Cultures and identities in ELT classrooms: Global considerations in the local context of Argentina

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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the current state of affairs in English literacy education nowadays in relation to cultural and identity issues as addressed in this book within the current international scenario of English language teaching (ELT) worldwide. I take the case of English rather than any of the several languages mentioned throughout the book because of two reasons. The first one is practical and brief: I am myself a teacher of English and this is my field of expertise both in teaching and research. The second more profound reason is that English is undoubtedly recognized as an international language nowadays, and therefore the discussion in this chapter may be relevant not only to ELT in the Latin American region, but also to other countries outside South America. Let me explain. In the field of TESOL, the voices from many countries in the periphery have been heard, especially from Asia and Africa, belonging to what Kachru (1996: 137) calls "expanding and outer circles." However, the Latin American perspective has been and still is underrepresented in general in academic publications. Hence, I wish to put forward my stance as an English as a foreign language (EFL) educator, teacher educator, researcher, and curriculum writer from one country in Latin America, namely Argentina.

The chapter is organized as follows. I start with some general observations about ELT nowadays. These considerations certainly apply to ELT in Latin America, but are simultaneously and purposefully linked to, and/or derived from, ELT in other international contexts. These observations concern the complex question of culture within ELT, especially within EFL education, which is dominant in Latin America. This cultural dimension lends itself to a consideration of identity issues, which take much of the focus of this chapter. This discussion involves an examination of the inseparability between the individual and the universal in ELT in general.

I also touch upon the political and ideological agendas (more or less) hidden behind ELT as reflected in the discourse of imperialism. My aim here is to connect this line of thought with the visualization of this chapter as an example of ELT as lived in a local setting. Seen in this light, this chapter responds to current calls from all the actors involved in the discourse of

imperialism: the importance of the individual and the local in descriptions of how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example.

In addition, given the pervasive linguistic and cultural diversity that educators face in their classrooms nowadays, not only in Latin America as we see in this book but also worldwide, I briefly review the conceptualization of the EFL classroom as a Third Space. This notion is relevant as it caters for the need to discover what unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds, in an attempt to be as much at ease as possible with each others' languages, cultures, and individualities. I strive to explicate the notion with specific examples from the Argentinean educational context.

The chapter concludes with a description of the current scenario regarding the aforementioned issues in Argentina.

A panorama of key views regarding ELT internationally as they pertain to the Latin American context

Let me begin with an observation which stems from the growing importance of cultural factors in language education and education in general (Labov, 2003), and in TESOL in particular (Atkinson, 1999, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 1999, 2003; Lazaraton, 2003; Siegal, 2000; Sparrow, 2000), in view of the increasingly multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural classrooms nowadays. In US and European contexts as well as in other English-speaking countries worldwide, the immigrant population and the native population whose first language is other than English has increased dramatically over the recent years. Factors such as immigration, migration, refugee movements, the labor market, and others have resulted in a change in the demographics of English speakers worldwide, with a significant rise of non-native speakers (NNS) to the point that at present they significantly outweigh native speakers (NS) in number (Kramsch, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Mauranen, 2003). In addition, those involved with ELT also need to take into account the current conceptualizations of English as a language of international communication (Paran and Williams, 2007; Warshauer, 2000), lingua franca (Jenkins, 2006; Mauranen, 2003), or global language (Nunan, 2001) which transverse the field nowadays. Despite the subtleties brought to bear on the distinctions among terms by these and several other authors, the internationalization of English (or whatever we choose to call the phenomenon) gives way to some underlying considerations worth mentioning at this point, which can be said to be common to all theoretical positions and perspectives on the matter. The reader will see that these

positions and perspectives are taken up, either explicitly or implicitly, in the description of the ELT situation in this chapter as well as in the descriptions of language education in other Latin American countries as included in this book.

First, different countries in Europe and North America have dealt with this new scenario in various ways, with significant singularities emerging in how educational policies have been designed and implemented across the globe (Nunan, 2003). Some examples, among many others, are McKay and Warshauer Freedman's (1990) comparison of language minority education policies in UK and the US; McKay and Weinstein-Shr's (1993) exploration of the relationship between US policies on English literacy, the available literacy programs in the country, and the individual lives of learners; Nunan's (2003) study of the impact of English as a global language on the educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region (i.e. Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malasia, Taiwan, and Vietnam); Vavrus' (2002) exploration of ELT and development in Tanzania; Bruthiaux's (2002) discussion about the role of English in development in low-income countries with the argument that in these contexts literacy development should take place in the L1, or a language known to the students (rather than English) (also Williams and Cooke, 2002) through community-based projects; and McCarty's (2003) description of new indigenous schooling approaches aiming at preserving indigenous languages and cultures in the US in the era of globalization.

Within this book, examples from Latin America appear in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Second, these conceptualizations of the status and role of English have deepened the discussion among TESOL professionals and academics about the discourse of imperialism in ELT, with passionate advocates and deterrents on both sides as we shall see later. A significant question for all parties here is simple: What does it mean to teach English in South American contexts? A commonality in all otherwise irreducible positions is that English is being used as a means of self-representation amongst native and non-native speakers worldwide, in socio-culturally diverse contexts of use, in order to symbolize, and make accessible, with more or less success, their idiosyncratic meanings reflecting specific and varied motivations for learning and using English. In a world where English is de-territorialized (Atkinson, 1999; Widdowson, 1993) and belongs equally to all its users (Warshauer, 2000; cf. Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008, 2009 later), the multiple and varied representations of the cultures (notice the plural) which accompany these users may hinder communication, and in

fact many times do. Because of the concrete and profound impact that ELT may have on the personal and social lives of learners, and the future of individual disadvantaged countries, authors like Mauranen (2003) stress the theoretical and descriptive need to conceptualize, investigate, document, and discuss the fact that English is an international or global language as well as the practical need to build corpora of English as lingua franca in diverse settings, with renowned interest in World Englishes.

Third, in an increasingly globalized world, or times of "informationalism" (Warschauer, 2000: 511), because of the pervasive cultural diversity of its contexts of use, the teaching of English offers an asset which has not been duly acknowledged neither given as much consideration as necessary in the midst of the frantic, hot and current debate in TESOL on imperialism (see for instance *Tesol Quarterly* volume 43). This plus point is twofold. On the one hand, ELT in classroom settings necessarily privileges access to and contact with multiple and varied cultures, a contact which in turn, depending on the setting, may favor direct cultural contact. In many countries in Europe, such contact may take the form of cultural immersion programs such as the Year-Abroad requirement, for instance (Alred and Byram, 2002). In Latin America, where trip-abroad options are difficult due to the scarcity of funding options, this contact is nonetheless possible through the Internet, films and TV, international advertising, different forms of art, multicultural literature, etc. On the other hand, this contact with Otherness generates an increasing awareness of one's own culture(s) (Byram and Morgan, 1994). This cultural dimension of ELT is nowadays in vogue and is reflected in the increasing number of publications on the topic in TESOL journals (as distinct from journals which specifically deal with cultural issues and language education in general, multiculturalism, etc.) like T*ESOL Quarterly, ELT Journal, World Englishes* and others.

Within this book, examples from Latin America appear in chapters 3, 5 and 9.

One specific aspect of this socio-cultural dimension of ELT includes various features of the learners' individualities, or in other words, identifications in terms of ethnicity, gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, special capacities, and many other factors. Put differently, it foregrounds information from different layers such as the home, the community, the school, the university, work, church, club, etc. (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) that reveals who learners are, what they believe in, how they live, and what family, community, and school environments make a difference in how they learn, how they engage in literacy activities, and what role language learning plays in their lives (Burgess, Hecht and Lonigan, 2002; Norton

and Toohey, 2001). "Knowing students individually also involves knowing them culturally", i.e. having "articulated knowledge of who students are individually-culturally" (Atkinson, 1999: 643). An interesting characteristic of globalization nowadays is that we have stopped talking about the members of other cultures, or the users of other languages, and have begun to hear their actual "voices", spoken by themselves, in our classrooms. Considering that diversity in these fronts (ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.) influences how learners interact, respond, and learn in classrooms (Chen, 2005), the question is: Do we really know who our students are? In particular, do we know what motivates our English learners to learn English, and use it? The key to the answer resides in research methodologies that foreground this focus on the individual and the local that I shall discuss later (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006) as well as longitudinal research carried out in community-based or classroom-based settings (Vavrus, 2002) with tasks, activities and materials which function as cultural mediators of the transactions of a given group of students with such tasks, activities and materials (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005) to obtain a "sense of the classroom" (Canagarajah, 1995: 592). From this perspective, this chapter brings to the attention of the reader the ELT situation in one local context, Argentina, from a theoretical perspective. This scenario complements other local realities portrayed in this book, crafted to capture one possible sense (among available others) of how English is lived in South America.

In this framework, we need a new conceptualization of language education, one that transcends the atomistic, de-contextualized acquisition of linguistic, non-linguistic, cultural, and other types of information and knowledge towards a fundamental transformation of the learners' actions and thoughts at a personal and social level (Chen, 2005; Widdowson, 1990). This view emphasizes the integral development of learners as individuals – a development that takes place when human beings reconcile new and challenging ideas with their pre-existing beliefs and values through diverse reading, writing and other experiences in English which lead to the multifaceted development of the self (Bean and Moni, 2003; McCarthey, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Vavrus, 2002). Teaching English in linguistically and culturally diverse settings goes beyond engaging in the phonics debate, learning about contrastive phonology English-(Spanish), having a repertoire of vocabulary-building, text comprehension (and many other) strategies, and the like. This practice-oriented, instrumental view of language education has resulted in a narrow discourse about ELT which pervades many publications intended for teachers of English in real classrooms. It has become manifest and dominant, for instance, in some practice-oriented journals of publishing companies in South America, which have been compelled to address practical issues pertaining to the education

of English learners in this country, given the scenario described above. One example is *The Teacher's Magazine* published by Edisa in Argentina, which is read nationally as well as in neighbouring countries.

Such reductionism, however, obviously misses the point. What teaching English in linguistically and culturally diverse settings means is, in the first place and above all, encouraging all learners to create, maintain, and/or develop their unique identities (Bean and Moni, 2003; Kramsch, 2003; McCarthey, 2001; McCarthey and Moje, 2002; Moje and MuQaribu, 2003; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Vavrus, 2002) – identities which are partly embodied in and partly projected by their use of the English language. From this perspective, the exploration of identity in the context of globalization is, as we shall see later, an exploration of the learners' multiple and subtle identities at local, national, and global levels (Chen, 2005; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002; Dlaska, 2003; Maloof, Rubin, and Neville Miller, 2006; Osler and Starkey, 2000; Starkey, 2007).

A final observation is related with the huge and demanding task that ELT educators in our settings face in the 21st century in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Byram, 2000; Lazaraton, 2003; Phillipson, 2001; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Sercu, 2006; Starkey, 2007). These demands may be hard, if not impossible to satisfy, especially for educators working in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Ideally, a lot would be required of the educators of these linguistically and culturally diverse populations (Byram, 2000 a; Deveney, 2007; Kramsch et al, 1996; Sercu, 2006; Starkey, 2007): a solid background in the EFL/ESL field; some knowledge about and command of their learners' native language(s); and some knowledge of and more or less predisposing attitudes toward their heritage culture(s) as well as the members of these cultures. The complexity of this scenario points to the urgency of finding pedagogic proposals which address the needs of these diverse learners and simultaneously reduce the pressure educators experience regarding their knowledge of multiple languages and cultures. The conceptualization of the EFL/ESL classroom as a Third Space, which I describe later, constitutes a first step in this direction.

Language-and-culture education

The cultural dimension of foreign/second language education in general (i.e. broader than ELT) is not new. It began to be given attention in the beginning of the 19th century in Germany with the concepts of *Landeskunde* (or Area Studies) and *Kulturkunde* (or the Study of Culture and Civilisation) (Byram, 2000 b). The reasons for its rise were mainly political (for example, to stress

Germany's national identity) rather than educational. Further political and military events in Europe during the second half of the 19th century led to discussions about the nature of *Landeskunde* (purposes, context, content, characteristics, etc.). In the second half of the 20th century, social, political and cultural factors (migration, communication beyond national borders, etc.) paved the way for an increasing awareness about the importance of cultural aspects in language education. In Britain in the 1990s this need was materialized in what is known as *Cultural Studies*, which foregrounded the cultural dimension of foreign language education with the aim of developing students' intercultural competence (Mountford and Wadham-Smith, 2000). This cultural dimension has been explored and developed since then (and so continues to be) by scholars in the European context, such as Michael Byram and his colleagues, as well as by scholars in the US such as Claire Kramsch. Such investigations have involved English as well as other languages. These developments have produced a significant body of work dealing with its theoretical and pedagogic underpinnings as well as issues of assessment and educational policy, among others, which are relevant to this chapter. I shall discuss pertinent considerations later.

Toward a definition of culture

Despite this accumulation in foreign language education on the topic of culture, defining the term culture is problematic, because definitions come from the humanities and the social sciences and involve disciples such as history, ethnography, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, literature, and cultural studies, among others (Atkinson, 1999; Kramsch, 1995). Both descriptively and methodologically, the concept is too wide, complex and vague (Byram and Grundy, 2002; Deveney, 2007; Kramsch, 1995) and there exist very few solid models to aid in its description (Archer, 1997). There is agreement in the literature, however, not to see cultures as objective, monolithic entities but rather as social constructions, i.e. the result of the perceptions of oneself and others in the context of a multifaceted reality representative of different subcultures such as social class, race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, and education, among others (Blanco, 2000; Geertz, 1974; Hugo, 2002; Labbo, 2000, Mahar, 2001; Shah, 2004; Warley, 2003). "In contrast with the classic view, which posits culture as a self-contained whole made up of coherent patterns, culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its borders. Such heterogeneous processes often derive from differences of age, gender, class, race, and sexual orientation" (Rosaldo, 1993: 20-21). Other authors like Genetsch (2007) also refute the notion of culture like essence and postulate it like "negotiation", i.e. as mutable and inherently diverse (Genetsch, 2007: 26).

This is the view embraced in this chapter and one that the reader will find that prevails in this book.

Why is culture the business of the language teacher? "One of the major ways in which culture manifests itself is through language. Material culture is constantly *mediated, interpreted and recorded – among other things – through language. It is because of that mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher. Culture in the final analysis is always *linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community that is both real and imagined*." (Kramsch, 1995: 85). From this perspective, a definition of culture should involve an imaginative dimension. As Kramsch (1995: 85) puts it, "Culture, then, constitutes itself along three axes: the diachronic axis of time, the synchronic axis of space, and the metaphoric axes of the imagination." Emotions are a key aspect in this imaginative dimension of culture (Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002). Hence, current ecological approaches to the study of language and culture maintain that "culture is no longer to be found in behaviors or events but in the symbolic construction of reality through discourse" (Kramsch, 2003, 2007: 245). In all cases, there are always visible and invisible elements in all cultures (Erez and Gati, 2004).

There is agreement in the field of TESOL on the predominance of "received but critical", and "critical" views of culture as Atkinson explains (1999: 629). According to the author, a "received" view sees culture as a static, monolithic, homogeneous and essentializing entity, usually associated with geographical and national boundaries. "Received but critical views" distance themselves from such essentializing conception but nonetheless adopt the concept. "Critical" views, by contrast, challenge the notion by incorporating issues of identity, hybridity, difference and others into the discussion. This chapter as well as this book as a whole embraces this last view.

This agreement notwithstanding, terminology weaknesses abound in the field. Terminology is laxly used in the literature within this cultural dimension of language education. There is a significant difficulty in the available terminology to capture the complexity of the issues involved in this cultural dimension of ELT. This difficulty reveals itself in the variety and multiplicity of currently available terms. The following ones, used loosely and interchangeably (when appropriate), are some examples:
- native and foreign text and culture (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 10),
- culture in the singular (despite the impossibility of singling out any one culture as a homogenous construct as the authors themselves acknowledge; Byram, 2001: 98; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 9;

Byram and Grundy, 2002: 193; Byrnes, 2008: 108; Erez and Gati, 2004: 585; Kramsch, 1995: 85; Kramsch et al, 1996: 100; Garner, 2008: 117; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 17),
-   cultural representations (now in the plural; Kramsch et al, 1996: 106),
-   cultural content (Abu-Rabia, 1998: 203; Smith-Maddox, 1998: 312),
-   cultural meaning (Byrnes, 2008: 108),
-   cultural significance (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 12),
-   cultural difference (Deveney, 2007: 311; Kramsch et al, 1996: 100; Rollin, 2006: 58), - cultural types (Deveney, 2007: 313),
-   cultural discontinuity (Deveney, 2007: 311),
-   cultural presuppositions (Kramsch et al, 1996: 106),
-   cultural contexts (Kramsch, 1995: 90),
-   elements or features of a cultural schema (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 206),
-   cultural understanding (Byram, 2001: 100; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 27; Kramsch, 1995: 88; Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 222),
-   understand otherness/diversity (Alred and Byram, 2002: 348; Garner, 2008: 118; Rollin, 2006: 58), and
-   comprehend (Lipson, 1983: 448; Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 204; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 19).

At no moment do these authors define these terms. What is understood by "cultural content" exactly, for instance? Overall, this brief overview of terms reveals the lack of unifying terminology in the field and the difficulty of capturing the complexity of the topic through specific terms when writing about it. This difficulty has not escaped TESOL and does not escape this chapter either (or for that matter, the others in this book), but it can be resolved as follows.

Faced with this difficulty, García Canclini proposes to refer to what's cultural rather than culture (García Canclini, 2006: 39-43). This simple terminology change from the noun culture to the adjective cultural has a significant implication: it reflects a conception of the object of study not as an essence or something that each group carries within itself, but rather as a subgroup of differences. These differences are selected and mobilized in order to articulate the "boundaries of difference" (García Canclini, 2006: 39). Within foreign language education, this terminology nuance, i.e. the use of the adjective cultural, was advocated in the past by Kramsch (1995: 84) in a discussion about the social and the cultural: "I will take both adjectives

to refer to the two sides of the same coin, namely, the synchronic and the diachronic context in which language is used in organised discourse communities. Both terms refer to an individual's place within a social group and his/her relation to that group in the course of time". This resort to the adjective cultural constitutes a useful solution to an intricate problem, and is one I adhere to in this chapter.

Cultural bias

Another concept which is relevant in a description of ELT education in Latin America is that of cultural bias. One of the reasons why the cultural dimension of ELT is complex is because cultural bias is unavoidable (Bereday, 1964). We all feel and act in accord to our ethnocentric principles and the outcome is a sort of "cultural egocentricity" (Byram, 1989 b: 50): we "identify our own local ways of behaving with Behaviour, or our own socialized habits with Human Nature" (Benedict, 1935: 7). Cultural bias results in honest and subtle differences of perception. In relation to literacy, cultural bias is important because the members of a certain culture share an understanding of the goals, assumptions, practices, etc. behind literacy learning, which make reading, writing, and literacy in general possible in such culture (Gallas and Smagorinsky, 2002). In this respect, Byram recommends a shift of perspective on the grounds that it would enable learners to "oscillate between two languages and their cultural perspectives" and regard both as alternatives (Byram, 1984: 211), re-interpreting some elements of other cultures not as threats to their identities but as contributions to them. "The ability to mediate between one's own culture and that of others' defines an intercultural competence" (Dlaska, 2003: 111). In a pedagogy of language-and-culture, as is required of ELT in the 21st century, the question of identity is central: the assumption is that the learner's identities are not "colonized", i.e., do not become submerged in the process of learning English, but rather are modified from a monocultural to a multicultural or intercultural perspective (Neuner and Byram, 2003). Exploring the individualities, languages and cultures present in the classroom brings about issues related with learner identities, stereotyping, empathy, cultural bias, and prejudice (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Kramsch, 1995) – among many others. The pervasiveness of these issues in teachers' and learners' daily lives is manifested powerfully in Kumaravadivelu's (1999) description of how the TESOL profession has continuously stereotyped Asian students. What can we expect of learners, and less aware teachers, when the TESOL profession engages in labeling and stereotyping of such kind?

Identity issues

Let me at this juncture come back to identity issues. One aspect of the socio-cultural dimension of ELT in Latin America that is relevant in this chapter comprises all the factors which influence how people see themselves and others. Identity matters because it is an aspect of how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with literacy in a first, foreign, second, or additional language (Kramsch, 2003; McCarthey and Moje, 2002; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Identity matters because people can be understood by others in particular ways, and because people act toward one another depending on such understandings and positionings. Because identity is fragmentary, multiple, hybrid, complex, fluid, and contradictory, it is always possible to paint many different portraits of the same individual depending on the relationships and interactions in the person's life that one chooses to examine: "these multiple identifications are never all activated simultaneously. Instead, the subjective salience of any particular identification fluctuates and changes in a dynamic and fluid manner as the individual moves from context to context, according to the specific contrasts which are present within the situation and according to that individual's own personal expectations, motivations and needs in that situation" (Byram el al, 2009: 13). So somebody can be said to be both aggressive and shy, for instance, depending on the spaces s/he is in, and the relationships s/he enacts within those spaces. When we consider identities as social constructions, we open up possibilities for rethinking these labels.

Seen in this light, the exploration of identity in the context of globalization as is relevant in ELT education in Latin America is an exploration of multiple identifications at local, national, and global levels, or in other words, "the cultural dimensions of social identity" (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002, 65). In our setting, identities are viewed as social constructions (Norton, 2000, Norton and Toohey, 2001): "... the aspect of 'construction' of identity implies that a self-image does not rely on essentialist formulations but is in need of a difference against which it can be defined" (Genetsch, 2007: vi). "All learners have the capacity to develop identities not only as national citizens but also as cosmopolitan citizens" (Starkey, 2007: 59), enacting multiple identifications depending on aspects such as language, religion, ethnicity, culture, etc. – at local, national, and global levels.

However, even though individuals build "a plethora of identities for themselves" (Bhatia, 2008), many times static identities are unconsciously cast upon them through labels (Chen, 2005; Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003) such as English learners, limited *English proficient, struggling readers, Third world citizens, socio-economically disadvantaged populations* and many others.

In this respect, Atkinson (1999: 641) points out the "basic human urge to categorize those in some ways different from oneself as radically, irreducibly other." Similarly, Byram (2001), Palfreyman, (2005), Ridgeway (2006: 12) and others agree that "to define self and other in order to act, actors first must develop a way of categorizing the other on the basis of comparison and contrast – that is, as different from or similar to known, socially predictable objects such as the self." The topic of labeling is significant in a discussion of identity because labels are monolithic constructs which simultaneously lead to and result from stereotyping (Kumaravadivelu, 1999) and have an impact on a person's identity. Vavrus (2002: 377) narrates her remarkable experience, certainly unimaginable to many, as a witness of explicit and extreme labeling in two private schools in Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, where students wore labels with the words "Shame Upon Me" for having spoken Swahili rather than English at school.

Hence, one primary role of educators in the 21st century in this direction is to engage students in resisting such static identities thus making diverse classrooms a culturally sensitive place to learn. The start is the recognition that the "acknowledgement and acceptance of multiple, complex cultural identities – which must have its foundation in really knowing one's students individually-culturally (...) should be a first principle of ESL teaching and teacher preparation" (Atkinson, 1999: 644). The fact that *resistance* is a strong word which may take different forms has been well exemplified by Kumaravadivelu (1999), who describes the subtle, calm but powerful resistance of a group of students to their teacher's imposition of text selections from the American culture – a resistance that manifested itself in silence and lack of cooperation in the classroom.

The notion of identity also embraces the clusters of stories that we tell about ourselves as well as the stories that others tell about us. As identities shape people's textual and literacy practices, their literacy practices play a role in their identifications and positionings (McCarthey and Moje, 2002; Tsui, 2007). In other words, personal life events and literacy development walk hand in hand. In the course of life, experiences such as new contacts, new interests, journeys (abroad), discoveries, etc. influence and transform a person's identities as reader, writer, or other roles (Berg, 2003). From this perspective, the study of relevant experiences can provide the foundation for the understanding of how learners continuously construct and re-create their literacy practices. What does this mean in relation to ELT? The answer is that as educators, we need to discover, among other things, which life events and turning points in our learners' lives make them choose or drop a certain literacy behavior, how far the choice of a specific literacy behavior represents a turning point in an individual's life, and in which biographical

aspects learners need to be assisted in order to ensure their full literacy development. This uncovering of the learners' multiple identifications makes educators more sensitive to their learners' needs in terms of their personal development. Accepting diversity in the classroom means that learners are not reduced in these identifications, precisely because identity changes and challenges are what literacy learning is all about (Berg, 2003).

Finally, readers, writers, and users of a language in general can come to understand themselves in particular ways as a result of a literacy engagement, be that reading, writing, or any other (McCarthey and Moje, 2002; Tsui, 2007). As way of example, identity may shift as a result of reading new material within a particular context, especially material that challenges some of one's beliefs based on one's social and cultural background (McCarthey and Moje, 2002). As language learning offers a new window on experience, learners are offered the possibility of perceiving things in new ways (Dlaska, 2003; Kramsch, 2003). These new experiences (in the native, foreign, second or additional language) may constitute a springboard for self-analysis. Any new language experience is challenging for learners as it may entail an identity modification through self-analysis. This can of course be good, or bad. "The cultural identity profiles of second language learners could be regarded as a resource or a hazard in the second language learning process" (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002). If learners find the new experience threatening, self-analysis may be a source of identity-based anxiety (Stroud and Wee, 2006) and stress, with accompanying feelings of insecurity and discomfort, and perhaps psychological and behavioural problems (Tong, Huang, and McIntyre, 2006). Conversely, if learners find the experience positively challenging, self-analysis may provide them with new insights into their identities (Byram 1988, 1989a, 1989b), a "new sense of self" (Tong, Huang, and McIntyre, 2006: 203), strengthening their identities (Byram and Morgan, 1994) and leading to self-confidence and security. In this sense, language learning, literacy, and literacy practices are tools for creating, representing and/or performing particular identities (Hammond Stoughton and Sivertson, 2005; McCarthey and Moje, 2002; Oikonomidoy, 2007).

The inseparability between the individual and the social in reading

The uncovering of identities as I have just described is congruent with the socio-cultural conception of English language education on which this chapter rests. TESOL scholars have recurrently stressed the need for classroom-based research as well as research on how individuals in different parts of the world live their literacy experiences in English (and in any

language for that matter). In fact, the socio-cultural cannot exist without this individual dimension as portrayed by these considerations on identity (Kramsch, 2003; Norton, 2000; Vavrus, 2002). As I have already mentioned, a decade ago, Atkinson (1999: 643, 2000) argued that "knowing students individually also involves knowing them culturally", or put differently, having "articulated knowledge of who students are individually-culturally" (my italics). This interrelationship and inseparability between the local and the global, the individual and the social, has been expressed in the past by the ethnographer Malinowsky (1923) with his notions of context of situation and context of culture, followed by the linguist Firth and later the anthropologist Hymes (1964: 41): "… the ethnographic study of communication makes closest contact with the social, political, and moral concerns with communication, conceived as value and a determinant in society and in personal lives" (again my italics). This line of argument is dominant at present as well. In Byram's (forthcoming) words: "This [research which is focused on understanding] is nonetheless an important area because it situates the didactics of intercultural competence in social contexts. Lantoff (1999, 2000a and 2000b) has argued for a theoretical position which recognizes the value of understanding processes of culture learning from the perspective of learners in informal learning contexts (…) It is also important to understand how learners in different settings in Latin America interpret their experience of [culture] learning." This chapter offers one concrete example in the Latin American region, namely the case of Argentina, but the reader will find other rich examples in this direction in the book as a whole.

More recently, this inseparability of the individual and the communal has been expressed by Kramsch (1995: 83), who argues for a deferral of an apparent dichotomy individual-social in language education: "The theoretical framework I propose here for teaching culture through language suspends the traditional dichotomy between the universal and the particular in language teaching. It embraces the particular, not to be consumed by it, but as a platform for dialogue and as a common struggle to realign differences." The apparent tension between the individual and the universal, the personal and the cultural, the local and the global, Kramsch (1995) argues, has been captured by the notions of *interculturalism* and *multiculturalism*. The former has been advocated by Byram (1997), refers to cultural understanding in different settings beyond national boundaries, and is framed in the European context. Risager's (2006) metaphor that languages and cultures "flow" globally has provided an interesting insight on the issue. What the metaphor means is that languages "flow" or spread across cultures in much the same way that cultures "flow" across languages (which is the predominant perspective in discussions about interculturalism).

The latter, by contrast, stresses diversity exclusively within national borders. Depending on which perspective one adopts, this book (and this chapter as a specific exemplar) can be said to constitute an illustration of research and/or experiences along both dimensions. On one side, the intercultural dimension of language education in general. In this book, the description of how the contact among cultures is lived in different regions in Latin America is present throughout. On the other side, the multicultural dimension, because this book will also foreground different aspects of individuals' multiple cultural identities within specific socio-cultural contexts. This chapter portrays one view of this reality in Argentina.

In this line of thought, i.e. the inseparability of the culturally-specific and the universal, the key lies in research methodologies that foreground this focus on the individual and the local (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006) as well as research carried out in community-based or classroom-based settings (Vavrus, 2002) with tasks, activities and materials which function as cultural mediators of the transactions within a given group of students with such tasks, activities and materials (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005) to obtain a "sense of the classroom" (Canagarajah, 1995: 592). This chapter (as well as this book) offers several examples of this kind of local description (theory, research, and/or practice) and therefore portrays the inseparability in this discussion between the two forces, namely the individual and the collective, the local and the global, the particular and the universal – a link which pervades not only in the theoretical rationale but in the methodological aspects involved in this discussion as well. This inseparability local-global has been expressed in cultural anthropology by Rosaldo (1993), in TESOL (in relation with discussions about culture and the field) by Atkinson (1999, 2000), Kumaravadivelu (1999, 2003) and others as well as by scholars from outside TESOL such as Byram (forthcoming), Kramsch et al (1996) and McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), in all cases with the same call: classroom-based research and the study of the individual using insider methodologies. In general, this book constitutes an example of both, and can be categorized as "work which seeks understanding of the experience of people involved in education" (as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change; Byram, 2008:91, his emphasis). "The truth of objectivism – absolute, universal, and timeless – has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and colored by local perceptions" (Rosaldo, 1993: 21; see also Geertz, 1974, 1983).

The drives toward the particular and the universal and the suspension of this apparent dichotomy as suggested by Kramsch (1995) foreground two

final aspects. One is the need to conceptualize English language education as a third space, which is something that I explore later in this chapter. The other is the focus on a dynamic conception of culture, i.e. a view that emphasizes processes rather than facts, that distances itself from monolithic and static perspectives, and that stresses its nature as a social construction: "the objectives that are to be achieved in intercultural understanding involve processes rather than facts" (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 27). The portraits contained in this book emphasize processes at two levels: theoretically, as reflected in this chapter; and methodologically, in research and classroom experiences conceived to embody this focus.

Culture and identity in EFL education in Latin America

I shall now focus on some interconnections between this cultural dimension in ELT and identity issues as they are of relevance in Latin America. One point to make is that the emergence of culture as a key component in foreign and second language education is not new, as the discussion above about the *Landeskunde* tradition in Germany shows. More recently, almost 55 years ago, Cordier (1946) made a case for intercultural education in schools. Between 20 and 30 years ago, discussions about cultural issues in ELT were radical. The discussion centered around the assumption that learning a second language meant learning a second culture and that patterns of thinking and feeling had to be re-directed (Brown, 1986). Learners were to be schooled into new values and molded into new behavioral patterns (Trivedi, 1978). "To acquire and use a foreign language is to enter another way of life, another rationality, another mode of behaviour" (Byram, 1988: 17), to acquire a different personality (Guiora and Acton, 1979). Second language learning was many times viewed "as a clash of consciousness" (Clarke, 1976: 382), i.e. a distressing and confusing experience which might result in an "environmentally induced schizophrenia" (Clarke, 1976: 379). Much of this thinking prevailed in ELT education in Argentina in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century (Banfi and Day, 2005), a view which is clearly exemplified by the widespread practice in those times of having students change their names to an English one. I mention this example in particular because names are considered the expression of identity by excellence.

Some authors have noted, however, that learners might indeed be unwilling to assimilate and accept the cultural burden of the target language (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984), preserving their identities (Dunnett et al., 1986; Kabakchy, 1978). In 1979, Guiora and Acton pointed out that learning a foreign language does not mean losing one's identity and assuming new

cultural roles, but rather having a clearly defined identity, a strong sense of self, a "healthy ego" (Guiora and Acton, 1979: 199). It is worth noting that still 30 years after this discussion was taking place, the debate in TESOL nowadays continues, in substance, along similar lines, materialized for instance in the discourse of English as a form of imperialism which adopts, as we shall see later, a more deterministic view now (Bhatia, 2008; Bolton, 2008; Dendrinos, 2008; Canagarajah, 1995, 1999; Esseili, 2008; Kontra, 2008; Meierkord, 2008; Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008a, b, 2008, 2009; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Saraceni, 2008). Because Argentina is considered a peripheral country in a peripheral region such as South America, the discussion about imperialism in ELT is undoubtedly of interest for the purposes of this chapter, and I shall develop it further later.

What the above reveals is that whereas in the past it was the teacher's role to change his/her learners' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as necessary (with the pertinent caveats as in Byram and Morgan, 1994), now it seems that English per se carries with it a more or less overt, a more or less covert, political and ideological agenda (Byram, forthcoming, 2001; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008a, b, 2008, 2009). Byram (2001), Byram and Grundy (2002), Edge (2003), Markee (2000), Singh and Doherty (2004) and others have taken up this matter of agenda, bringing forward the political, ethical and moral decisions and dilemmas that language educators face nowadays given the current international scenario in the 21st century. Byram (2001: 91 and 102) argues: "foreign language teaching inevitably involves the teacher in a political force-field and, whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are involved in a political activity (...) language teaching as foreign-language education cannot and should not avoid educational and political duties and responsibilities."

These theoretical discussions were accompanied by pedagogic developments that are relevant to the scenario described in this chapter, and may so be to the other educational contexts comprised in this book. Between 1972 and 1979, for instance, Morain developed several techniques to incorporate culture in the language classroom, such as the Culture Cluster, the Cultoon, and the Audio-Motor Unit (Elkins, Theodore, Kalivoda and Morain, 1972; Meade and Morain, 1973; Morain, 1976, 1979). More than 25 years ago, Byram was already bringing cultural issues to the attention of educators in Europe, and since then he and his co-workers have put forward a solid case for what is now known as language-and-culture education (Byram, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989a, b; Byram and Morgan, 1994). Kramsch (1995), Bredella (2000, 2003), Burwitz Melzer (2001), Byrnes (2008) and others have put forward the integration not only of language and culture but also of literature as well in a tripod: language-literature-culture. The intercultural

dimension of foreign language education favors pedagogies that focus on learners as researchers, learners as ethnographers, experiential learning, conciousness-raising (Alred, Byram, and Fleming, 2003, 2006; Byram and Fleming, 2001; Byram and Grundy, 2002, 2003; Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002), critical cultural awareness (Alred and Byram, 2002; Byram, 2001; Kramsch, 1995; Ktamsch et al, 1996), situated learning (Kramsch et al, 1996), the use of situated texts (Byrnes, 2008) and literature (Kramsch, 2003), the 5Cs approach (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities; Byrnes, 2008), culturally responsive teaching (Garner, 2008), critical discourse analysis (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002), theater (Heathcote and Bolton, 2001) and a variety of other options. Similarly, TESOL scholars have also recommended a focus on learners as cultural researchers and ethnographers (Atkinson, 1999), critical language awareness and critical reflexivity (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Murray, 1998), critical classroom discourse analysis (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), project-based pedagogies (Warschauer, 2000), and the incorporation of diverse cultures and local Englishes in the classroom (Matsuda, 2003; Warschauer, 2000), among other possibilities.

These pedagogic approaches contrast sharply with the purely linguistically-oriented practices of ELT which have traditionally prevailed in South America, and surely still do in many regions. These practices align with more instrumental views of ELT in the area which focus on the teaching of English as a system, are closely tied to training in de-contextualized and isolated skills (Viglione, López and Zabala, 2005), and which contrast sharply with the intercultural conceptions as discussed in this chapter. However, this situation is counterbalanced with efforts to raise the awareness of educators in this area of the world regarding the need to become more fully engaged with culturally responsive literacy practices (Porto, 2009). In these efforts, the pedagogies mentioned above are becoming increasingly influential. At this junction, I cannot but acknowledge, nevertheless, the perspective of authors like Sacarano (2002), who argues for the centrality of culture in education in Argentina, for instance, but concludes with a gloomy and pessimistic position about the difficulty or even impossibility of actually implementing the theoretical considerations around the notion of multicultural education in this country.

Identities and cultural colonization

I shall now expand on the discourse of imperialism that I mentioned before. Almost 20 years ago, Barrow (1990) and Valdes (1990) claimed that language teaching involved the inevitable transmission of particular beliefs

whether overtly or implicitly. Holly (1990), on a similar vein, posited that English teaching might be a form of ideological and cultural colonization, i.e. a form of indoctrination. This line of argument, based on the fact that English cannot be dissociated from the social, cultural, historical, economic, political, religious and other relations in which it exists (Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, 2003; Osler and Starkey, 2000; Starkey, 2007), sustains that the cultural norms and values associated with English in specific socio-cultural contexts can be transmitted and imposed as an expression of hegemony. One consequence is that the learners' cultures are "totally submerged" (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984: 15), constituting a threat to their national identities. More recently, Chien-Hui Kuo (2003: 223) warns us that "if multiculturalism cannot successfully create a space for subaltern groups, it simply becomes an accomplice to cultural imperialism."

In the field of TESOL, Barrow's, Valdes' and Holly's argument above gets replicated in Phillipson (1992), who has been dwelling on the topic of linguistic and cultural imperialism for over 15 years. The author talks of "the infectious spread of English within a wider language policy framework" and "triumphant" English as a result of processes of Americanisation, Europeanisation, and McDonaldization (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996: 436 and 440). "These developments embody and entail hegemonising processes that tend to render the use of English 'natural' and 'normal', and to marginalise other languages" (Phillipson, 2001: 191.) As part of the political, cultural, religious, military, corporate and other organisations which have contributed and still contribute to such hegemony, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) include TESOL. Edge (2003), Markee (2000), Singh and Doherty (2004) and others take up this matter, bringing forward the ethical and moral decisions and dilemmas that TESOL professionals face nowadays given the scenario above. More recently, building on this previous argument, Phillipson (2001, 2008a: 250, 2008, 2009) questions the apparent neutrality of terms such as lingua franca and global English, which he says are flawed and ethnocentric, and strives to redefine English as "lingua frankensteinia" in an attempt to capture its devilish effects.

Irrespective of the undeniable influence of Phillipson's line of thought on the TESOL community, several scholars have called our attention to recurrent pitfalls. In a review of his 1992 book, Canagarajah (1995) criticises the lack of both a sense of the classroom and the individual dimension in the work. That is, Phillipson misses the insider perspective in the debate, he himself leaving in the background the voices of those who have been disadvantaged by the spread of English. "What is sorely missed is the individual, the local, the particular. It is important to find out how linguistic hegemony is carried out, lived, and experienced in the day-to-day life of

the people and communities in the periphery" (Canagarajah, 1995: 592). This point brings us back to the inseparability in this debate between two forces, namely the individual and the collective, the local and the global, the particular and the universal.

This inseparability local-global has been expressed in TESOL in relation with discussions about culture and the field by Atkinson (1999, 2000), Kumaravadivelu (1999, 2003) and others as well as by scholars from outside TESOL such as Kramsch et al (1996) and McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), in all cases with the same call: classroom-based research and the study of the individual using insider methodologies. In subsequent work, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) and Phillipson (2001, 2008a,b, 2009) acknowledge the need to anchor English in the local cultures and classrooms in the periphery but does nothing to bridge the gap. For instance, he brings forward as evidence of imperialism a study in India funded by the British Council, an organization from the center which he himself argues perpetuates the hegemony of English (Phillipson, 2001). In addition, which areas of the world does the word "worldwide" encompass for the author (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996: 429)? Who are the "world's people" (Phillipson, 2001: 185)? Europe for the most part, touching upon Asia and Africa incidentally, and completely relegating Latin America to the point of non-existence. And when a peripheral country from Latin America like Argentina gets mentioned in passing (Phillipson, 2008a: 262), I can say as an Argentine academic and citizen that the argument and the evidence cannot possibly be more anecdotal, second-hand and untrue to reality. In this sense, this chapter constitutes an attempt to picture the situation of ELT in Argentina, in much the same way that this book portrays other local settings in Latin America, with a focus on other languages apart from English.

Other serious objections (Bhatia, 2008; Bolton, 2008; Dendrinos, 2008; Esseili, 2008; Kontra, 2008; Meierkord, 2008; Saraceni, 2008) have been raised with regard to the debate of imperialism, in particular Phillipson's last innovation about English as lingua frankensteinia (Phillipson, 2008a,b; 2009). What this counterargument has made clear, overall, is that English is not necessarily detrimental to the native culture(s) or the identities of its users (a point that Phillipson acknowledges to some extent). Widdowson (1993) argued contemporaneously with Phillipson's 1992 book that English expresses the socio-cultural identities of the members of the host country, as learners appropriate English to express their self and communal identities. This discourse of the "ownership" of English has been addressed by others in TESOL, as this chapter shows (see also Higgins, 2003). "Language education potentially gives access to new identities as it is based on the premise that

core aspects of other people's identities, including their language, are cultural features that can be borrowed or acquired." (Starkey, 2007: 56). In addition, English can be used by the disadvantaged "to undermine that superiority [the superiority of English institutions], foster nationalism, and demand equality and freedom (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 464), in other words, "it can also be deployed as a weapon of the dispossessed" (Warschauer, 2000: 516). We can see that TESOL does acknowledge and reflect this view too, together with others such as Matsuda (2003) and Vavrus (2002), though perhaps a bit later.

The EFL classroom as a Third Space

One way in which the EFL classroom has helped counterbalance the drawbacks of imperialistic conceptions of ELT in the region comes from its conceptualization as an ideal arena for bringing different individualities, languages and cultures into contact, making "connections and comparisons between cultures and communities" (Sercu, 2006; Starkey, 2007: 69). The aim is not only to observe the idiosyncrasies, languages and cultures present in the classroom by comparing and contrasting (Imhoof, 1968; Lado, 1957; cf. Kramsch, 2003), but also to promote a shift of perspective which will allow learners to abandon their monocultural awareness and adopt an intercultural perspective (Byram, 1984). Such shift of perspective, Byram claims, results from the challenge and modification of the learners' schemata as well as the recognition that other people have different schemata. The process is complex, but ultimately learners will gain new perspectives on their own society as well as on their own understandings of issues such as race, identity, diversity, cultural boundaries and barriers, etc. (Osler and Starkey, 2000). The role of educators at this point is to encourage learners to move beyond dichotomies or binary divisions (upper and lower, Western and Eastern, White and Black, Occident and Orient, etc.), which produce an idealized, essentialized, and static vision of the Other (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), toward a "Third Space" (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003: 234; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Kramsch et al, 1996) "by opening up a space of translation, a place of hybridity (...), a transformative and subversive force by which the production of cultural difference is mobilized (...), an ongoing process of relating to otherness" (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003, 234), "a hybrid space in which a writer may refuse to be either same or Other" (Genestch, 2007: 11). Genestch (2007: 20) says: "Hybridity is a heterogeneous concept. In its syncretistic sense, it foregrounds mixing of diverse cultural influences to a more or less homogeneous new whole. Recent arguments have stressed the dynamics of hybridity as process and thus as infinitely creative. Within such a view, hybridity connotes not so much a fusion of cultures than an opportunity

for an individual to draw on the best of a multitude of worlds and thus to escape conceptual restrictions. Discarding the myth of authenticity and purity, culture is not only seen as mutable and inherently diverse but also viewed positively as horizon rather than limitation."

Central in this new conceptualization of ELT as a Third Space is the notion that individuals in a given culture draw on multiple resources to make sense of the world and to make sense of literacy encounters (Moje et al., 2004). We live and participate in multiple worlds and as we do, we occupy the in-between spaces of two (or more) cultures. Being "in-between" different resources, funds of knowledge, or Discourses affects one's literate, social, and cultural practices. In sum, all individuals in a given culture use multiple funds of knowledge and resources to capture reality (including literacy in any language).

I include here some examples of resources, funds of knowledge, and Discourses which are relevant to the discussion in this chapter. Examples in the home include the conceptions of family, the jobs and tasks that parents (and other family members) perform within and outside the home; the different roles enacted by family members within the family; consumptions (goods, services, and other) by family members; all health, education, safety and other issues in the family; household activities such as cooking, cleaning, participation in ethnic and cultural traditions; the different ways of traveling between and within communities, towns, regions, countries, etc; male and female roles and activities in the home (and then in the school, community, region, province, nation, other nations, the world); and others. Examples in the community include the different educational, recreational, and other organizations and institutions; social and educative programs for children, youth, and adults; entertainment and educational summer programs; local and regional libraries; etc. Finally, examples related with peer groups can be seen in the relationships among peers within and outside the classroom (becoming important socio-affective support mechanisms); peer activities that children and youth perform alone in the school and the community (for instance, visiting friends to dance and sing; reading, writing, speaking, drawing, etc. different materials about TV, the cinema, the school itself, etc.; exchanging personal objects, books, magazines, lyrics, stories, etc.); peer activities that children and youth perform outside the school but accompanied or supervised by an adult (for example, going to the cinema, to a show/park/mall/club, taking different kinds of lessons etc), among others.

Sarroub (2002: 130) uses the term "in-betweenness" to refer to the immediate adaptations of one's actions and identities to the immediate context as well

as to the textual, social and cultural context of each individual. Inherent to this process of adaptations is the negotiation of meanings, ways of being, and life patterns that integrate values, attitudes, and the different identities of individuals (on the basis of identifications such as ethnicity, gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, political orientation, physical appearance, special capacities, and many other factors) (Thisted et al, 2007). Individuals create, recreate and connect such identifications through bridges, realizing them in a unique alternative for each individual – an alternative that picks up aspects of each one of those identities and constantly re-structures them. The result of this process of existing among two or more realities, two or more cultures, manifests itself in a concrete way through talk, body language, choices (of music, dance, dress, entertainment, reading, writing), etc. These choices vary according to the identity that one decides to express depending on a certain situational context. This notion of in-betweenness captures what individuals do to relate with one another in their everyday lives in a satisfactory way.

How do we visualize this Third Space in real classrooms? I argue here that the ELT classroom offers a possible home to this space within the curriculum, allowing for the intertwining of the funds of knowledge and Discourses mentioned before. At a local level, the ELT classroom narrows the gap between the school, and the resources, funds of knowledge and Discourses that children and youth use outside it. At a broader level, ELT nowadays allows for the integration of the intercultural perspective by welcoming multiple cultures in the classroom. This inclusion offers a wide array of relations, not only within the school boundaries but also outside them, encouraging learners to identify with characters, places, spaces, contexts and/or situations which may be too distant from their everyday reality. As way of example, an Argentine boy or girl in an EFL class, member of some of the Indian peoples, or the descendant of immigrants from neighbouring countries, can read a short story, poem, etc. whose central character is a Latino boy/girl in the US and can identify with the life experiences of this character, generating in this way a space of unique shared experiences from geographically distant locations and contexts, motivated by one specific encounter with reading, i.e. the reading of that story or poem. From the standpoint of this learner's everyday reality, such experiences would be distant or impossible. This means that the ELT class can make possible valuable cultural approximations in this way.

The future ahead in Latin America

The theoretical discussion offered in this chapter regarding crucial tenets in ELT as they are pertinent to Latin America implies the recognition, by all parties involved in language education, each one from their own positions, of the need to:

• Create, develop and strengthen the learners' "integrated cultural identities" (Maloof, Rubin, and Neville Miller, 2006: 255), exploring their multiple and dynamic manifestations at a local, national, and global level (Chen, 2005; Chien_Hui Kuo, 2003; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002; Dlaska, 2003; Starkey, 2007).

• Include and represent diversity, in its multiplicity of forms, avoiding the superfluous celebration of the folkloric, the exotic, etc. (Osler and Starkey, 2000; Sercu, 2006; Tong, Huang, and McIntyre, 2006).

• Approach Otherness, the Other, the different, difference. "The curriculum must begin with the recognition of these differences, because it is in this cultural heterogeneity that topics, concepts and propositions related to the learners' cultural identities can be identified – cultural identities with which learners "recognize" themselves (Thisted et al., 2007, 16). In this way, the hipervisibity of difference is avoided in the classroom.

• Generate favourable conditions of inclusion for learners in disadvantaged situations, i.e. learners whose cultural identities are omitted, silenced, distorted, or downgraded, creating a real space for these groups in the classroom, and avoiding simplistic views of pluriculturalism (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003).

• Recognize all learners as equal in dignity and right, promoting "dialogic and egalitarian relations among the people and groups that participate in different cultural universes, working on the inherent conflicts in this reality" (Thisted et al., 2007, 18).

• See learners as "citizens of the world" or "cosmopolitan citizens" (Starkey 2007: 59) and help them address issues of xenophobia, prejudice, racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and hostility to cultural and linguistic differences; cultural barriers and demarcations, etc. (Starkey, 2007).

• Promote an understanding and awareness of the universal principles which underpin democratic societies (e.g. diversity, unity, global interconnectedness, human rights), catering for the need to discover what unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds, in an attempt to be as much at ease as possible with each others' languages, cultures, and individualities (Starkey, 2007).

• Build a culturally pluralistic classroom environment which promotes respect, care, mutual understanding, equality, acceptance of diversity,

commitment to antiracism; etc.
- Implement the foregoing on basis of pedagogies, classroom proposals, pedagogic strategies, techniques, content and materials that are critical and culturally relevant and that therefore encourage reflection; awareness of the previously mentioned aspects; autonomy, dialogue, exchange of ideas; critical thinking; collaboration and cooperation; genuine respect, mutual understanding, and solidarity. When all of this is achieved, the critical and culturally relevant pedagogies become "emancipatory practices by creating the spaces in which learners can work toward their personal and social transformation (Chen, 2005: 17).

Naturally enough, how these needs are, and have been, materialized in ELT settings in different countries in Latin America is peculiar to each context. This chapter offers some insights regarding the ELT situation in Argentina, in much the same way as other chapters in this book portray different contexts in different countries, such as Brazil, Cuba and México. It would obviously be impossible to dwell on all of these considerations for the case of Argentina with some depth here. What I shall do in the final section that follows then is present a very general overview of the ELT scenario in this country.

An example from Latin America: the case of Argentina

Specifically in relation with the topics addressed in this chapter, the situation in Latin American countries has been underrepresented in TESOL. In contrast, the experiences in other areas of the world are well-documented (Bruthiaux, 2002; Clemente, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; McKay and Warshauer Freedman, 1990; McKay and Weinstein-Shr, 1993; Palfreyman, 2005; Tsui, 2007; Vavrus, 2002). I shall write what follows from my experience as classroom teacher, teacher educator, researcher and curriculum writer in Argentina.

A bit of background rescued from the Introduction to this book is useful at this point. Linguistic diversity is a reflection of South American multiethnic societies. Its territory is witness to more than 700 remaining native languages being currently spoken. There is also an increasing awareness in the region about the status of Spanish, its most widely spoken official language, as one of the potential "rivals" (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996: 437) of English as the main international language in the future – something that Phillipson himself does not acknowledge (potential rivals for him are Chinese, Arabic, and German for instance). Complex immigration and migration processes have given rise to communities where a number of

foreign and/or second languages are spoken. South America´s long history of cultural negotiation and exchange between people speaking different languages reflects the intricate and inseparable relationship among the languages, cultures and power issues present in the region. However, and despite the fact that linguistic and cultural diversity is a familiar phenomenon in people´s daily lives, comparatively little has been written about the political and ideological agendas behind the decisions taken at educational levels in the treatment of linguistic and cultural diversity.

As mentioned in the introduction, recent years have seen new phenomena taking place in the field of languages, such as the development of intercultural bilingual programs in the region. These are programs of all kinds, with Spanish and Portuguese both as L1 and L2, local varieties of Spanish available throughout the area (something like "World Spanishes"), indigenous languages as L1 as in chapters 6, 7 and 8 in this book, etc. The policies of protection and celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity available worldwide, mentioned in the beginning, have been influential in spreading international trends cherishing linguistic and cultural diversity in the region. At the level of research, continuous national efforts by CONICET in Argentina (the most prestigious scientific and technological research Institution from the National Ministry of Science and Technology) have led, for instance, to the creation of a Department of Anthropologic and Linguistic Digital Documentation. This Department is the result of an initiative to document four indigenous languages (tapiete, vilela, wichi y mocovi) in their ethnographic context from one poor province in the country called Chaco. This initiative belongs to a Program for the Documentation of Languages in Danger of Extinction called Dobes (Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen; http://www.caicyt.gov.ar/DILA) funded by CONICET and Instituto Max Planck. At the level of education, these trends have affected, and are still affecting, educational decisions at the national level in the teaching of native and foreign languages locally (i.e. throughout the region). Countries such as Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico and Colombia are placing increasing interest in revisiting how languages are being taught at different levels in their systems of education both in compulsory schooling and Higher Education.

Narrowing the scope to the case of Argentina now, this is a developing country with an unstable economy, constant poverty and unemployment in disadvantaged areas, and an emerging democracy. Socio-economic factors are a significant determinant of literacy development (both Spanish and English) in this country. For example, underdeveloped provinces do not have adequate buildings, resources and facilities are scarce, and when one considers aspects such as literacy-rich classrooms/schools and

digital technologies, the panorama worsens dramatically. Even though the governments at different levels (municipal, provincial, federal) are growing increasingly aware of the inequalities in education brought about by socio-economic factors, on occasions, in their attempt to level these inequalities, the result has been that school instruction has disregarded the formal teaching of reading and writing on behalf of "social service". Furthermore, while language education policies at the provincial and national levels emphasize the need to provide "equality of access" to education, they fail to take account of "equality of outcome" (McKay and Warshauer Freedman, 1990: 399; Warshauer, 2000) or "equality of opportunity to achieve" (McCarty, 2003: 149) for a variety of reasons.

It is important to note that English is a dominant and prestigious foreign language. Forty years ago and much before, its local "rival" was French, while nowadays French is in plain decay and being increasingly replaced by Italian, German, and, since the creation of Mercosur, Portuguese. Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur) is a geopolitical and economic association of countries in South America, integrated by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, which was created in 1991. Other participating countries in the region are Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia and Ecuador. Interestingly enough, the official languages of Mercosur are Spanish and Portuguese (rather than English for instance). The creation of Mercosur has brought about an increasing and renowned interest in the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese in the region (as chapters 3 and 5 in this book show).

The scenario is different and more complex in the frontiers of Argentina, or in immigration conglomerates, where different languages gain or lose power and prestige (e.g. Portuguese acquires strength in the Brazilian frontier, *guarani* is omnipresent in the border with Paraguay, etc.). The new *National Law of Education (Ley de Educación Nacional*, 2006) prescribes the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in primary school and extends its obligatory teaching throughout secondary school. Since 2007, English is therefore taught compulsorily as from 4th form (nine-year olds) both in private and state schools. A few new primary and secondary education curricula for English were passed in 2007 in several Argentine provinces – with a spreading effect that is having a nationwide impact. From this perspective, Argentina is a pioneering country in Latin America, whose example will be followed by other countries with similar characteristics in the continent. In well-off educational environments, English is offered as a service (indeed an expensive one) and is widely taught and learned from age 6 onwards (including college education) in private institutions and organizations in addition to the school time assigned to it by law through curricular documents. Disadvantaged populations, however, do not have

access to education in English or in any other foreign language outside of school.

Let me take, as way of example, the case of the Province of Buenos Aires, the biggest, richest and most populated and influential (culturally, socially, politically, economically) province in the country. So that the reader can picture this influence, I can say that this province has historically led the way as far as educational policy and curricular developments in other provinces are concerned. Now, one classroom in this province can host learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds such as indigenous children, the descendants of immigrants from neighboring countries, from Peru, Asia (Corea, Taiwan) or some African nations, the children of homeless farmers or rural workers in precarious conditions, children from neighborhoods stigmatized as low or dangerous, gypsies, migrants from other provinces, etc. The culture matrix is clearly complex. Since 2005, educational policies are being continuously revisited to meet the educational needs of these learners in the 21st century. Changes in the formulation of educational aims, new definitions of student profiles when leaving school, and curricular innovations respond to the theoretical considerations on culture, identity, and ELT discussed in this chapter. Central to these considerations are the emergence and development of new, changing social identities or identifications and therefore, new social needs that have to be met by compulsory schooling. One current assumption is that schools should provide a common basis to allow for a conscious and critical participation in society, i.e. schools should foster literacy development with the ultimate aim of empowering students for active citizenship (Osler and Starkey, 2005).

Current foreign language education in the country is in tune with the latest developments in the field (in particular ELT). English teachers are in general highly qualified, having to enroll in five-year graduate programs to be allowed to teach (cf. the short certification processes offered in the US and Europe to teach English learners). From a theoretical perspective, the notion of culture is nowadays embraced as pedagogically and educationally relevant within foreign language education in this country. It is accepted that education in general and EFL education in particular are framed within specific socio-cultural contexts. Professional development after graduation is seen as an integral part of current efforts to transform and revitalize education (Author, 2003a). The underlying assumption is that language teachers have *the right and the responsibility* to develop the knowledge and skills required to educate and prepare learners for the demands of the 21st century in language learning. Teacher development in the Province of Buenos Aires, for instance, is free, of quality, and provided by the state. I have

already discussed elsewhere in this chapter the high demands placed by the current international scenario on language educators, demands which are exacerbated by the fact that English teachers are non-native speakers of the language in this country (Lazaraton, 2003; cf. Kramsch, 2003). Despite the foregoing, I must concur with Markee (2000: 570) that in general, in the working of their everyday lives as educators, "teachers and teachers-in-training rarely pay much attention to the larger sociocultural factors that often determine what is possible or desirable in a given classroom ". Efforts in this direction have taken and are taking place (Porto, 2003a, 2009).

Argentina can definitely be thought of as a country in which English is additive rather than subtractive (Phillipson, 2008b). Learners appropriate English, each one in their own ways, to face and negotiate the world, decoding its multiple systems of symbolic, social, and cultural meanings (Cots, 2006). In general, the society at large, from educators to learners, parents, the population in general, teacher educators, researchers, authorities, policy makers and curriculum designers, are all aware of the positive significance of English for their individual and social lives. In our setting, English has become a form of cultural capital, which learners will use together with other forms of social and economic capital, to open up to the world and have access to knowledge and information, health, education, employability, and social and economic mobility - through different resources and means (Byram, 2001). For most learners, English becomes a resource, a tool, that they will use within the school, but also outside it (in the home, the community, and the society at large), to enrich their lives in different facets (linguistic, social, cultural, academic, moral). English is empowering and instrumental to emancipation, allowing them to fight the inequalities of their own setting (poverty, discrimination, etc.) as well as the inequalities which they may be subjected to in the course of their lives as Third World citizens. This situation is concomitant with an undeniable process of *Americanisation* observable through TV, films, and other symptoms (Phillipson, 2008a), though anyone here would argue that English is perceived in utilitarian rather than hegemonising terms. In a way, the high regard for English by the local actors themselves in Argentina echoes descriptions by Matsuda (2003) in Japan and Vavrus (2002) in Tanzania.

Many barriers, however, exist, and need to be acknowledged here, regarding this previous rendering of ELT in Argentina. These include a mismatch between these previous flags and reality in many areas (due to many factors, including social, cultural, and financial); the educational consequences of the increasing gap between rich and poor; the actual low performance of Argentinean students in standardized international testing;

a lack of emphasis on early and adult education; high drop-out rates in primary and secondary schooling; the clouding of the "equality of access" to education (which all educational policies advocate) by the failure to take account of "equality of outcome" (McKay and Warshauer Freedman, 1990: 399; Warshauer, 2000) or "equality of opportunity to achieve" (McCarty, 2003: 149) for a variety of reasons; a crisis of recruitment and retention of qualified teacher for the public school sector; consequently, poorly qualified teachers for public schools (because of low salaries and the low reputation associated with being a school teacher in this country); an inflexible and ineffective system of teacher regulation (regarding salaries, compensations, leaves of absence); and a teacher culture in public school contexts that tends to be dominated by a lack of commitment and dedication, absenteeism, and strikes (cf. teaching as a "sacred vocation", Hargreaves, 2008: 29). This scenario is accompanied by other aspects which also seem to darken the at times naïve picture portrayed above. In other words, the everyday reality of ELT classrooms in real schools many times distances itself from the scene I have described, for the reasons just outlined, in combination with others. Among these other reasons I can mention important political changes at all levels (not only education), the existence of still strong ideologies which conceive of ELT in purely functional, linguistically-oriented terms, and which are prevalent today in some districts and provinces (e.g. the capital city of Buenos Aires), the co-existence of English with other languages within schools (not only the languages spoken by the learners themselves but also those taught at schools, apart from English)[1] , these broader conceptualizations of foreign language education, as I have described in this chapter, which are also directly relevant to the teaching and learning of these other languages, and finally, the fact that all changes and innovative conceptualizations and currents in education do not become alive in real classrooms from one day to the next. Changes take time to become visible in schools, simply because schools (and therefore head teachers, teachers, learners and all actors involved) need time to welcome them. This scenario clearly complicates matters.

Finally, as we have already seen, TESOL scholars have recurrently stressed the need for classroom-based research as well as research on how individuals in different parts of the world live their literacy experiences in English (and in any language for that matter). Research efforts congruent with these

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[1] Although Argentina is thought of as a predominantly Spanish-speaking country, there exist several immigrant languages (Italian, German, Levantine Arabic, South Bolivian Quechua, Catalán, Mandarín, Japanese, Korean, Welsh and others) (Gordon, 2005) and as many as 16 or more living indigenous languages (Censabella, 1999).

calls (Porto 2003b, 2007, 2008, 2009) can help make the Latin American situation available to be known to interested TESOL professionals. Issues of culture, identity and literacy in EFL contexts in this country are ingrained in these investigations. Research under way at present explores how a group of Argentine college EFL learners perceive, examine, and interpret the cultural perspectives explicitly and implicitly embedded in literary narratives and the process of interpretation within this cultural dimension. This line of research conceptualizes reading as social, contextualized practice and therefore necessitates a congruent view of schema, or in other words, a sociocultural perspective on schemas that rethinks both their nature and use. "Schemas, as traditionally conceived in relation to reading, were limited to in-the-head categories, in part because they were removed from materiality connected to cultural context and processes (...) If we think of schema as embodied and not just in the head, then it becomes clear that patterns of enactment, ways of engaging the world, both shape our interpretation of cultural activity and are shaped by cultural activity." (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek's, 2005: 546 and 550). These studies do not confine the cultural dimension to one aspect of an individual's "integrated cultural identities" (Dunnett et al., 1986; Kabakchy, 1978; Maloof, Rubin, and Neville Miller, 2006: 255), namely race, ethnicity, or nationality (occasionally religion), and adhere instead to a view of culture that takes account of the complex interplay of multiple and varied aspects of one's individuality (Rosaldo, 1993), or in other words, identifications in terms of gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, political orientation, physical appearance, special capacities, and many other factors. Put differently, we acknowledge, together with Atkinson (1999), that cultures and cultural schemas are not static characteristics of an individual's cognition (are not an in-the-head phenomenon) but rather are shared by members of a cultural group, are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through time and generations, and are instantiated (materialized) in cultural artifacts like rituals, paintings, narrative, video, classroom discussions, student productions (written, oral or other), etc.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the current state of affairs in English literacy education nowadays in South America, with a focus on Argentina, drawing on theoretical conceptions related to the current international scenario of English language teaching (ELT) worldwide. I have argued that I have taken the case of English rather than any of the several languages mentioned throughout the book because of the undeniable process of internationalization that it is undergoing. I have also mentioned that

the Argentinean perspective as portrayed in this chapter contributes to alleviating the under-representation of the Latin American perspective in the field of TESOL (cf. the many voices aired from peripheral countries in Asia and Africa).

I have addressed the complex question of culture within ELT, especially within EFL education, which is dominant in Latin America, and have continued to tackle related identity issues. I have also touched upon the political and ideological agendas hidden behind ELT as reflected in the discourse of imperialism. My aim here was to connect this line of thought with the visualization of this chapter as an example of ELT as lived in the local setting of Argentina. From this conception, this chapter (as well as all the others in this book) purposefully responds to current calls from all the actors involved in the discourse of imperialism, i.e. the urge and need to describe how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example.

Given the pervasive linguistic and cultural diversity that educators face in their classrooms nowadays, not only in Latin America as we see in this book but also worldwide, I have briefly reviewed the conceptualization of the EFL classroom as a Third Space. This notion is relevant as it caters for the need to discover what unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds, in an attempt to be as much at ease as possible with each others' languages, cultures, and individualities. I have concluded with a description of the current scenario regarding the aforementioned issues in Argentina.

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