

Appropriate methodology:
context, culture and emergent practices

Adrian Holliday



Early rationale

- Conflict between two educational domains.
- Private ELT originating in Britain, Australasia and North American (BANA)
 - Aggressive promotion
 - Methodology, training, qualifications, projects,
 - Teachers labelled as ‘native speakers’
- Mainstream tertiary, secondary, primary state education across the world (TESEP)
 - The majority of ELT
 - The largest market for BANA methodology
 - Teachers labelled as ‘non-native speakers’
- Making BANA appropriate to TESEP

Problems with the BANA-TESEP model

- Encourages a polarised view of cultural environments, systems and people
- Interested in “solving the ‘problem’ of marginalised communities”
 - **Canagarajah (1996)**. Appropriate methodology and social context. *ELT journal* 50/1: 80-82. (p.81)
- TESEP is by its nature imagined to be problematic

Western tradition of cultural profiling

- Objectification
 - Turning social environments into simple objects
 - Essentialist picture of culture that confines everyone to the stereotype
- West as steward discourse
 - You can only do well by learning from the West
 - 'Well done!'
 - 'Giving voice' to TESEP
 - Protective, simplistic descriptions of 'my context'
- A Western picture of collectivism
 - Pretends to be protective of group tradition
 - An image of cultural deficiency vs. always positive individualism
- A Western construction which serves globalised markets
 - Top-down globalisation
- A divisive, neo-racist cultural politics

Inevitable marginalisation

- TESEP 'contexts' will always be Periphery and non-Western
 - Only ever collectivist
 - Know their contexts because they are all the same
 - 'Non-Western' because they can be described in simplistic terms
 - Ignores the normal differences found everywhere
- BANA will always be Centre
 - Assumes its 'freedom' to be individualist
 - Not possible for its teachers to generalise their 'contexts'
- Encourages native-speakerism

Critical cosmopolitan appropriate methodology

- Remove the BANA-TESEP tension
- Make methodology everywhere appropriate to everyone
- Acknowledge the communicative knowledge and intelligence that all students bring to all settings
 - Basic communicative approach
 - All the people concerned
 - Communicating with local exigencies
 - **Breen & Candlin (1980)**. The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. *Applied Linguistics* 1/2: 89-112.
 - **Hutchinson & Waters (1984)**. How communicative is ESP? *ELT Journal* 38/2: 108-13.
- Not specific to BANA or distant from TESEP
 - Any classroom, class size, institutional setting and cultural background
 - **Normal** difficult circumstances
- The potential for positive, creative and innovative **cultural contribution** across boundaries
 - **Delanty (2006)**. The cosmopolitan imagination: critical cosmopolitanism and social theory. *British Journal of Sociology* 57/1: 25-47.

A shift in thinking

- From cultural disbelief
 - That TESEP contexts have the cultural richness to contribute positively to ELT without change and development
- To cultural belief
 - That students and teachers everywhere have the rich cultural and linguistic experience to contribute positively

Safe houses and hidden spaces

- Learning from the margins
 - **Contesting world orders, claiming centre ground**
 - **Stuart Hall (1991)**. Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities. In King (Ed.), *Culture, globalisation and the world-system*. Palgrave: 40-68.

- Safe houses and hidden spaces
 - **Free from surveillance**. ... asides between students, passing of notes, small group interactions, peer activities, marginalia in textbooks and notebooks, transition from one teacher to another, before classes begin, after classes are officially over. Outside the classroom: the canteen, library, dorms, playgroups, and computer labs. In cyberspace: email, online discussion/chat
 - **Canagarajah (2004)**. Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses, and critical learning. In Norton & Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge University Press: 96-116.

TESEP (?) writes back

Knowledge from the margins

Egyptian students organising their studies

Hong Kong pupils being communicative position to teachers

Taiwanese students practising autonomy out the classroom

Kuwaiti students using English for globalised identities

British pupils playing with each other's

Indian teachers acknowledging the human resources of large classes

Chinese teachers making their own communicative curriculum

Italian pupils playing with their migrant identities

Confining TESEP and BANA structures

Institutions, policies, resources, teaching methods, profiles, research methods, 'context' expectations

Appropriate methodology

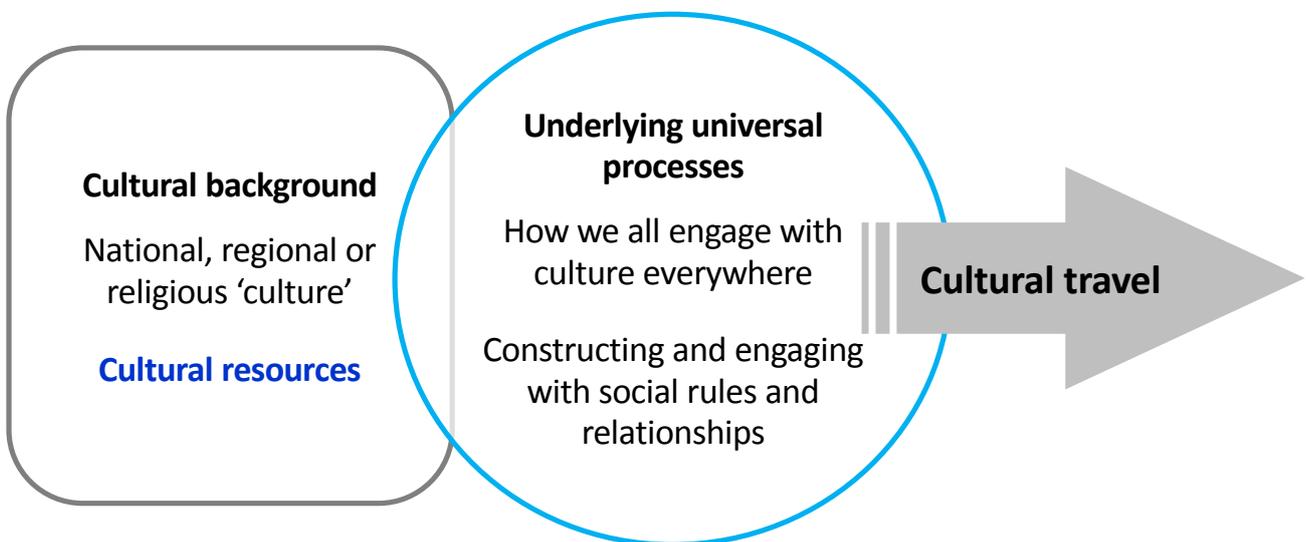
De-centred ethnography

- Can look around established preoccupations
 - Forgetting the TESEP 'context' profile
 - Not thinking like teachers
 - Students' vs. teachers' lessons; interaction vs. transaction
 - **Holliday (1994)**. *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge University Press.
 - **Widdowson (1987)**. The roles of teacher and learner. *ELT Journal* 41/2: 83-88.
 - Remembering what it's like to be a student
 - Students as people rather than learners as operatives
 - Leaving research questions behind
- Thick description across diverse and unexpected aspects of settings
 - The backs of classrooms, corridors, meetings, personal diaries, margin scribbles, conversations, misbehaving, personal talk, friendship groups, social networking
 - Researcher memories and narratives
- Reveals unexpected, **de-centred criticality**
 - 'I'm not interested in planning holidays but I want to communicate with the world'
 - **Gong & Holliday (2013)**. Cultures of change. In Hyland & Wong (Eds.), *Innovation and change in English language education*. Routledge: 44-57.

The amazing potential of Web 2.0

- Squeezing Web 2.0 into a traditional Hong Kong syllabus
 - ‘Print, visual and multimodal ... pop-music culture (e.g., songs, magazines, concerts, festivals, comics, interviews with pop stars, and so on)’ ... especially important for young people as they go through the often difficult adolescent stage ... everyday successes and failures ... searching for their identities ... constructing their self-image, and finding their self-worth.’
 - **Lin & Cheung (2014)**. Designing an engaging English language arts curriculum for English as a foreign language students: capitalising on popular cultural resources. In Benson & Chik (Eds.), *Popular culture, pedagogy and teacher education: international perspectives*. Routledge: 138-50.
- **Not the technology**, but what it reveals to us
- Inhibited by Institutional structures which don't allow space
 - Empty bullet points
 - Existing curriculum
 - ‘Real progress struggles at the margins’
 - **Warschauer (2004)**. The rhetoric and reality of aid: promoting educational technology in Egypt. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 2/3.

Social action view of culture



- Everybody does this naturally
- But powerful C2-L2 discourse
- Statements about culture
- **So may need help recognising and using cultural resources**
 - **Appropriate methodology**

Case study

- Iranian students
 - Holliday (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford University Press.
 - 'In our context we only want lectures'
 - Then they appropriate the communicative approach in their own terms

- Engage with the small culture of the communicative classroom
 - Read its politics
 - Non-compliant insurrection
 - Negotiate terms
 - Design a new classroom
 - Employ the teacher appropriately
 - Effect change on their own cultural terms

- We need to revisit their initial statements about culture
 - Essentialist culture and language discourse

- ... and our own discourses of culture
 - Essentialist culture and language discourse
 - 'They are culturally deficient'
 - West as steward discourse
 - 'We have to train them to think'

Other references

Amadasi (2014). Beyond belonging. How migrant children actively construct their cultural identities in the interaction. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Family Studies* 19/1: 136-52.

Holliday (2014). *Using existing cultural experience to stamp identity on English.* Unpublished Paper, <http://adrianholliday.com/articles>.

Kamal (2012). *Perceptions of globalisation among English language students at Kuwait University: voices of ownership.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Naidu, Neeraja, et al (1992). Researching heterogeneity: an account of teacher-initiated research into large classes. *ELT Journal* 46/3: 252-63.