Exploring other worlds: escaping linguistic parochialism

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This chapter argues the importance of developing a more worldly view of English in secondary education. It is motivated by three factors in a changing world:

1. With an increasingly global role, English is used more as an international language than as a language of any particular 'English speaking' nation. Indeed, English is probably used more by second language speakers communicating with each other across the world in different ways in a wide range of media, institutional, professional and technical discourses which transcend national boundaries, than by first language speakers within Britain, North America or Australasia (Graddol 1997)[1].
2. Ideology and prejudice is deeply embedded in the everyday use of language, supported and legitimised by group, institutional and professional discourses which form the fibre of society.
3. The forces in (2), operate naturally within a parochial, Anglo-centric English to reduce and degrade the 'foreign' other both abroad, and at home within an increasingly multicultural Britain.

Growing up in such a world, it would seem that young people in Britain need an awareness if not a use of English which goes beyond the parochial Anglo-centric. I shall begin with a brief exploration of the importance of a more worldly, non-parochial vision of English. Then I shall demonstrate how this vision might be facilitated through a process of making the familiar strange, by looking at a series of instances in which the 'expected' construction on 'us' and 'them' in English texts is changed and thus promotes a critical, non-parochial view.

The need for non-Anglocentric vision

I use 'parochial' to refer to a state of mind in which a particular language is thought of as characterising and belonging to a particular people or nation. In some cases this may seem a straightforward relationship, where all and only the people of one nation are the speakers of a particular language. This is arguably the case with, for example, the Japanese. Even if Japanese is heard in Bradford, it is most likely that it is spoken by a Ja-

[1] In an increasingly plurilingual world, all terms like 'mother tongue', 'native speaker', 'first', 'second' and 'foreign' language become problematic. Throughout this chapter I shall use 'first' and 'second' language to refer roughly to a language spoken from birth, as distinguished from one learnt later in life. I shall not attempt to distinguish 'second' (normally associated with another language with an established role within a particular country) and 'foreign' (normally another language belonging to another country).

panese person, and the Japanese speaker of Japanese is easily assumed the norm. Arabic can also be considered parochial, but less so than Japanese. In one sense all the first language speakers of Arabic are Arabs. Indeed, one definition of 'Arab', is 'someone who speaks Arabic'. However, the span of Arabic is geographically far greater than Japanese, across many countries. Furthermore, not all first language Arabic speakers would be equally comfortable with the label 'Arab'. For many Egyptians 'Arab' refers to people living in the Gulf, unless they are invoking 'Arab nationalism' as a concept to unite 'Arab World' countries against the rest of the world. There is no consensus about which is the 'best' or 'standard' spoken Arabic; and there is a strong feeling that 'everyday' Arabic is far removed from the 'pure' Arabic of the Koran.

One would think that English is rather like Arabic in this sense. Both languages have been carried by colonisation to different parts of the world where they have taken root and acquired very different regional standards (see Bax, this volume). English can however be seen to have a far less parochial character. There is no word like 'Arab' to tie all English speakers together. There is no concept of international 'English nationalism'. Moreover, English is not always used as a national language. It is spoken as competently, though very differently, in many places where it is not officially a first national language. For example, it is still the most frequent language for internet users all over the world; it is the language of Microsoft, and thus dominates world computer software; it is used as a lingua franca between business people all over the world (Graddol 1997: 13). From my own experience, whereas British teachers of French would normally speak English outside the classroom, English teachers in many parts of the world would always use English in front of their students both in and out of the classroom, and often when talking to each other. I once came upon two Egyptian colleagues speaking English to each other. When I asked them why they were not speaking in Arabic, they retorted 'Why shouldn't we use English? Why should you British feel you have a monopoly on the language?' In such contexts English is considered an important socio-economic resource. In Singapore, although there has been popular concern that English is eroding 'Singaporean culture', many parents do not want to risk their children missing the advantage of English-medium education (O'Brien 1999).

It can therefore no longer be simply thought that English belongs, as the first language, to Britain, North America and Australasia, or that it is this same, 'native' English which is taught as a second language to the rest of the world. This long received, Anglo-centric notion of English has given us the straight forward idea that (from an Anglo-centric viewpoint) 'we' educate 'our' young people in the complexities of 'our' English, and that 'we' teach a simplified version of this same English to 'foreigners' so that 'they' can talk to 'us'[2]. This is no longer the case. Other people are using English as their own; and very often they do not need 'our' English. Increasingly, English is a world language which 'we' use in a particular way as one community among many, each of whom use English in other particular ways, making 'us' just one partisan, albeit influential, political player in this community of English users.

[2] Throughout I shall assume an Anglo-centric viewpoint in the use of 'we' and 'us'.

I am not pursuing this argument simply to put 'our' English in its place, nor to suggest that 'we' should stop teaching 'our' English at secondary level. I wish instead to propose a new dimension through which we can enrich the way in which we see 'our' English. Seeing 'our' English as an interactant in a much larger scheme of things can provide a window onto worlds not previously encountered. In educational terms, 'we' are wasting a valuable resource in understanding ourselves and others by only being concerned with our own parochial use of English. We need to see and appreciate how our English is perceived in other worlds, and that there are *other* people using *their own* English about us. This will help us to deconstruct our own ethnocentricity and to become more worldly in the way we live with others in an increasingly multicultural society. We must all come to terms with how English is also 'foreign', how we can also be 'foreign' English users to others, and how the 'foreign' is also 'normal', within our own society as well as within the world. We need to acquire a worldly, non-Anglocentric vision - really to see things from the 'other' side - the 'foreign' as normal, ourselves as foreign, and taken-for-granted discourses as ideological. This will help us counter racism and to see how the ethnocentricity of our own position can lie in our own language. The three characteristics of a changing world defined at the beginning of this chapter require a completely different way of thinking about 'us' and the 'foreign'. Kress expresses this sentiment as follows:

> I happen to think we are in a period of truly epochal change; and in that it may be that existing ways of thinking will no longer serve in all respects, and that new ways of thinking may be called for in some crucial areas. (1995: 6)

To be citizens of this changing world and align ourselves with international, multicultural society, we must work first on ourselves - seeing how 'we' are strangers to others, and how others can use our English in different ways. Kress goes on to assert:

> The cultural diversity of societies - pluri-, multi-, or polyculturalism - will not be reversed. [...] A newer understanding of equity will be based on the realisation that all groups in society have goods, cultural goods, to which all others will need to have access as an absolute prerequisite for producing a culture of innovation. Equity will need to be seen as a matter of reciprocity. (1995: 8)

I would like to consider English as one of such 'cultural goods'; and if it is accessible to others, 'we' can learn from how they use it, and expand ourselves accordingly.

The impact of escaping the parochial and seeing 'our' English from other directions can be seen in what this author has to say about suddenly living in another, strange world of a foreign country where everything was different and even the simplest things could not be taken for granted:

> In the First World I had never paid any attention to the physical mechanisms which held my life together. It never occurred to me to figure out how the flush of a toilet worked, which secret route a gas pipe actually took, what a spark plug's purpose was. Their intrinsic nature had never concerned me [...] To me the inner life of mechanical objects was as abstract as a cubist painting. (Marciano 1998: 76)

Similarly, we need to become aware of the inner life of 'our' language - to see ourselves as strange - to make us understand better the normality of others and their worlds.

Making the familiar strange

In the major part of this chapter I am going to present a series of what might loosely be called textual instances, each of which force an alternative perception that facilitates a liberation from linguistic parochialism. Each instance involves a fragment of English which is either interpreted by, has impact upon, or contains elements of other worlds than those normally associated with 'our' English. Some of the instances will present the text itself for analysis; others present how text was interpreted by others. As the discussion proceeds, I will refer to three disciplines through which to approach these texts and interpretations, and to work this liberation from linguistic parochialism:

a) Making the familiar strange - a central discipline in interpretive ethnography - enables the observer to distance her or himself from the easy, prescribed agendas most likely to dominate perception.
b) Critical discourse analysis - based on the work of Fairclough (e.g. 1989) - confronts implicitly the ideological nature of texts by connecting language forms with the social forces which surround them.
c) Consciousness of the ways in which 'our' language Others 'them' - or reduces the 'foreign' other to something simple and inferior - provides an ongoing monitor.

Each of these disciplines will be elaborated as the textual instances are investigated. I see making the familiar strange as overarching with respect to the other two, as it is often only by seeing things strangely that ideology and Othering can be detected. Although each discipline derives from complex interpretive and critical traditions in social science, I hope to demonstrate how they may be accessible to the secondary English curriculum.

'Their' view of 'our' English

The first textual instance involves a user of English as a second language interpreting a text from the British press:

> I recently showed a copy of *The Guardian* to Sara, 19, who lives in a 'developing' country. She has never travelled abroad nor seen a British newspaper before. Although illegal, she has seen CNN and BBC World television in

> friends' homes, and listens regularly to the BBC World Service on the radio. She has learnt English at school and is an enthusiastic member of an 'English group' - friends who meet regularly to practice their English. Her parents speak English, as do many of their educated compatriots.
>
> She read the newspaper eagerly from beginning to end, moving quickly over the extracts of the newly published tapes in which Clinton talked about his relationship with Monica Lewinski. What she commented on in particular was a full-page article about famine relief in an African country. She wanted to know why the newspaper had chosen to publish this article at this time, when famine was ongoing, and why the journalist's name was highlighted at the beginning. She asked if the real purpose was to project the image of a 'caring' media who employed 'caring' journalists, while at the same time reducing the people in the African country to a starving 'foreign' other?

My own interpretation of her reaction - for there could be many - is that here is a member of a society acutely aware of the way in which the media - what people are told, can or cannot say - is an instrument of political power. She is thus automatically critical. This compulsion by people from politically oppressed societies to 'read' more 'between the lines' is suggested by Wallace, who cites the banned Czech writer, Sdener Urbanak's statement that:

> '"You in the West have a problem. You are unsure of when you are being lied to, when you are being tricked. We do not suffer from this: and unlike you, we have acquired the skill of reading between the lines."' (1992: 59, citing Pilger)

I am not sure that, as Urbanak continues to say, 'in Britain today we need to develop this skill urgently' because 'as freedom is being gained in the East, it is being lost here' (ibid.). Sara comes from a farther 'Eastern' place, the name of which I do not disclose in order to protect her, where 'freedom' in whatever form still cannot be compared to that which we enjoy in Britain. Nevertheless, I am arguing in this chapter that we *do* need to acquire a greater skill in reading between the lines, not only in the press but in our own language, but so that we may practise our freedom more fairly.

More to the point, though, is Sara's attitude to English. She comes from a background where there is considerable ambivalence with regard to English, which she associates with the West, which on the one hand represent international commercial, educational and cultural opportunity, and on the other, dubious cultural and political power. At the same time as finding a potentially corrupt President is 'nothing surprising', she challenges the more 'innocent' famine article. She problematises the style and choice of content in the newspaper as an artefact of the way in which British society sees itself. Sara thus, without instigation, asks some of the basic questions which are recommended in critical discourse analysis 'to help raise awareness of the ideology of texts' - about *why* the topic is being written about in the first place, *how* it is being written

about, what other *ways* there are of writing about it, and why in *this* case it is being written about in *this* way (Wallace 1992: 71, citing Kress).

There is nothing really new in the substance of her critical discourse analysis. One might say that Sara is overdoing her critique. It does not however matter whether she is right or not. It is the nature of the questioning which is important. Sara's critique is an important example of how seeing the (to us) familiar as strange makes one think twice about what 'we' are doing with our own English. In Fairclough's terms, to 'us' the way the journalist is presented in the article on famine has become 'naturalised'. It has become '*natural* and legitimate because it is simply *the* way of conducting' things (1989: 91, his emphasis). Because Sara is an outsider, she sees the article as 'strange', and sees through this naturalisation.

Innocent ideology

It is important to pause a moment to consider the nature of naturalisation. I have found it useful to divide the concept into three, as depicted in Table 1. These levels are entirely my own, which I am imposing on Fairclough's work for the sake of this argument. In terms of public awareness, *Level 1* is relatively unproblematic. Much of the British public in the nineties, with the talk of spin doctors in politics, and after the revelation, that came with the 'mad cow' crisis, that even science can be ruled by rhetoric, are aware of the way in which language is manipulated in the press, image in advertising, and statistics in what 'research has shown'. Although we may be daily taken in, we generally know that we are, and are in a position to play back, by choosing to 'buy' or not.

Table 1: Levels of naturalisation

	Source	**Ideology**	**Mode**	**Awareness**
Level 1	government, media, science	Thatcherism, New Labour, short termism	language manipulation, image, spin doctors, advertising, statistics	very aware, resistant, knowingly taken in
L**evel 2**	institutional, professional	commodification of education, health, charity, the military, quality assurance	semi-naturalisation of technical discourse in documents, reporting, charters, professional talk	semi-aware, initial resistance, gradually taken in
Level 3	everyday language	sexism, racism, bullying	naturalised words, phrases, emphasis, chauvinist discourse	often unaware

Level 2 is more problematic. Here Fairclough is concerned at how our society undergoes a more subtle change, in which, for example, education and the health services become the new 'commodities' (1989: 35). His work contains examples of how university prospectuses and government pamphlets have been 'invaded' by the discourses of consumerism and 'the customer'. Although the instigation of much of this change may have been through government policy in Level 1, in Level 2, as naturalisation ad-

vances, we becoming less aware of how citizens', patients', students' charters are only 'apparent' in their democracy. It is very easy for us to forget as we all begin to take part in the 'synthetic personalisation' evident in much media, work-place and professional interaction (1995: 89). 'The simulation of private, face-to-face, person-to-person discourse in public mass-audience discourse - print, radio, television' leading to 'the breaking down of divisions between public and private, political society and civil society' can easily be interpreted as a rational means whereby, for example, doctors are more effective if they talk to patients in a friendly manner. However, it also results in a '"political functionalisation of speech"' (ibid.: 80, citing Thompson). Fairclough considers how the 'counselling [...] now used in preference to practices of an overtly disciplinary nature in various institutions' - as in staff appraisal - is in effect a 'hegemonic technique for subtly drawing aspects of people's private lives into the domain of power' (ibid.: 81).

At this Level 2 we may thus be initially aware, but are gradually taken in. I remember myself and colleagues being acutely resistant to the discourse or quality assurance when it first arrived more than five years ago; but with the necessity to use and be involved with its technology, although resistant to a degree, we now conform to it as we daily speak its language.

The most problematic of all is *Level 3*, at which it is easy for us to be 'standardly unaware' of how ideology has become naturalised in our own everyday language (Fairclough 1995: 36). This is where we are racist or sexist without knowing, at the frontier of political correctness. This is where we so easily fall in with, and are seduced by the discourse of our peers, to label and taunt the 'other' in our midst. 'Ideology' here is not necessarily in the sense of political movements such as Marxism or fascism. It can be any '"systematic body of ideas organised from a particular point of view"' (Clark 1992: 121n, citing Kress and Hodge). Ideology can thus be present in everyday '"common sense" assumptions' that certain states of affairs or being, often represented by 'relations of power' are 'natural' (Fairclough 1989: 2).

Everyday talk

Two examples come to mind here. The first is again from my own experience. I was washing the dishes when Rachel, an eighteen-year-old friend of my daughter's came into the kitchen and said, '*You're* well trained'. Here, Rachel utters what at the time seemed to me a sexist, therefore ideological comment. I felt she was expressing surprise that I, a male, should be doing a task 'normally', in her terms, reserved for females. However, it is very difficult here to see whether she was knowingly being sexist. Indeed, it was not clear that she was even aware that her comment carried any ideology at all. On the one hand, 'you're well trained' could have been phatic, in that it is a very common phrase that is commonly said to men in circumstances like this, as a piece of mild banter - a comment that Rachel might have heard used many times without attaching particular significance. On the other hand, she might well have been making a bald-on-record statement, analysing me washing up in the kitchen, without realising that it was sexist. Whichever way, the sexism is deeply naturalised in common, everyday language, and difficult to see.

Another example of apparently innocent phatic talk is described by Lansley (1994: 52-3) within a teachers' room setting. Teachers talking about their students are heard to say 'He's really thick. He's not worth bothering about' or 'Arab students always have terrible spelling problems, don't they'. Other teachers collude silently. Even if they disagree, they do not wish to confront the speaker over such a small issue and 'reflect' or 'mirror' her or his statement to show solidarity. Though the second statement approaches racism, it might seem admissible while 'only' talking about students. It is 'only' staffroom talk. However, it gets more serious when colleagues are allowed to say 'Women are terrible drivers, aren't they', then 'Pakistanis are taking over the area, aren't they'. Nevertheless, collusion is still easier than disagreeing. The use of the question tag helps make it sound as though the obvious is being stated and that disagreement is all the more inappropriate. Lansley labels this type of talk as 'moral illiteracy', and sees it as the building blocks to prejudice (ibid.).

It is at this *Level 3*, that foreign, outsider Sara sees things going on in the newspaper article that we might not. She can see the ideology in what to us seems neutral because she is able to see our familiar as strange. It is this Level 3 on which secondary school English could easily focus through analysis of text and school talk.

'Our' English in 'their' world

My second textual instance involves a text written by 'us' which has an impact on 'their' society, and how it might be perceived by second language English users in that society. It demonstrates the direct impact of English on another world where English has an authentic value. It is taken from a popular tourist guide, *Morocco, The Rough Guide* (Ellingham *et al* 1998: 260):

> **Temara Zoo** (open 9.30am-dusk) is an unexpected delight. Most 'zoos' in Morocco are scrubby little enclosures with a few sad-looking Barbary apes. [...] Amid the imaginatively laid-out grounds there are lions, elephants, gazelles, jackals, desert foxes, giraffes and monkeys; there is a lake too, with pelicans and wading birds.

Although is it written for a British audience of tourists in Morocco, for whom it is supposedly a harmless description, when seen from the Moroccan viewpoint it is a text from the West about how tourism, which plays a major role in their own economy and is relevant to the lives of many people in their own communities, is constructed in their own country.

I recently showed this text to a group of Moroccan secondary school teachers, who noticed the implicit (Level 3) ideology which implies something substandard to the British expectation (see Holliday 1998). There is the obvious derogatory description, 'scrubby little enclosures'; but more significant is the veiled expectation in the understatement of 'unexpected delight' and the use of inverted commas in '"zoos"', which imply a British civilisation pronouncing, between the lines, about the rest of the world. After this, 'imaginatively', in the third line, emerges as almost patronising, as the '"foreigners", who know so little about "real" zoos, try their best'. Nevertheless, as Level 3

ideology, as with Rachel's comment about being 'well trained', one cannot even say that the writer's *intend* anything derogatory. Like us all, they are caught up in the texts of our society.

My analysis is of course highly interpretive; others may see the text quite differently. It would however be difficult for a text describing the society of others, especially as 'foreign' as sub-Mediterranean Morocco, to be ideologically neutral. For the Moroccan secondary school student, this text reveals not only a British, Western attitude to their own society, but also the way in which the potential tourist psyche is played to and constructed by the writers and publishers of tourist guides.

Genre and society

This brings me to another important point. The Temara Zoo text represents the disciplined genre of tourist guides and, despite its brevity, is rich in the features of this genre - bold head-word, with bracketed information to quickly denote place and opening times, followed by concentrated information, aided by lists, which appears neutral but is in fact loaded with opinion. Fairclough defines genre as the 'socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity' (1995: 14). Put another way, the text is:

> Embedded in larger shared public practices. [...] Language *is* social practice in which meanings are made, fixed, and shared publicly. Language *is* the practice of linking signs, rules and patterns in agreed ways within larger shared and purposeful material practices. (Lankshear *et al* 1997: 23).

The Temara Zoo text thus represents real social practice, not only in British, but also Moroccan society where tourism takes place. Moreover, as representative of an established genre, validated by publishers and the tourism discourse community, it represents the authority of society.

If presented in an educational setting, whether in Morocco or Britain, the language in the Temara Zoo text needs therefore to be treated as part of the disciplined genre of tourist guide writing, thus making it clear that it has an institutionalised professional base, and that it is not simply a body of description and opinion about Morocco. This established, the students will find the encounter with the ideology of the Temara Zoo text even more poignant. 'Most "zoos" in Morocco are scrubby little enclosures' is not simply an opinion about Morocco. Socially located within the discourse of tourism, it represents a concerted ideological power which the student must confront. Just as subject boundaries in other fields of education, genre boundaries in language education present a firm foundation of authority against which students can measure their own thoughts, thus contributing to the learning tension (Bernstein 1971). Moreover, because the genre has authority, and the student has to conform with it in order to participate in it, a very critical learning tension is set up. It is by having to negotiate a position with regard to the more negative ideological elements of the text, presented as authority, that the student will become autonomous in the struggle and learn to 'write into the discourse'. Classroom activity thus becomes authentic in that, as in the rest of social life,

individual language users are caught in a social matrix of genres within which they need to struggle to maintain their own text. 'Texts become an arena for struggle' in which a 'struggle over meaning takes place' (Clark and Ivanic 1997: 173-4, citing Vološinov).

Reducing the 'foreign' other

The overall impact of the Temara Zoo extract can be seen as the Othering of aspects of Moroccan society. Othering can be defined as the process whereby the 'foreign' is reduced to a simplistic, easily digestible, exotic or degrading stereotype. The 'foreign' thus becomes a degraded or exotic 'them' or safely categorised 'other' (Holliday 1999). This phenomenon has perhaps been given most popular attention as underlying 'Orientalism', as defined by Said (1978), where 'our' conceptualisation of, in particular, the Middle East, are constructed by our own agendas:

> suggesting not only a whole culture but a specific mind-set. It is very much the case today that in dealing with the Islamic world - all one billion people in it [...] - American or British academic intellectuals speak reductively and, in my view, irresponsibly of something called 'Islam'. (Said 1993b)

Said (1993a:xi) argues that the process of Othering is easily extended to what the 'modern metropolitan West' considers 'its overseas territories'. It is presented everywhere in our society, in literature, painting, the media and advertising (e.g. Kabbani 1988, Moeran 1996, Holliday 1996). An example of this preference for stereotypes over a more complex reality is exemplified in a television programme on Bosnia (Villiaumy 1993) when it suggests that whereas the British public, often encouraged by the media, prefers the image of the fundamentalist Muslim, many Muslim Bosnians eat pork, drink beer, dress and enjoy music just as Western Europeans do. A woman reports how journalists showed disappointment when she put on make-up and fashionable clothes for an interview, because this was not the headscarved, puritan image which their readers expected (Holliday 1994b: 127).

Othering is not however restricted to 'our' view of 'overseas territories'. It is deeply intertwined with racism, sexism and other isms everywhere. I would maintain that Othering is also at the root of bullying - where the 'different' school child or employee is placed as the 'Other' by the dominant 'in' group - someone perhaps not prepared to collude with the group's dominant discourse - not prepared to agree with staffroom statement that 'Pakistanis are taking over the area, aren't they' (cf. Lansley's discussion above). The 'Other' is thus no longer in distant lands. With the increasing movement of different types of people and their multicultural embedding in each other's societies 'Orientalism is dated' and 'has itself become a cliché' (Ahmed and Donnan 1994: 5). Jordan and Weedon argued that in '"postmodern" societies: the celebration of difference and the commodification of Otherness' is everywhere (1995: 149). They state strongly that:

> Blackness, for example, is often *celebrated* in the dominant - that is to say, racist - culture, especially by those in the dominant group who regard

> themselves as liberal, avant-garde and/or cosmopolitan. // The celebration of racial and cultural difference is a marked feature of the radical twentieth-century avant-garde (both modernist and postmodernist) in the West. (Ibid.: 150, their emphasis)

This point of view may seem extreme, but to question is important:

> Our questions simply are these - Isn't the Cosmopolitan often inadvertently a Racist? - How innocent is shopping for difference? [...] Doesn't this particular recreation often reproduce again, inadvertently - racist imagery and fantasy? (Ibid.)

And such questions are not far removed from Sara's questioning about the famine article (above).

In multicultural Britain Othering feeds 'the ideology underlying the construction of minority group cultures based on the principle of differences' (Sarangi 1995: 11). Baumann, at the introduction to his ethnography of the uses of the concept of 'culture' in Southall observes that:

> In Britain this Ethnic reductionism seemed to reign supreme, and the greater number of even of academic community studies I read seemed to echo it. Whatever any 'Asian' informant was reported to have said or done was interpreted with stunning regularity as a consequence of their 'Asianness', their 'ethnic identity', or the 'culture' of their 'community'. (Baumann 1996: 1)

Sensitivity to the 'negative stereotyping' implicit in Othering is currently present in Britain in many circles. This is seen in the *Right to Reply* programme on television, where complaints about the way in which various vulnerable sectors of the population, such as ethnic minorities and the disabled, are aired and the authors of media required to answer. There is thus concern and discussion about how, for example, the new Asian character on *Coronation Street* is depicted. My concern in this chapter is how this sensitivity can be methodically integrated into the secondary school English curriculum. This concern belongs in the English curriculum because it has to operate deep in the everyday language which we all use (Level 3 Table 1).

Baumann suggests a methodology, implicit in ethnography, connected with the principle of making the familiar strange, in an attempt always to look at things differently to what one would automatically. He tells us that while working as an anthropologist in South Africa, '"an African miner is a miner" was a neat phrase that [...] served as a slogan against reducing people's culture to their tribal or ethnic identity' (Baumann 1996: 1, citing Gluckman). Similarly, within a British context, he suggests that it is more objective to think that:

> 'a Southallian Sikh is a Southallian', and whether or not I have to refer to their 'Sikhnesss' or their caste to understand what they did would be a matter of finding out, rather than knowing in advance. (Ibid.: 2)

This is in effect distancing oneself from the 'easiest' label. It is part of the basic ethnographic discipline of distancing oneself from the most obvious agenda and opening to less obvious channels. In this way, the observer allows perceptions to emerge from evidence displayed rather than working from preconceived stereotypes.

Making the 'foreign' one of 'us'

I shall take as an example of how this may be done with my third textual instance, this time an extract from Hanif Kuraishi's story, 'My son the fanatic'. This is a difficult text to describe in terms of 'us' and 'them' because ostensibly the writer and all the characters are British. The story is nevertheless about 'Asians' in 'our' society. In the story, Parvez, a taxi driver, is a father who is disturbed by his son, Ali, becoming a religious 'fanatic'. I am going to suggest two readings of these extracts:

> [A] in which Parvez is interpreted as a member of the 'Asian culture', which many British people would regard as 'them'. Using Baumann's familiar-strange methodology (above), this Asian taxi driver becomes primarily Asian.

> [B] in which Parvez is simply one of 'us', thus countering the dominant discourse of ethnicity and cultural difference in Britain. Using Baumann's methodology, this Asian taxi driver becomes primarily a taxi driver.

I would like to suggest that the two readings are each dependent on which parts of the extracts the reader focuses on most in forming a picture of Parvez. In the following extracts I have underlined those parts which would support reading A. The none-underlined parts would I think support reading B.

> Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught the Koran. To stop him falling asleep when he studied, the Moulvi[3] had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez's hair, so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions. Not that the other taxi drivers had more respect. In fact they all made jokes about the local mullahs[3] walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live. (Kureishi 1997: 123)

3 Moulvis and mullahs are people with specifically religious, priestlike roles.

> Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with mushrooms and mustard and sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for his breakfast every morning. (Ibid.: 125)
>
> On one occasion Ali accused Parvez of 'grovelling' to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not 'inferior'; there was more to the world than the West; though the West always thought it was the best. // 'How is it you know that?' Parvez said, 'seeing as you've never left England'. (Ibid.: 129)

I am aware that I am leading the reader here - unavoidable within the constraints of this chapter. English teachers might like to turn this example into an activity, in which students are invited to find focuses that support each of the two readings for themselves - and, indeed, to evaluate the whole supposition I am making. My argument is that Parvez does undoubtedly have a Pakistani upbringing which *is* very different from, and culturally 'foreign' to that of the majority of British people, and which does influence his view of the world and of himself. This is represented by the underlined parts. This does not mean to say, however, that he cannot be *like* the majority of British people in other ways, and at the same time. His love for crispy bacon might be something he has developed in Britain, because it *is* British food, of a sort unlikely to be found easily in Muslim Pakistan. Nevertheless, he has the normal human capacity to eat crispy bacon if he wishes, when it is available. In this way, his likes, dislikes and capacity for variety of behaviour are as complex as anyone else's. Reading A would see this differently - that he is essentially narrowed in his behaviour by a reductive, Othering notion of Asianness, and that eating crispy bacon is somehow a *loss* of 'culture' brought about by him becoming 'Westernised' - no longer a 'real' Asian. This is how his son sees him, accusing him of 'grovelling' to the West. Reading B would of course see his son's behaviour as characteristic of any revolution of youth, which sees loss of integrity of identity in the old.

Put in other terms, Reading A represents a narrow view of 'culture', in which difference excludes and limits. Reading B represents a more creative view of 'culture', which allows diversity and complexity, allows ordinary people to be 'us' as well as 'them', and does not see the embracing and absorbing of 'other' behaviour as loss. Reading B makes Parvez travelled, worldly, and cosmopolitan - moreso perhaps than those who might be seduced by reading A. The film of the story (Prasad 1998), unfortunately 18 certificated and not accessible to secondary English students, makes much of Parvez going down to his cellar to find his own private space, where he can drink whisky and listen to Frank Sinatra and jazz. This is not, however, the act of a man 'grovelling' to the West and losing his Asianness, but of someone being his fullest self.

Perceptions of 'us' in 'their' English

My last textual instance is an extract from an Egyptian novel, *In The Eye of The Sun*, by Ahdaf Soueif, about an Egyptian research student, Asya, who goes to England to study. Significantly, the novel is written in English, not translated from Arabic - in itself evidence of an English that has travelled, but also a rare example for us to see, in an English

of which they 'they' have taken ownership, how 'they' think about 'us'. This extract describes the study of Asya's British university tutor - an aspect of 'our' education system in 'their' English:

> A room with modern furniture. Teak effect. But then, she was silly to expect anything else here. To expect deep leather armchairs, an enormous nineteenth-century desk, books piled up of the floor, a silver tray with drinks and biscuits, a window-seat looking out over the white sunny quad - with cloisters. (Soueif 1992: 329)

Hence, 'silly to expect anything else here', refers to 'our' system as strange, while her reference to 'their' system remains positive and richly resourced. In another extract we see 'their' inability to accept what 'we' might consider normal. When Asya arrives in her hall of residence room:

> On the floor there is a brown rug of the same texture as the bedspread, only thicker. [...] She looks at the room again, then she takes two paces and bends down. Using the tips of her fingers she folds up the rug and pushes it under the bed. She lifts the bedspread a tiny bit and peeps: white cotton sheets and a beige blanket. She peels back the bedspread, folds it up and pushes it under the bed next to the rug. (ibid.: 324-5)

By 'richly resourced', I mean that 'their' society is far from the reduced, simple and therefore Othering stereotype we might have of it. Finding 'leather armchairs', 'quads' and 'cloisters', which 'we' might normally associate only with 'our' society, within this otherness makes it many-faceted and complex[4]. Without this varied richness, Asya's difficulty with fluffy British rugs and blankets, which may seem to her less clean than the plain white sheet and smooth floor, might seem simply a 'cultural difference'. With this varied richness, such a simple view is problematised. As with the images of Parvez above, ('their') images **of** Egyptian life on an evening with Asya's family in 1979, with Rod Stewart and brandy as normal, play with our preconceptions of the foreign 'other':

> 'They sit on the balcony looking silently at the sky. A Warm, moonlit, July night. Rod Stewart is on the record-player and a supper of cheeses, cold roast beef, salads and yoghurt [...]. Mint tea is brewing in the teapot and three small glasses stand ready for it. [...] Hamid Mursi, wrapped in his woollen cloak with his beige shooting cap still on his head, sits in a woven armchair and longs for a brandy. (ibid.: 9)

[4] It could be argued that these are essentially British residues embedded artificially in a 'pure' Egyptian culture through colonialism or Western oriented globalisation (e.g. Pennycook 1994). I would instead maintain that such influences are a normal part of the complexity of any society. This is not so much a cultural hybridity as normal social complexity (Holliday 1999).

An account by a foreigner which makes 'our' normality strange may seem a simple reversion with which to end my textual instances; but perhaps the whole issue *is* simple. The response to Sara's basic questions (above) might be simply a matter of from whose point of view one is looking. Almost any text could be rewardingly re-written from 'their' rather than 'our' point of view - a feasible exercise for any secondary English class.

Conclusion

I shall now try to retrace the basic arguments in this chapter. Each of the four textual instances were selected to demonstrate how 'we' must think carefully and be critical of what 'we' are doing with 'our' Anglo-centric English as one partisan player in a wider world of international English. Sara (first instance), a non-Anglo-centric English user, perceives 'our' English as an ethnocentric artefact. The second instance, of tourist writing about Morocco, shows the impact of 'our' English as an ideological force in 'their' society. These realisations lead to an analysis of how ideology is embedded in 'innocent', everyday language, and can reductively misrepresent the 'foreign' other both abroad and at home, and form the building blocks of social 'isms', from race to common bullying. Moreover, the struggle to reveal and address this ideology is part and parcel with the struggle of individuals to write themselves into the maze of genres which underlie the authority of society. The third instance demonstrates how the ethnographic discipline of making the familiar strange can induce a different reading of text and avoid the reduction of ordinary people, like taxi driver Parvez, to a 'foreign' or 'ethnic' other. The fifth instance, of a description of 'us' by a non-Anglo-centric writer, shows how simply perceptions can be completely changed depending on who is the writer.

The overall message I have tried to purvey is that English is often far from what it may seem; and that different viewpoints must be brought to the most 'innocent' of English texts - that their Anglo-centricity must be revealed and addressed if we are to be appropriate players in an increasingly pluricultural world of English. Moreover, this sensitivity must be begun at school; and it requires disciplined, critical investigation.

Despite the simplicity of the final textual instance, this critical approach may seem over-complex for the secondary English curriculum. In my defence, Kress makes the following point. Although he is talking specifically about orthography, the principal can be transferred across all aspects of language. 'Complexity is not a matter for anxiety [...] but it is *directly* a question of the challenge posed by the structure of the world for the child' (1995: 13, his emphasis). Furthermore:

> English has always been an enormously complex subject - the subject that has provided a curriculum of the resources of communication; a curriculum of cultural values; a curriculum of aesthetic considerations; a social curriculum of questions focused on how we can and should live together; and a national curriculum addressing the issue of what it is to be English. (ibid.: 9)

I am basically arguing in this chapter that the direction and ownership of English - 'what it is to be English' - can no longer be taken for granted - by anyone.

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