determining the language ability of individuals. The findings from this study are instructive because they help us understand the pervasiveness of native speaker norms and how they are deeply rooted and ingrained in teachers' pedagogical and philosophical orientations. Therefore, this study recommends taking a middle

ground. While in agreement with Canagarajah's recommendation about foregrounding procedural (knowledge how) over declarative knowledge (knowledge that), I believe that teachers would need to strike a balance between acquainting the students with and training them for the use of EIL as well as preparing them for excelling in their programs of study which, for better or worse, draw on native speakers' norms.

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APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Aim: To ascertain the extent to which teachers in the FPDE at Qatar University are aware of and implement elements of English as an international language (EIL)?

Questions

Please answer the following questions. Kindly note that there is no word limit.

1. Can you think of specific examples from your teaching that you think promote the students' understanding of their own culture as well as other cultures?
2. Do you raise your students' awareness of the different varieties of the English language? If yes, how? If not, why?
3. Please comment on the use of the students' native language in the classroom. Give examples from your own practice if possible.
4. What cultures (English-speaking countries/other countries) are represented in the materials you are currently using? How do you feel about and/or deal with such representation?
5. Would you say that your teaching approach is student-centered, teacher-centered, or both? Please explain by describing some of the activities you carry out in your classroom.