

Globalization of English and English Language Policies in East Asia: a Comparative Perspective

MONDIALISATION DE L'ANGLAIS ET LES POLITIQUES SUR LA LANGUE ANGLAISE DANS LES PAYS ASIATIQUE: UNE PERSPECTIVE COMPARATIVE

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Abstract: The last decade has witnessed the ever rising realization of the significance of English, which triggered the booming concept of teaching English as an International Language (EIL). English as a lingua franca has been playing an important role in the whole world since the 1950s in the twentieth century. In order to compete with western rivals in the new century, East Asian countries and regions in the expanding circle of English have to respond positively to the globalization of English and make adjustments to their respective ELT policies. This paper tries to review the global spread of English and discusses world Englishes and varieties of English. Besides, it would also describe and analyze the corresponding English language policies in East Asian contexts through a comparative perspective. A description analysis of ELT policies in Japan, Korea, Chinese Taiwan and China's Mainland would be presented.

Key words: globalization; ELT policy; East Asia; comparative study

Résumé: La décennie dernière était témoin de la réalisation même croissante de la signifiante de la langue anglaise, ce qui a déclenché en plein essor le concept de l'enseignement de l'anglais comme une langue internationale.(EIL) L'anglais comme une lingua franca a joué un rôle important dans le monde depuis 1950s pendant le 21^e siècle. Dans le but de rivaliser avec rivaux occidentaux pour le nouveau siècle, les pays et les régions asiatiques dans le cercle en expansion de la langue anglaise a à répondre positivement à la mondialisation de la langue anglaise et à mettre en ajustement leurs politiques respectives ELT. Cette mémoire tente de revoir

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la diffusion mondiale de la langue anglaise et de discuter de l'anglais mondial et des variétés de l'anglais. D'ailleurs, elle décrira et analysera aussi la correspondance des politiques pour la langue anglaise dans le contextes des pays asiatiques par une perspective comparative. Une description et une analyse des politiques ELT au Japon, en Corée, à Taiwan et dans la Chine continentale sera présentée.

Mots-Clés: mondialisation; politique ELT; asiatique; étude comparative

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament, when people attempted to build a heaven-reaching tower, the Tower of Babel, in a city (now thought to be Babylon), they were punished by the Lord to become unable to understand one another's language. Then, the tower itself was abandoned and the world separated.

Contemporary means of transportation, telecommunication, and mass media, nowadays, has virtually shortened the geographical distance between different nations. As the saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall". Human beings are able to unite again to build the "global village" with joint efforts, which is called globalization.

To facilitate globalization is, to some extent, to find a common language to enable different peoples all over the world to communicate with each other. This language, undoubtedly, shall be a well-established and universally-recognized international language.

The last decade has experienced the ever rising realization of the significance of English, which triggered the booming concept of teaching English as an International Language (EIL). In historical discussion, almost all the researchers (see, for example, Crystal, 1997, cited in McKay, 2003; Graddol, 1997, cited in McKay, 2003) concur that English is serving as an International Language or a lingua franca connecting different peoples in different areas, at different levels, and from different cultures. Lingua franca refers to a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other's and where one or both speakers are using it as a second language. (Harmer, 2001, p.1) English as a lingua franca has been playing an important role in the whole world since the 1950s in the twentieth century. (Crystal, 1997, p.9-10)

This paper tries to review the global spread of English and discusses world Englishes and varieties of English. Besides, I would like to describe the corresponding English language policies in East Asia contexts through a comparative perspective. A description analysis of ELT policies in Japan, Korea, Chinese Taiwan and China's Mainland would be presented.

2. ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

An International language refers to a language in widespread use as a foreign language or second language, i.e. as a language of international communication. (Richards et al.1992, p.234) In this sense, as a language of wider communication, English is the international language. (McKay, 2002, p.5) So to be recognized as an international language, a language not only needs to have a large number of native speakers, but also should be spoken by a large number of speakers of other languages. That is to say, English as an international language has its global and local sense. (ibid. p.5)

English is evidently regarded as an international language because of its large number of native speakers, being one of the five most widely spoken mother tongues in the world today. (ibid. p.4) Besides, according to Crystal (1997, p.2), English achieves its 'special role' as an international language mainly in two ways. On the one hand, he maintains a language can be made the official language of a country,

employed as a major medium of communication in all walks of life. (ibid. p.3) On the other hand, Crystal thinks that a language can be made a priority in a country's foreign-language teaching, even though this language has no official status. (ibid. p.3) He points out that today there are over 100 countries in which English is widely taught as a foreign language. (ibid. p.3)

3. WHAT MAKES AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE?

One of the major reasons for a language to become an international language is the political power of its people, especially their military power. But it still needs economical power to maintain and expand it. (ibid. p.7) In history, Britain had once become the leading industrial and trading country by the beginning of the nineteenth century. (ibid. p.8) Crystal concludes in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth English was the language of the leading economic power, namely the United States in the world. (ibid. p.110) English now is a common language (**lingua franca**) for the following reasons: It is used in new communication technologies such as telegraph, telephone, etc, used in international politics, used in international industry and business, used in mass media, such as newspaper, radio, E-mails, etc, used in technology and science and in education areas. So the important factor in the spread of English is that it has been in the right place at the right time.

4. THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH

From the above analysis, we see English has reached the stage of a global language with three circles of speakers: first-language, official-language and foreign-language speakers. (ibid. p.4) Kachru et al. points out that along with the spread of English as a global language, English in different countries or regions meets with the language-contact situations and cultures which are 'far removed' from those of the native English speakers. (1996, p.10) So "these contact situations have had striking and lasting effects on English in these regions." (ibid. p.10) In this sense, English is not a single type, instead, English has spread to be inscribed as World Englishes. This means multiple forms or uses of English, namely varieties of English.

Similarly, in terms of variations of English and users in the world, Kachru's categorization of countries in which English is used in different regions with different situations provides us with a clear view of the spread of English around the world. (Cited in Crystal, 1997, p.53-4) Kachru's three circles of English in complex situations represent different ways in which English has been acquired and is currently used. The three circles offer us a unique development trace of English. From the historic views, in the **Inner Circle**, English spread because of a migration of English speakers. On the other hand, the spread of English in the **Outer Circle** is mainly the result of colonization by English-speaking nations. In the **Expanding Circle**, English is largely studied as foreign language because of its importance in foreign exchanges. (McKay, 2002, p.10) Kachru's model is valid in the sense of earlier history and politics, the dynamic progress of English in the world and the roles and standards in current global interactions. (Kachru, et al. 1996, p.14)

5. REASONS FOR THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Just as those factors such as colonialism, speaker migration, and new technology contribute to making English an international language, so they are major reasons for the initial spread of English. (McKay, 2002, p.16) After his conclusion from the historical contexts and cultural foundations, Crystal (1997, p.78-110) summarizes the current uses of English in various intellectual, economic and cultural aspects

as follows:

- *International relations*: English has been made official language in approximately 85 per cent of the 12,500 international organizations listed in 1995-1996 Union of International Associations' Yearbook.
- *The press, advertising and broadcasting use more English*.
- *Motion pictures*: in the mid-1990s, the United States controlled about 85 per cent of the world film market.
- *Popular music*: of the pop groups listed in *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, 99 per cent of the groups work entirely or predominantly in English.
- *International travel*: the United States is the leader in tourism earning and spending.
- *Publications*: more books are published in English than in any other language
- *Communications*: about 80 per cent of the world's electronically stored information is in English.
- *Education*: in many countries English plays a significant role in higher education.

6. THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH

Experts spare no efforts in predicting the future development of English. The discussion about the future of English would inevitably involve the following several key issues:

6.1 Will a single world standard for English develop?

This has been viewed as a hot topic in the future of English in that there are at least two dimensions to the question according to Graddol: (1997, p.26) One is whether English will 'fragment into many mutually unintelligible local forms'. As a matter of fact, as English shifts from foreign language to second language status for an increasing number of people, in the future, it is expected that English will continue to develop a large number of local varieties in many countries. (ibid. p.27) But 'these are by no means mutually unintelligible'. (Crystal, 1997, p.135)

The other dimension is whether the current English could maintain its standard usage. (ibid. p. 26) Graddol is concerned about the use of the two major techniques, namely printing and broadcasting, which have helped develop national, standard language forms because the new forms of computer mediated communication are closing the gap between spoken and written English. Besides, different cultural trends encourage the wide use of informal and more conversational language. (1997, p. 27)

6.2 Change and variety of English

The current spread of English as an international language has resulted in a tremendous growth in the number of bilingual users of English in the Outer Circle countries, where the greatest controversy regarding change and questions of intelligibility has arisen. (McKay, 2002, p.53-4)

Kachru classifies Outer Circle countries as norm-developing communities because innovations tend to get conventionally established by regular use and are subsequently codified. (1986, cited in McKay, p.54) Thus, many Outer Circle countries have developed new standards of use in distinct historical, acquisitional, and cultural context with the spread of English. (ibid. p.54)

6.3 Practice in ELT

ELT refers to the teaching of English as a second language or English as a foreign language. (Richards et al. 1992, p.152) Thanks to the ELT industry, it may help maintain an international standard for English language. (ibid. p.27) Strevens points out that the industry of ELT teaching has the effect of preserving the unity of English despite its great diversity. (Cited in Graddol, p.27) Nevertheless, Graddol argues that

second-language countries are likely to develop their own curricula, materials and teaching resources, which may help bring new and non-native models of English into competition with the older standard varieties. (ibid. p. 28)

The chief task confronting ELT is to devise effective pedagogical policies and practices in which the need to maintain an international standard of intelligibility, in both speech and writing, can be made to co-exist comfortably with the need to recognize different varieties or diversity in speech and then in writing. (Crystal, 1999, p.63)

Jenkins even predicts that a new paradigm of English in which English spreads and adapts according to linguistic and culture preferences of its users in the outer and expanding circles, many native speaker assumptions will no longer hold. (2003, p.44) It is also clear that if some other standard varieties are to compete with English, then they have to be accorded or perhaps more likely, accord themselves at least the same English language rights as those claimed by mother tongue speakers. (ibid. p.44) In this case, ELT is in the best position to face the challenge. (Crystal, 1999, p. 63)

6.4 Which language may rival English as a world lingua franca in the twenty-first century?

Graddol's engco model reflects his estimate for speakers of English in 2050. (Graddol, 1997, p.33) According to his estimate, there is no any other language will appear within the next fifty years to replace English as the global lingua franca. (ibid. p.29) However, it is a potential shift in the linguistic centre that English lose its international role altogether or, at best, come to share it with a number of equals. (Jenkins, 2003, p.44) Similarly, Graddol (1997, p.30) predicts three possible linguistic scenarios in Asia as follows: English remains the preferred language of international communication; Mandarin becomes regionally more important and no single language emerges as a dominant lingua franca in Asia.

Jenkins analyzes two main factors that may bring about some alternatives to English as a lingua franca. On the one hand, English has inherent difficulties in learning, i.e. orthographic, phonologic and grammatical ones. On the other hand, many strong arguments in favor of Spanish as the principal world language has been put forward now that Spanish appears to have simpler pronunciation, spelling and verb systems and its increasing influence in both the EU and America. (Jenkins, 2003, p.44-6)

6.5 What impact will the internet have on the global use of English?

Graddol admits the internet has been an important factor in the spread of English around the world, but he points out that the quantity of Internet materials in languages other than English is set to expand dramatically in the next decade. (1997, p.35-6) He further predicts that as the computer use spreads around the world, there will be a sharp decline in the English medium content from 90 per cent in 1990s to 40 per cent in the next decade. (ibid. p.36)

7. ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION IN EAST ASIA

Language policy consists of language management, language practices (language varieties language use and language pedagogy) and language ideology. Few educational professionals can deny seeing the day-to-day results of the sociopolitical phenomenon of global English in the policies they encounter. Anecdotal evidence suggests that governments around the world are introducing English as a compulsory subject at younger and younger ages, often without adequate funding, teacher education for elementary school teachers, or the development of curricula and materials for younger learners. In business, industry, and government, workers are increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English. These demands for English offer opportunities to the TESOL profession, but at the same time they have created many challenges for TESOL educators internationally. An initial challenge is simply to

document the nature of the educational policy responses to the growing need for English in countries where English is not a native language for the majority. Such descriptive data are needed as a starting point to eventually address questions being raised by governments, bureaucracies, and industry about language policy and language education. Because TESOL professionals hold a central place in English language policy, they need to understand the impact of English as a global language on the educational practices and medium of instruction in educational systems around the world. Currently, governments and ministries of education are framing policies and implementing practices in the language area without adequately considering the implications of such policies and practices on the lives of the teachers and students they affect. It would therefore be imprudent for TESOL professionals to remain unaware of such policies.

Despite some generalizations that can be made about English language teaching (ELT) policies across the countries, each country has a distinct profile and is therefore presented individually. In this section, I present the data yielded by documentary analysis.

7.1 ELT Policy in Japan

Japan requires 9 years of compulsory education, 6 at the primary and 3 at the junior high level. English is introduced as a compulsory subject in the first year of junior high, when learners are 12. Students receive three 50-minute lessons a week in each of the 3 years of junior high. Although there are no plans to lower the age at which English is taught as a compulsory subject, as of 2002, all public primary schools offered a course called General Studies. This course is taught three times a week to all third through sixth graders and is supposed to cover foreign languages, including English, global education, welfare, and the environment.

According to one informant, many primary schools are planning to introduce English, focusing on listening and speaking, within the General Studies program. Because the Ministry of Education has stipulated that the purpose is not to “teach” English in primary school, but to provide “fun” time in English, there will be no textbooks. The amount of English taught and the actual content will vary from school to school. official government rhetoric is evident in the Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools (Ministry of Education, 1999), which sets out the following objectives: First, to deepen students’ understanding of language and culture through learning a foreign language and to foster a positive attitude toward communicating in it by developing their basic ability for practical communication such as listening or speaking skills; second, to implement real communicative activities for students to communicate their feelings or thoughts; third, to help students find proper expressions for each concrete case or situations in such communicative activities. (p. 2)

Japan has operated the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme (similar to the NET scheme in Hong Kong) for about 15 years. Under this scheme, approximately 5,000 native speakers of English provide support instruction in the schools. The salary for each JET teacher is roughly 300,000 yen a month, making the scheme a costly one.

7.2 ELT Policy in Korea

In Korea, English is introduced in the third grade, when children are 9. The school year consists of 30 weeks per year. Students receive 1–2 hours of instruction a week in Grades 3–6, 2–4 hours a week in Grades 7–9, and 4 hours a week in Grades 10–12. The age for compulsory English was lowered from 13 to 9 in 1997. There are no plans to lower it further (Kwon, 2000; Park, 2000). English is a major concern in all areas of government, business, and education. All colleges and universities require 3–12 credit hours of English, and many universities and employers require minimum Test of English for International Communication and Test of English as a Foreign Language scores from those seeking either education or employment.

In 1995, the Sixth National Curriculum adopted a communicative, grammatical-functional syllabus. In 2001, the Ministry of Education adopted a policy of teaching English through English, which encourages the use of English in English classes. However, as with other countries in the region, a major

problem is that many English teachers simply do not have the proficiency, and therefore the confidence, to teach in English. Park (2000) asserts that this is a major problem that can only be addressed through teacher education.

Although the policy and textbooks changed to a communicative orientation in 1995, most teachers do not have the English language proficiency or methodological skills to implement the policy, and there has not been a great deal of change from the grammar-translation approach. Some universities offer pay incentives to encourage teachers to teach in English. A tremendous amount of money has been spent on teaching and learning English. On average, Korean families spend one third of their income on private lessons for their children in English, art, and music. Increasing numbers of English-medium schools are also beginning to appear, and the largest of these have student enrolments running into the hundreds of thousands.

Some concern has been expressed about the negative effects that early introduction of English is having on national identity (see, e.g., Crystal, 2000). However, this concern seems to be somewhat muted and does not seem to have had much impact on the explosive demand for English language. Several informants were more concerned that introducing English language literacy to students before they had attained literacy in Korean would have a negative impact on their L1 literacy.

7.3 ELT policy in Chinese Taiwan

The emergence of English as a global language has had a major impact on the government's thinking. Taiwan aims to be a major economic global player and sees the economic imperative as a major impetus for promoting the learning of English. Thus, in September 2001, English was introduced in Grade 5 (in which learners are 10–11 years of age), but this was then lowered to Grade 1 in 2002. Classes are taught 1–2 hours per week during the two 20-week semesters in each school year.

A recently published document on the English curriculum sets out the official government line on principles underpinning the curriculum (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2000). The objective of the elementary/junior high school curriculum should be to instill a basic communicative ability, to prepare students to take a global perspective, and to give individuals confidence in communicating in the global area ("thus improving the nation's competitiveness"). Elementary and middle schools should provide a natural and enjoyable language learning environment. (p. 2)

All informants agree that Ministry expectations are far above what most schools and teachers can deliver. A major issue is the training of teachers, and teacher training programs are very limited. Even teachers who have completed training programs have difficulty with their English skills as well as their teaching pedagogy, particularly with regard to teaching younger learners. This is because most teacher educators have no experience themselves in teaching younger learners.

The entire public school system in Taiwan is undergoing tremendous change with the introduction of a new initiative entitled "the Nine Year Program," which aims to integrate Chinese, English, information technology and computing skills, math, science, and social studies in elementary and junior high school curricula. Governmental investment is large, but the hope is that this initiative will have a beneficial effect later on, resulting in higher levels of proficiency in English at the university level. (Informants generally agreed that the level of English proficiency among university students is still quite low when it comes to communicative use.) According to the informants, content-based instruction is a foreign concept in Taiwan. Whether this change in the future, as appears to be the case in some contexts in China Mainland, is difficult to say, and informants were unable to offer a perspective on this point.

7.4 ELT policy in China's Mainland

In Kachru's model, China is in the Expanding Circle, where the spread of English is largely a result of foreign language learning. (cited in McKay, 2002, p.10) Kachru (1984) suggests that in the Expanding Circle, 'the use of English should be norm-dependent since there is no regular internal use of the language'. (ibid. p.54) So among great variation in the reasons for choosing English as a favored foreign

language, English is favored mainly because of the desire for commercial, cultural or technological contact. (Crystal, 1997, p.4) For this purpose, China has witnessed the spread of ELT in China since it opened its door to the outside world in 1978.

ELT classrooms have also been influenced by various contextual factors as suggested by McKay as political and social context (the role of English in the society, economic resources appropriated to ELT, linguistic and cultural attitudes toward EIL), Educational institution itself (teaching objectives, material resources, and so on)and the teachers' and students' background.(2002, p.116)

It is in the fundamental interest of China for her to have strong enthusiasm for English. Due to the national policy of reform and opening-up implemented in early 1980s', China is playing an increasingly significant role in the international arena. This requires much co-operation with her counterparts, communication with the outside world, and participation into the international affairs. All these efforts along with the spur of globalization have to be realized with the assistance of the international language, i.e. English.

In the case of Chinese context, in elementary schools, middle and high schools, students are expected to learn English as a foreign language. At the tertiary level of education, all the college students participate in English learning since the course College English is a compulsory subject and students who fail to pass the nation-wide College English Test for Band 4 (CET-4) can not be awarded a bachelor's degree. Besides, Students with a satisfactory English proficiency can expect a good career future. The point in ELT in China is that students should be able to apply English as an international language to communicate.

As for the English variety, in fact, there is no set variety of English taught in China specifically. However, with more and more exposure to English language than ever before, students tend to favor American English rather than British English since more students long for speaking popular American English on campus. As for the teaching materials in use, mainly target culture materials from the US, UK and Australia have been adopted. Basically, as ELT teachers, they usually introduce target have to make the distinctions between the different varieties in teaching.

Besides, the trend of ELT methodology in China is communicative language teaching (CLT) since educational leaders believe this is the most modern and productive way to teach English. (ibid. p. 110) But sometimes CLT itself is problematic in practice since both the teachers and students outside the Inner Circle may not be familiar with cultural information in CLT contexts, which is a challenge to CLT (ibid. p.113)

8. DISCUSSIONS

This comparative study has shown that English has had a significant impact on policy. For example, despite considerable country-by-country variation, the age at which English is a compulsory subject in most of the countries has shifted down in recent years, a shift that is predicated on the importance of English as a global language. Underlying the shift is an assumption on the part of the governments and ministries of education that when it comes to learning a foreign language, younger is better. This view seems to be firmly entrenched in popular opinion, which influences policy decisions, despite its controversial nature in the professional literature.

First, in most of the East Asian countries and regions surveyed, considerable inequity exists in terms of access to effective English language instruction. In China, for instance, the haves versus the have-nots and city versus rural divides and the inequities flowing from these divides have been exacerbated by the growing importance of English and the inequitable access to quality instruction in English. In a number of the countries, informants spoke frankly of the fact that the quality of English language education in the public sector was so poor that "no one learns English in school." These informants reported that the only children who stood a chance of learning English were those whose parents could afford to send them to private, after-school language classes. The data from this study strongly support the following assertion by Bruthiaux (2002): In most markets, the consumers of English language education are the relatively

well-off, already far beyond the stage of mere survival. To the extent that the severely poor are aware of it at all, the global spread of English is a sideshow compared with the issue of basic economic development and poverty reduction. (p. 290)

Second, all of the countries surveyed subscribe to principles of CLT, and in a number of them, TBLT (the latest methodological realization of CLT) is the central pillar of government rhetoric. However, in all the countries surveyed, it would seem that rhetoric rather than reality is the order of the day. Poor English skills on the part of teachers as well as inadequate teacher preparation make it very difficult, if not impossible, for many teachers to implement CLT in their classrooms. In places such as Taiwan, where principles of TBLT are beginning to appear in commercial textbooks aimed at the public school sector, most teachers have a poor understanding of the ideas, and it remains to be seen whether they will be able to use these materials effectively.

Third, Teacher education and the English language skills of teachers in public-sector institutions are inadequate, according to the informants in all the countries included in this study. Although this may not be surprising in developing countries, such as China, it must be of major concern in more developed countries, such as Japan and Korea, where millions of dollars have been poured into teacher education in recent years. Of even greater concern has to be the widespread use of nonqualified teachers throughout the region and a decline in the percentage of qualified English teachers in public schools.

With the introduction of English at the primary school level, teachers need special training in the needs of younger learners. Curricula, teaching methods, and materials should meet the needs of the learners of different ages and at different stages. In reality, adequate and appropriate training is a major problem in all countries surveyed. However, all of the countries (as is the case in most other parts of the world) lack a pedagogy that is appropriate for young learners. In addition, there is little evidence that differentiated curricula to meet the needs of learners at different chronological ages and stages have been developed or are being developed, although this is changing in some of the countries (the change being driven as much by forward-looking commercial publishers as by ministries of education).

9. CONCLUSION

Countries in East Asia are investing considerable resources in providing English, often at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum, but the evidence suggests that these resources are not achieving the instructional goals desired. It would seem advisable, then, for governments and educational bureaucracies to review their policies on ELT. If English is a necessity, steps should be taken to ensure that teachers are adequately trained in language teaching methodology appropriate to a range of learner ages and stages that teachers' own language skills are significantly enhanced, that classroom realities meet curricular rhetoric, and that students have sufficient exposure to English in instructional contexts.

In view of the central role that ELT is playing in educational decision making in these, and presumably other, countries, the TESOL profession also needs to increase knowledge about the actual uses of English and its effects. Research is needed on the English language requirements of workers in workplaces and occupations, from multinational corporations to government and quasi-government institutions, such as hospitals and other public institutions. Although industry-specific needs analyses are common, there are few empirical investigations into the specific nature of the demand for English in the everyday working lives of individuals outside of fields such as tourism.

Finally, at a socio-cultural level, the effect of the emergence of English as a global language on first and indigenous language development needs to be studied, and, in developing countries, a key question is the extent to which access to English is a mechanism for determining who has access to economic advancement and who does not. However, in other areas, the spread of English may threaten the right of children to be educated in their own language.

Through the above comparative analysis, Chinese ELT teachers should incorporate more source culture materials and international target culture materials into the language teaching. Moreover, insightful classroom practitioners should make attempts to come up with a set of more effective

methodology or pedagogy in ELT, which is best suitable to Chinese learners instead of copying theories from those in Inner Circle. In short, teachers should understand the concept of thinking globally but acting locally in the teaching of EIL.

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