Chapter 31
Developing Meta-cultural Competence in Teaching English as an International Language

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31.1 Introduction

English language teaching worldwide has been undertaking a paradigm shift over the past decades due to advances in research and practice in relevant disciplines, including World Englishes, English as an International Language (EIL) and Cultural Linguistics. Such a 'shift' embodies the following aspects: (1) English has become a pluricentric language, namely from English to 'Englishes', with legitimate variations in lexis, syntax, discourse, pragmatics and cultural conceptualizations among different varieties of English; (2) the distinction between English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL) and English as a native language (ENL) has become blurred, and such entities are commonly replaced by notions such as English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF); (3) the ownership of English has been challenged due to the diversification of the English language. The ownership discussion has shifted from who 'owns' English to users of English becoming 'guardians' of the language, and who has the best access to English as a multilingual tool for international communication; (4) in the context of ELT, there has been a shift of focus from decontextualised 'correctness' to 'appropriateness' in context; and (5) there has also been a shift in people's perceptions of the role of their first language and culture (i.e. L1 and C1), from a 'problem' resulting from 'interference' to a 'resource' that can be naturally 'transferred' into their English language learning and use. In other words, the status of L1 and C1 has shifted from a 'baggage' of burden and nega-

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tivity to a 'badge' of linguistic and cultural heritage and identity. In addition, one of the fundamental shifts underpinning the goals of ELT is from manufacturing 'native or near-native' speakers of English to developing and mentoring effective and strategic translanguaging users of English in multilingual communication contexts.

This paradigm shift has therefore set new demands and challenges for researchers and teaching practitioners (Xu 2002). It is therefore important to become aware that new literacy, proficiency and competence in relation to EIL emerge and they need to be addressed and incorporated into classroom practice. In this chapter, I adopt a Cultural Linguistics approach to teaching EIL. I focus on developing *meta-cultural competence* among students in the EIL classroom. 'Meta-cultural competence' (Sharifian 2013a: 8) is 'a competence that enables interlocutors to communicate and negotiate their cultural conceptualisations during the process of intercultural communication', and it comprises three major components including 'variation awareness', 'explication strategy' and 'negotiation strategy'. In this chapter, I propose a number of EIL tenets and principles for developing meta-cultural competence with specific EIL programme units as examples, and analyse how principles can be applied to the EIL classroom. I also explore pedagogical implications of developing meta-cultural competence for teaching EIL.

31.2   Cultural Linguistics and EIL

In order to adopt a Cultural Linguistics approach to teaching EIL, this section unpacks relevant theories and concepts regarding Cultural Linguistics and EIL.

31.2.1   *Cultural Linguistics and Applied Cultural Linguistics*

Cultural Linguistics is a multidisciplinary area of research that explores the relationship between language and cultural conceptualisations, and it attempts to 'understand language as a subsystem of culture and examine how various language features reflect and embody culture'.

Applied Cultural Linguistics is concerned with how Cultural Linguistics research can be applied to various other domains and disciplines. Applied Cultural Linguistics can be defined as a holistic approach that examines the cultural conceptualizations (e.g. schemas, metaphors and categories) in order to understand cultural meaning, raise awareness of cultural variation and enhance intercultural

communication in the areas where language and cultural conceptualizations play a salient role such as language education, World Englishes, English as a Lingual Franca, international business and relations, health care, media, interpreting and translation, forensic linguistics, and many other 'applied' studies.

31.2.2   Cultural Conceptualization and Cultural Conceptualizations

Based on earlier research in cognitive linguistics and a number of other relevant disciplines, Sharifian (2011, 2013a) has developed an analytical framework of 'cultural conceptualization', which views language as firmly grounded in a group-level cognition that emerges from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. Cultural conceptualization is not only a framework, but also a dynamic, ongoing and interactive process of cultural cognition, (re)schematisation, and (re)negotiation among members of cultural communities. 'Cultural Linguistics places a great emphasis on culture as a source of conceptualising experience through cognitive structures such as schemas, categories, metaphors and scripts' (Palmer and Sharifian 2003: 11). Such cultural conceptual schemas, categories, metaphors, models and scripts are commonly referred to as units of conceptual knowledge, or specifically, 'cultural conceptualizations'. They can be applied to the analysis of cultural phenomena, language teaching and learning, and intercultural communication. In this section, cultural conceptual schema, category and metaphor will be elaborated with specific examples.

   A schema is a network of knowledge, beliefs and expectations about particular aspects of the world. Cultural schemas have many subcategories, for example, context schema, procedure schema, strategy schema, event schema, role schema, image schema, proposition schema and emotion schema. Cultural schemas are constantly negotiated and renegotiated. One of the examples of 'image schema' and 'proposition schema' is the imagery and association of 'dragon' in relation to Chinese culture, as depicted in one of the popular songs throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The song is entitled 'Descendants of the Dragon': *In the ancient East flies a dragon/Zhongguo (China) is its name/In the ancient East resides a group of people/they are all descendants of the dragon/I grew up beneath the feet of the great dragon/I'm a descendant of the dragon/With black eyes, black hair and yellow skin/I'm forever a descendant of the dragon* (Lyrics of 'Descendants of the Dragon'). Images such as this imaginary dragon in association with concrete objects including the Great Wall, the Yangtze River and the Yellow River are perceived by the overwhelming majority of Chinese

as representing China. A dragon is apparently a fabrication, or an image in the minds of the Chinese. However, when the Chinese talk about it, they do not feel that it is a fabrication, and they take it as a real entity. This Chinese image schema of a 'dragon' comes from the beliefs and expectations of Chinese over centuries or even thousands of years. The Chinese value their 龙 (or *long*, a Chinese character of 'dragon') for its power, magic and beauty with great respect, and they regard themselves as the 'descendants of the Dragon'. Such image and proposition schemas of a Chinese 'dragon' are different from those of a 'dragon' conceptualised in the Western world, where a dragon is a fierce-looking monster, with large wings and sharp claws, breathing out fire and killing people. In contrast with the conceptualizations of a Chinese 'dragon', a Western 'dragon' is commonly conceptualised as something unwanted or something that a hero tries to get rid of.

In terms of a 'cultural category', people from different cultures may or may not share the same conceptualizations. For example, Chinese may label many occasions as *festivals*, including the *Spring Festival*, the *Mid-Autumn Festival*, the *Lantern Festival*, the *Dragon-Boat Festival*, the *Qingming Festival* (which is actually a *day* to honour the deceased), and even the *National Day*, *Labour Day*, *Women's Day*, *Children's Day*, *Father's Day*, *Mother's Day*, and *Teacher's Day* are all literally called '*festivals*'. The following dialogue shows the negotiation and renegotiation of the cultural categories of *festival* and *day* between speakers of a Chinese and an Indonesian:

> Indonesian: *You call it a festival, but we just call it a day. We don't call it a festival. For example, the Mother's Day is a day, not a 'festival'.*

> Chinese: *We call it a festival. It's a festival to us.*

> Indonesian: *Yeah. But it's not a festival to us* (Xu and Dinh 2013: 374).

Cultural metaphors are cognitive structures that map onto two or more domains and enable people to understand certain culturally determined experiences. For example, the following is an excerpt from a short story written by a Chinese migrant writer in English:

> *Unfortunately his wife had died two years ago; people used to call them 'a pair of mandarin ducks,' meaning an affectionate couple. True, the two of them had spent some peaceful, loving years together and had never fought or quarrelled. …*

The 'mandarin ducks' metaphor is widely used as a Chinese cultural conceptualization, because the Chinese believe that mandarin ducks are lifelong couples, and they symbolise fidelity and affection.

As elaborated above, various cultural conceptualizations help enrich English language in the sense that there is a co-presence or co-construction and (re)negotiation of existing and emergent schemas, categories and metaphors among speakers of varieties of English.

31.2.3   English as an International Language

In the 'supplement to NATURE of September 1, 1962', there was a section on 'ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE':

> The novelty of the situation in the world at the present time is the density and range of communication. Since the whole world is involved, there seems to be a need for a world language ("Supplement to NATURE", 1962).

The understanding of 'English as an International Language' in the 1960s was a 'world language' that could be used to cope with the increasing 'density and range of communication'. In the 1970s, Smith (1976: 38) proposed the notion of 'English as an International Auxiliary Language' (EIAL), and he defined the term 'international language' as one 'which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another'. Smith (1976: 41) also pointed out the 'affective, structural, and rhetorical consequences' of EIAL, namely the changes in our attitudes towards English, the structural variation of different varieties of English, and the cognitive and cultural differences among speakers of English. In addition, Smith (1976: 38–42) made a number of assumptions regarding the relationship of an 'international language' and culture. These include

(a) Its learners do not need to internalise the cultural norms of native speakers of that language;
(b) The ownership of an international language becomes 'de-nationalised'; and
(c) The educational goal of learning it is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

In the 1990s, Pennycook (1994) explored the social, cultural and political contexts of English in his book on *the Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. He put forward the notion of the 'worldliness of English' in relation to the sociopolitical discourse of the spread of English, and the critical pedagogy for teaching English as a worldly language.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, McKay (2002) revisited the notion of EIL, and put forward the following assumptions of EIL:

(a) As an international language, English is used both in a global sense for international communication between countries and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies;

(b) As it is an international language, the use of English is no longer connected to the culture of Inner Circle countries;

(c) As an international language in a local sense, English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used;

(d) As English is an international language in a global sense, one of its primary functions is to enable speakers to share with others their ideas and culture.

EIL has become an area of study in the field of Applied Linguistics. In recent years, there have been a number of edited volumes on teaching EIL, including *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues* (Sharifian 2009b), *Principles and Practices of Teaching English as an International Language* (Matsuda 2012), *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language* (Alsagoff et al. 2012) and *The Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Perspectives from Scholars, Teachers, and Students* (Marlina and Giri 2014).

EIL has been variously defined over the years. Smith (1976: 38) has put forward an operational definition of an 'international language' as one 'which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another' and he points out that 'English is the most frequently used international language'. Pennycook (1994) views EIL as a 'worldly language', and he argues that EIL has gone beyond the English language itself, and it embodies the 'worldliness' of English. McKay (2002) reiterates the global and local sense of EIL. Matsuda (2012) regards EIL as a 'function' that English performs in international and multilingual context. Alsagoff (2012) argues that EIL represents new ways of thinking, doing and being, and Sharifian (2009a, b) proposes that English has become a new 'paradigm' for thinking, research and practice (Sharifian 2009a, b). Marlina (2014: 4–5) unpacks the notion of EIL further by clarifying that EIL, as a paradigm, 'recognizes the international functions of English and its use in a variety of cultural and economic arenas by speakers of English from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds who do not speak each other's mother tongues', and that 'the EIL paradigm recognizes and embraces all varieties of English at national, regional, social, and idiolectal levels in all circles as equal'.

Based on the current literature, I propose three tenets of EIL. These include

(a) EIL, as a paradigm, has been developed alongside the glocalisation, i.e. globalisation and localisation, of English;

(b) EIL is a multicultural lingua franca of various cultural conceptualizations for international and intercultural communication;

(c) EIL recognises English variation and varieties, including different dialects of English and world Englishes.

What lies at the heart of the EIL paradigm is communication across cultures in world Englishes, and EIL communication requires new literacy, proficiency and competence.

31.2.4   EIL Literacy, Proficiency and Competence

The current default context for intercultural communication is an EIL context in which English is chosen and used as a lingua franca among speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, or speakers of world Englishes. As such, intercultural communication in English not only involves literacy in English as a language, but also a new literacy in EIL. This implies a fundamental awareness and understanding that English is no longer a language that belongs exclusively to its 'native' L1 speakers, and that English has become an international language that can be used by all bilingual and multilingual speakers of English to communicate across different cultures. EIL is a multilingual lingua franca of various cultural conceptualizations and it has been developed and adopted in such a way that it enables and empowers its users to explicate and negotiate their cultural conceptualizations. In this connection, there has been new vocabulary regarding EIL, e.g. *EIL awareness*, *EIL mentality* (as opposed to ethnocentric *us and them* mentality), *EIL mindset*, *EIL-lise English curriculum*, *EIL-minded people* and *EIL proficiency and competence*.

Canagarajah (2006: 233) points out that 'in a context where we have to constantly shuttle between different varieties [of English] and communities, proficiency becomes complex' and that 'one needs the capacity to negotiate diverse varieties to facilitate communication'. The notion of 'proficiency' in EIL appears to require more than just the mastery of grammar and lexicon in EIL contexts. The EIL proficiency involves exploring various systems of cultural conceptualizations and practice in adopting effective communicative strategies when communicating in EIL contexts. According to Sharifian (2009a: 249), 'more proficient speakers are those who have been exposed to, and show familiarity with, various systems of cultural conceptualizations, participating with flexibility in EIL communication and effectively articulating their cultural conceptualizations when their interlocutors need this to be done'.

Such EIL proficiency, therefore, presumes not only 'linguistic competence' (cf. Noam Chomsky), and 'communicative competence' (cf. Dell Hymes), but also 'intercultural competence', 'EIL competence' and 'meta-cultural competence' (Sharifian 2009a: 4, 14–15).

"It is becoming increasingly recognized that 'intercultural competence' needs to be viewed as a core element of 'proficiency' in English when it is used for international communication" (Sharifian 2013b: 8). 'EIL competence implies an ability (not just a readiness) to interact in unpredictable multicultural contexts and the

ability to adapt to a variety of communities and types of community' (Nunn 2007: 39). 'EIL competence, then, cannot be reduced to a single, limited, monolingual or non-cultural concept. It is composed of a set of interlocking and interdependent competences that sometimes compensate for each other, sometimes counteract each other and sometimes reinforce each other' (Nunn 2005: 65).

31.2.5 Meta-cultural Competence for Intercultural Communication

One of the interlocking competences, as far as intercultural communication in EIL is concerned, is meta-cultural competence. Meta-cultural competence refers to 'a competence that enables interlocutors to communicate and negotiate their cultural conceptualizations during the process of intercultural communication'. It involves three components, including variation awareness, explication strategy and negotiation strategy (Sharifian 2013b: 9).

Variation awareness refers to the awareness that one and the same language could be used by different speech communities to encode and express their respective cultural conceptualizations. Explication strategy refers to a conscious effort made on the part of interlocutors to clarify relevant conceptualizations with which they think other interlocutors may not be familiar, and negotiation strategy enables interlocutors to negotiate intercultural meanings in seeking conceptual clarification when they feel that there may be more behind the use of a certain expression than is immediately apparent (Sharifian 2013b; Xu 2013). In the following section, I propose a number of principles for developing meta-cultural competence and elaborate on the relevant practices in teaching EIL.

31.3 Principles and Practices for Developing Meta-cultural Competence in Teaching EIL

New developments in English language studies have given rise to new principles and practices in teaching EIL. One of the practices is to develop meta-cultural competence among learners of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds for intercultural communication. Over the past decade, I have been involved in programmes of teaching EIL at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Experiencing the paradigm shift from English to Englishes, and being informed of the latest developments in Cultural Linguistics and World Englishes, I propose a number of principles for developing meta-cultural competence in the practice of teaching EIL.

31.3.1 Principles of Developing Meta-cultural Competence

(a) **Acknowledge** the paradigm shift in relation to the current use and users of English. English has become pluricentric, and it is increasingly used as a lingua franca. The majority of English users are multilingual speakers of English, and the default context for intercultural communication involves speakers of different world Englishes.

(b) **Anticipate** different cultural conceptualizations that are embedded in English when using English as an international language for intercultural communication. It is the different cultural conceptualizations, namely cultural schemas, categories and metaphors, that have enriched the English language, making it truly an international language.

(c) **Acquire and accomplish** new literacy, proficiency and competence to engage in intercultural communication in English as an international language. This entails sufficient exposure to world Englishes, increasing familiarity with different cultural conceptualizations, and effective use of strategies to (co-)construct, explain and (re-)negotiate meaning across cultures.

31.3.2 Practices of Developing Meta-cultural Competence in Teaching EIL

This section focuses on practices of developing meta-cultural competence in teaching EIL units. These units include 'Exploring English as an International Language', 'Language and Globalization', 'Writing Across Cultures' and 'Language and Intercultural Communication'. They are offered to students at Monash university for the programmes of BA major in EIL and the EIL stream of the MA in Applied Linguistics. They involve lectures, tutorials and online discussion forums. Data and examples are selected from these units, and they demonstrate how the 'principles' proposed in Sect. 31.3.1 are applied to the practices of developing meta-cultural competence, namely, developing cultural conceptual variation awareness, cultural explication strategies and intercultural negotiation strategies.

31.3.2.1 Developing Cultural Conceptual Variation Awareness

Cultural conceptual variation awareness is 'the awareness that one and the same language could be used by different speech communities to encode and express their respective cultural conceptualizations' (Sharifian 2013b: 8–9). In the practice of teaching EIL, topics and activities that contribute to the awareness of cultural conceptual variation should be included and prioritised.

Example 1 Variation in 'time' metaphors across languages and cultures.

In the unit 'Exploring English as an International Language', one of the topics is for the students to explore different cultural conceptualizations. One example is about variation in 'time' metaphors across languages and cultures. A class survey among 56 students, who come from 17 different countries and regions, and speak 14 different first languages, shows that there are over 50 different 'time'-related expressions and metaphors across cultures, e.g. *time is money; time is a fixed income; time is a gift; time is just like the water in a sponge; time is gold*, and *time and tide wait for no man.* A close examination of all the 'time' expressions and metaphors reveals different conceptualizations of 'time' among the students, namely TIME AS TEMPORAL MEASUREMENT (e.g. *time is a down-counting clock; time is running out; time spares no one*;), TIME AS COMMODITY (e.g. *time cannot be purchased; time is gold; time is money; time is a fixed income; time is treasure; time is a coin; time is a gift; time is a file that wears and makes no noise; time is stolen; lost time can never be found again; time is expensive; time is a knife; time is a sword*;), TIME AS DYNAMIC ENTITY (e.g. *time flies; time flows; time runs; time goes; time is a Circus, always packing up and moving away; time is a grenade, and it will explode before you realise it; time is like the appearance of a broad-leaved epiphyllum; time is a shooting star; time travels as fast as you blink your eyes; time is fleeting; time is dragging on; time is ticking; time runs like a white horse; time slips through your fingers like sand; time stays not the fool's leisure*), TIME AS FUNCTION (e.g. *time heals; time is a charger; time is a prison; time is a thief; time is a teacher; time tames the strongest grief*), TIME AS EVIDENCE (e.g. *time is age; time tries friends as fire tries gold*), and TIME AS PACE, RHYTHM, SPEED AND LIFESPAN (e.g. *time is life; there is a time or season for everything*). In addition to the different emergent group-level 'time' conceptualizations among the students, there are also explicit culture-specific conceptualizations, for example, students are aware that certain 'time' expressions and metaphors are related to specific cultures, as shown in the following responses:

> *'Time flies' and 'time runs' are both used in* **Sri Lankan culture***.*

> *In* **Italian***, time and weather are expressed with the same word 'tempo' and this affects our ways of thinking when talking in English.*

> *In* **Aboriginal** *culture, I think they believe that time isn't linear but it's continuously going back and forth.*

> **Russian** *sayings: 'There is its own time for everything' (Vsemy svoe vremya); 'Every/Any vegetable has its own time' or 'There is time for every/any vegetable' (Vsyakomy ovoshy' suoe vremya); 'In time comes knowledge' (Vremya vsemy naychit).*

> **Chinese** *sayings: An inch of time is worth an inch of gold, but an inch of gold cannot afford an inch of time; Distance tests a horse's stamina, and time reveals a man's heart.*

Such surveys in the EIL classroom help students acknowledge that apart from the traditional 'English' expressions based on British and American varieties of English, there are also emerging expressions from other languages and cultures,

which contribute to the worldliness of English. This is the first tangible step that the students take to realise the paradigm shift from English to Englishes. In addition, through such EIL class activities, students anticipate different cultural conceptualizations associated with common words and notions such as 'time'.

Example 2 Variation of 'I love you' across languages and cultures

In the unit 'Language and Intercultural Communication', students participate in online discussions, and the following is an excerpt, which shows the students' awareness of cultural conceptual variation in expressing 'I love you' under particular circumstances.

> J (Japanese): *When a Korean ferry had rollover accident in April, many students sent massages to their parents from the ferry and they wrote "I love you". My question is: in your culture, do you say "I love you" to your parents?*
>
> C (Chinese): *In a situation like that, I would say, Mum and Dad, I miss you! ('Love' can be a very strong word in Chinese culture, so we tend to say, I love our country, or I love Beijing etc., for loving people, we have an alternative word, xihuan, similar to 'like' or 'having an affectionate feeling towards').*
>
> J: *In my culture, 'love' is also a really strong word and we do not really use it (now, I started to wonder when Japanese use 'love'?). But yes, younger generation use it but when they write or say it, they use it in English which is 'love' but not in Japanese. Also, if I were in that situation, I would say "Mum, Dad, thank you."*

Example 31.2 shows that the Japanese participant is aware of possible intercultural variations in responding to a given circumstance. In this example, given that the 'accident' took place in South Korea, and the two online discussion participants are also from East Asia, it is clear that cultural conceptual variations exist, e.g. people in crisis may say 'I love you' to their parents, or 'Mum, Dad, thank you', or 'Mum and Dad, I miss you'. In addition, the awareness of such intercultural variations also motivates and triggers the participants to initiate new topics for their communication.

31.3.2.2 Developing Cultural Explication Strategies

Cultural explication strategies comprise a conscious effort to 'clarify relevant conceptualizations' that people from different cultures may not be familiar with (Sharifian 2013b: 9). The following examples show how students develop their explication strategies in intercultural communication.

Example 3 Explaining naming conventions and practices across cultures

> S (Saudi Arabian): I think our naming conventions do not differ much from other cultures. That being said, we do have some conventions, which I think might be interesting. For example: married males and females who have been blessed with children may be called by their first born in this form: 'father of' or 'mother of' (eldest son or daughter). In my case, my father would be called 'father of Abdulrahman' because I am the eldest son.

A (Australian): Traditionally in Australian-Anglo culture the first name (or Christian name) is the name of an older relative, i.e. Grandfather, Aunt etc. However more recently it is increasingly common for children to be given a unique name, or possibly a name spelled in an unconventional way, e.g. Alysyn instead of Alison. This seems to be a trend taken from Hollywood celebrities.

T (Thai): In English, the word "aunt" normally refers to the sister of your father or mother. However, in Thai, there are separate words for the big sister of your father or mother which is "Pa" [pǎː] and the little sister of your father or mother which is "Na" [náː]. The term "Pa" and "Na" can be used with not blood related members as well. For instance, when I talk to my mother's colleague, I will use "Pa" if her colleague is older than my mother or around the same age as my mother. I will use "Na" if her colleague is not much younger than my mother.

Example 31.3 demonstrates that the participants are not only aware of cultural conceptual variations in naming conventions, but they also adopt explication strategies to make other participants understand what they deem to be their own culture-specific conventions. In the example, all the participants take advantage of the written medium, e.g. they spell out specific names such as 'Abdulrahman' and 'Alysyn'. The Thai participant has even adopted the phonetic alphabet to explain address terms used in Thai culture. This shows that intercultural explication strategies are an important element for developing meta-cultural competence.

Example 4 Explaining different 'cultural practices' in English

In the unit 'Writing across Cultures', one of the writing tasks is for the students to write a short passage to explain a 'cultural practice'. It can be expected that students choose many different 'cultural practices' and develop their cultural explication strategies while explaining those cultural practices of their own choice. These include, for example, the Filipino gesture of 'Mano Po'; the Jewish festival of Purim; the Aussie tradition of 'Bring a Plate'; the British 'Guy Fawkes Night' (or Bonfire Night, or Firework Night); the Arabic Ramadan; the Japanese tea ceremony; the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival (or the Moon-Cake Festival); the Korean 'wooden ducks' as wedding presents; and the Singaporean Chinese New Year, Diwali (or Deepavali, the 'festival of lights'), Hari Raya Puasa, and Christmas. The following example shows how an Australian student of Filipino parents explains 'Mano Po':

In Filipino culture, it is common for people to greet their elders with a gesture known as 'Mano' or 'Mano Po'. This entails taking the hand of the aforementioned elder and pressing it on your forehead. While the practice is not as common with Filipinos as in multicultural societies such as Australia, it is extremely common in the Philippines. It is derived from the strong Spanish Christian/Catholic influence in Filipino culture and is used as a sign of respect to elders and the exchanging of blessings. As a Filipino Australian, it is not a regular practice that I part-take in with all my elders. As I have a rather large family that I see rather often, I keep the practice of 'Mano' reserved for my God-parents whom I see on much rarer occasions. However, when I am in the Philippines, I endeavour to do so with all my elders as it is much more expected in Filipino culture.

Example 31.4 shows that the student is not only aware of intercultural variations in 'greeting' practices, he is also competent in explaining a particular practice from

a specific cultural perspective, tracing the practice back to where it is derived, and negotiating the extent in which it can or should be practiced from his personal intercultural understanding and experience.

31.3.2.3 Developing Intercultural Negotiation Strategies

Intercultural negotiation strategies are strategies that participants adopt to 'negotiate intercultural meanings', or to seek conceptual clarifications when participants feel that 'there might be more behind the use of a certain expression than is immediately apparent' (Sharifian 2013b: 9). Examples 31.5 and 31.6 show how students negotiate among themselves regarding whether English is a killer language or a tool for wider communication, and whether native speakers hold more advantages over non-native speakers of English.

Example 5 Negotiations on whether English is a killer language or a tool for wider communication

A (Australian): I think that it would be naive to say that English has not 'killed' other languages in the past. Look at our local context! Australia used to be home to over 750 local indigenous dialects and now has under 150. However, I do believe that this was particularly characteristic of colonisation, which is not happening in the same way today as it was 200 years ago. I think that English is *becoming* a tool, but wasn't always one.

B (Australian): In my opinion coming from an English as a first language speaker, English is a tool for wider communication because in my experience, in travelling and speaking to L2 speakers, it allows me to communicate with people from other non-English-speaking countries, and therefore promotes world communication and makes travel and commerce much easier, when there is a common language between speakers.

C (Singaporean): The English language is definitely a tool for wider communication. Take for instance Singapore—a multicultural nation, the progress of the nation strongly depended on everyone speaking a common language. When the government chose English as the lingua franca and main language of communication since its independence, Singapore not only prospered to greater heights but it also builds a stronger bond between its people and made the nation more united as everyone is using a common language to communicate with each other. It also allows the nation to engage with other countries outside of its Southeast Asia region e.g. America/UK.

D (Hong Kong): English is both a 'killer' language and also a tool for wider communication. It's a killer because while paying so much attention to learning English, people may lose their own languages and its cultures/traditions and its values/beliefs. But it's also a very good tool for communication as it works as a lingua Franca for people to communicate. Instead of learning all these languages, English is good enough to interact with everyone from all around the world.

E (Australian with a Chinese background): It is in fact like a Swiss Army Knife —there are many components and tools. And the tool to choose depends on the function that is to be performed. Is English a killer language? I think, for the most part, not. Is English an essential language in the current global civilisation? Definitely.

F (Australian with a Japanese background): I recently experienced an interesting situation where English (or the spread and dominance of English) could revitalise other language. I spent most of my life outside my home country due to my parents' jobs. And having lived overseas for some time, I was able to see how wide-spread English is and its influence or dominance as you might call it. I have been frequently exposed to an environment where I had to use English whether it be part of education or daily life. But because of the overt influence and spread of English, strangely I came to a point where I feel very blessed to be able to speak multiple languages other than English and that I want to refine my 'mother tongue', which I have not learned or used at all in my life. Because of this experience, I have decided to study in my home country on exchange next year, so I'd argue that English does not always kill but could give life to languages.

G (Chinese): So far we seem to have reached more or less a consensus that English is both a tool for wider communication and a killer language in relation to other languages and cultures. If we push the discussion a bit further, we may consider that implications of this for our use of English and perhaps other languages … to me, one of the implications is that we should promote an English+ world of multilingual society, rather than an English only community of speakers. While recognizing that English is a great tool for intercultural communication, and enjoying the benefits of learning and using English, we should also develop awareness of maintaining languages and cultures other than English, and promote a sustainable linguistic ecology where all languages and all users of different varieties play an integral part in the intercultural, as well as intra-cultural communication.

Example 31.5 shows that class participants use different strategies for negotiation. Student A uses facts to illustrate that English in Australia kills indigenous dialects; B uses her experiences as an English L1 speaker to show that English is a tool for wider communication, particularly with many L2 speakers of English; C takes Singapore as a case to show that English is a tool for wider communication and for the prosperity of the country; D takes a middle position in arguing that English is both a killer language and a tool for international communication; E makes good use of his metaphorical competence in putting forward a metaphor that English is a Swiss Army Knife in the sense that it serves different explicit functions, while in the meantime, as a knife itself, one of its implicit functions can be for killing; F puts forward a slightly different argument in saying that English actually revitalises other languages, based on his personal multicultural and multilingual experiences. As part of the 'negotiation' process, the lecturer G summarises the arguments and takes the 'negotiation' a step further in promoting 'English plus', or English-knowing multilingualism and a sustainable linguistic ecology. Such

negotiations entail variation awareness, explication and negotiation strategies, and they also represent new EIL literacy, proficiency and competence.

Example 6 Negotiations on whether native speakers of English hold more advantages over non-native speakers of English

> T (Thai): I think native speakers hold more advantages over non-native speakers, particularly during intercultural communication in a language which is not the first language (L1) of some speakers.
>
> A (Australian): I think it's broadly correct that in a debate, discussion or negotiation conducted solely in English, the English L1 speaker is likely to have certain advantages. However I'm not convinced that this necessarily equates to greater power and/or influence in an economic or political sense. I often feel disadvantaged when dealing with people around the world by the fact that I have only one method of effective communication (i.e. English), whereas they may have 2 or 3 languages where they can communicate effectively.
>
> I (Indonesian): Native speakers of English seem to have more benefits than non-native speakers. Even though Kirkpatrick (2007) has clearly argued that native speakers of English are not always better than non-native speakers of English at teaching English, many people, perhaps including myself, are still likely to believe that the native speakers of English are more qualified in teaching English than the non-native speakers of English.
>
> C (Chinese): Yes, Kirkpatrick's argument is highly relevant. He seems to be keen on multilingual education. His latest argument is that ELT is not about teaching 'English' to non-native speakers of English, but about teaching different L1 speakers to become multilingual speakers of their L1 plus English.
>
> I: Oh I see. Wow it's quite surprising though. Then, it's not implausible that the variety among many Englishes will lead to mutual unintelligibility just like Latin language :)
>
> C: Yes. Referring back to Kirkpatrick (2007), he also raised the issue of the 'tension' between identity and intelligibility. When people intend to show their 'identity', they tend to speak varieties of English, but when they want to communicate, they would choose to speak a more 'intelligible' variety of English. We cannot underestimate people's ability to switch between different dialects or different varieties of English. For example, a lot of Singaporeans could speak basilect, mesolect, and acrolect of Singaporean English(es). :).
>
> I: Yes, I strongly agree with you. It also possibly prevails towards Broad, General and Cultivated accents in Australian English.

Example 31.6 is an extended discussion on the issue of whether 'native speakers' of English hold more advantages over 'non-native speakers'. The Thai and the Indonesian seem to think that 'native speakers' of English have more advantages than 'non-native speakers'; however, the Australian and the Chinese have managed to negotiate their counter arguments by either referring to their own experiences and viewpoints or referencing other researchers' views. Such negotiation strategies go beyond the awareness of cultural variations and the explication strategies, and they help the participants to co-construct meanings across cultures over specific arguments and conceptualizations.

31.4 Pedagogical Implications of Developing Meta-cultural Competence

Developing meta-cultural competence for intercultural communication has implications for teaching EIL.

First of all, to develop meta-cultural competence, students and lecturers in the EIL classroom should consider the 'triple A' principles of 'acknowledging' the current paradigm shift from English to Englishes, 'anticipating' different conceptualizations in intercultural communication using EIL, and 'acquiring' EIL literacy, proficiency and competence for intercultural communication.

Second, it should be made aware that EIL is not simply a variety of English, but a multilingual language with different cultural conceptualizations. It is also 'a paradigm for thinking, research and practice', and 'it marks a paradigm shift in TESOL, SLA and the applied linguistics of English, partly in response to the complexities that are associated with the tremendously rapid spread of English around the globe in recent decades' (Sharifian 2009a: 2). This awareness and understanding of EIL coincide with the results of one of the EIL class surveys on what EIL implies. The survey results show that EIL is (1) a 'common' language; (2) a tool for effective intercultural communication; (3) a conglomeration of Englishes; (4) a process of glocalisation of English; and (5) a paradigm and an area of study of changing English.

Third, meta-cultural competence should be developed alongside the students' linguistic and communicative competence. The goal of developing meta-cultural competence is to equip students with literacy and proficiency in EIL and sufficient multicultural knowledge to engage in intercultural communication competently. Rather than simply conforming to the cultures of certain English-speaking countries, students should become aware of, exposed to and familiar with intercultural variations, and maintain their own cultural traditions and identities while acquiring EIL for intercultural communication.

In addition, meta-cultural competence does not only involve students' multicultural knowledge, but also their intercultural presence and academic stance through intercultural explanation and negotiation. Students should develop meta-cultural competence by enhancing awareness of intercultural differences and improving their abilities to explain and negotiate across cultures. One of the effective ways is to engage themselves proactively in intercultural communication to boost their intercultural presence and put forward their academic stance through active intercultural explanation and negotiation. As students from diverse cultural backgrounds come to interact with one another in English, new systems of cultural conceptualizations emerge and develop at the individual and the intercultural group levels.

Last but not least, developing meta-cultural competence also has pedagogical implications for lecturers of teaching EIL in multilingual and multicultural societies. They may design their curricula that are relevant to their students' respective cultures in addition to the cultures associated traditionally with English-speaking

countries. They may engage their students in exploring controversial issues, e.g. whether English is a killer language or a tool for wider communication, to instil students' critical thinking and intercultural negotiation strategies. They may also encourage their students to use local varieties of English, e.g. Australian English, Indonesian English and Chinese English (Xu 2010), which embody different cultural conceptualizations, to (re)negotiate and (co)construct their position, relationship and identity in intercultural communication.

31.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored a Cultural Linguistics approach to teaching English as an International Language. In particular, I have reviewed relevant literature on Cultural Linguistics, Applied Cultural Linguistics and English as an International Language. I have proposed three tenets of English as an International Language, and 'triple A' principles for developing meta-cultural competence, namely, 'acknowledging' the current paradigm shift from English to Englishes, 'anticipating' different conceptualizations in intercultural communication using EIL, and 'acquiring' EIL literacy, proficiency and competence for intercultural communication. The focus of this chapter is on developing *meta-cultural competence* among students in EIL classrooms. I have also explored pedagogical implications of developing meta-cultural competence for teaching English as an International Language.

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