BEYOND THE DICTIONARY IN ENGLISH

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1. Introduction.

This article has two purposes: firstly, to argue for a substantial cultural component to be included in all advanced level English language syllabuses; secondly, to attempt to break up the large, amorphous area of knowledge knowledge known as "culture" into departments within which didactic material can be developed.

2. The Importance of Cultural Knowledge.

Any verbal message, whether spoken or written, relies on assumed knowledge for its communicative effect. The encoder of the message assumes:

> i) that the decoder shares his knowledge of the language, i.e. that he has the linguistic competence to decode the propositional content of the message; and
> ii) that the decoder will be able to interpret the illocut-ionary force in the way intended.

If both parties are native speakers, there is an excellent chance that the first assumption will hold good, provided the intended decoder is paying attention, that here is no physical interference such as noise or unclear handwriting, and that specialized vocabulary is not being used.

The second assumption is far more risky, even among native speakers, especially when the spoken medium is being employed. Misunderstandings of peoples intentions are very common, particularly between people who do not know each other very intimately. When one of the parties is not a native speaker of English, the chances are high that communication will break down altogether. It is fortunate that many materials writers these days aim to supply lear-

ners with a knowledge of USE as well as USAGE, thus reducing the tendency of eager foreigners to launch into detailed accounts of stomach-aches or hangovers in response to the greeting "How are you?"

Language in use may then be said to consist of a surface form and an underlying intent; yet this is still only half the picture. There is a still deeper level of knowledge of the language assumed in much communication, which might be covered by the vague term "cultural knowledge", and which enables people to interpret a message not simply in terms of the immediate context, but in the context of a shared way of life, a shared national heritage, shared social, religious and cultural values. One native speaker communicating with another relies heavily on the assumption that what he says or writes will be understood in the way that he means, that both inhabit, to all intents and purposes, the same world. The more the encoder assumes this to be true (correctly or not) the more his message is likely to include slang and dialect forms, references to names and places, real or fictional, that he expects his listener or reader to have heard of, bits of proverbs, nursery rhymes, songs, and so on. The same sociolinguistic factors which, according to the situation, may influence the choice of language, dialect, style or register, will also affect the further choice of how much cultural knowledge to assume in the decoder. The more accustomed to taking and acting upon such decisions the encoder is, the more sensitive he will be to feedback from his audience — e.g. a London policeman, perceiving that the person asking him the way to the Air Terminal is having a struggle with the language, will probably speak more clearly than usual, avoiding slang, and not referring to certain landmarks the way he might when speaking to an Englishman. A newspaper vendor, in the same circumstances, might be less likely to modify his speech in any way, except perhaps by making it louder — his range of styles would be more limited, and although he might be quite aware that the foreigner is not following him, lack of practice in rapid recording in response to feedback would prevent him from adopting the clear, culturally-neutral style understandable to foreigners (sometimes called "foreigner-talk", by analogy with "baby-talk").

This everyday example serves to illustrate that it is only those who have practice in speaking to foreigners (and not always those) who have the skill to simplify their language appropriately. Most native speakers of English lack this practice, and even those who are able may choose NOT to make any concessions to foreigners if there are native speakers also present (as is usual in British universities,

for example) — or if they are feeling hostile towards foreigners on that particular day (a fruitful source of deliberate misunderstandings and bloodymendedness on the part of air stewardesses, London shop assistants, bus conductors, and others who spend so much of their lives hearing English being mangled that they have been known to forget their manners on occasion).

So if allowances are sometimes not made even when it is known that foreigners are present, how about when the message is aimed exclusively at an English-speaking audience, as in films, TV, the press, and most literature? It must be assumed that, in most cases, a very great deal is lost in transmission — that what the foreign student extracts from the message, however good his knowledge of the English language may be, is only a shadow of what the encoder intended to communicate. If this is so, and if, as seems to be the case, lack of cultural knowledge is to blame, then it is clear that cultural knowledge needs to be systematized like other aspects of language, and explicitly taught.

3. Cultural Analysis of some recent newspaper articles.

In order to back up my contention that cultural knowledge is indispensable to full comprehension of many British publications, I have gleaned The Guardian Weekly, one of the few periodicals consistently read worldwide by non-native-speakers, for examples from the last half-dozen editions of language use which assumes background knowledge beyond that usually encountered in foreign students who have not lived in Britain. I have grouped the extracts into broad areas of knowledge, which will be developed and refined in section 3.

GEOGRAPHY: Geographical references pervade every article, so I shall not include any particular examples.

GOVERNMENT: Again, countless references in most articles. Here are a few examples:

"His father was a former Tory MP."
"It is not a question of whether the polemical stylists are in Transport House or in the Parliamentary Labour Party."
"Asked by a Labour backbencher..."

The reader is clearly assumed to know all about the British parliamentary system, the various terms used to refer to its main parties, and their rival factions Transport House is the headquarters of the Trade Union Congress, which generally speaking represents the left wing of the Socialist (Labour) Party.

EDUCATION: "Some MP's disliked what they thought of as a smarmy public school manner, though it could equally be described as faultless inbred courtesy."

Here the reader is required to know that public schools are private and expensive in England — this quotation also tells us something about the relationship between education, manners and class attitudes.

RELIGION: "It is the rescue from oblivion of two highly cherished expressions of the English language at its most beautiful and most powerful: the Authorized Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. On Monday the signatories presented to the General Synod of the Church of England their almost desperate appeal..."

> "t is no longer possible to hear Matins or the 1662 Communion service..."
>
> "...no vicar can carry all the variants in his head."

The reader must know a little about Britain's official religion, its cultural and social status, its significance in the minds of a tradition-loving people, as well as be aware that the term 'vicar' would not be used of a Catholic priest, nor the term 'Communion service' to refer to the Mass, any more than they would be to refer to a Presbyterian minister, or a Methodist prayer meeting.

CURRENT EVENTS:

> "Men didn't like Goldsmith's City style or his Falkender knighthood."

Lady Falkender was Harold Wilson's private secretary when he was Prime Minister, and the Honours List which he presented, as is the custom, to the Queen upon his resignation is said to have been largely drawn up by her — it conferred titles on some unexpected people, including herself, and several rich tycoons of doubtful honesty.
'City style' refers to his tendency to dress and behave in the manner of a rich banker.

> "When half the people one has ever heard of (from Derek Nimmo to A.J.P. Taylor, from Lord Bullock to Ted Hughes)..."

How many of those names will mean anything to the average Brazilian university student of English?

HABITS:

> "So John Bloom became a multimillionaire by liberating millions of women from Monday misery with cheap washing machines; John Young did much the same on the greenback of Latin lovers with package holidays via his Court Line when Luton Airport was a mere tarmac stripling."

Perhaps it is obvious from this that British housewives traditionallY wash clothes on Monday. Package holidays might be found in a recent dictionary, the equivalent of an 'excursão', mainly designed for the mindless masses. The reference to Luton Airport will mean more if the reader knows first where it is and second something of the debate that has been raging for more than a decade over over London's airports.

> "Then the clocks went back."

Clocks are put forwards and back each year in Britain, as in many other places. These events seem to symbolize, for the British, the onset of summer and winter respectively.

> "It's a good swot for anyone who's outside the Green Belt."

The Green Belt is a circle of countryside surrounding the extreme suburbs of London, defined and preserved by law.

"Someone else takes over on Boxing Day. . ." (from an article describing the annual search in the writer's household for the nutcrackers every Christmas.) Boxing Day (the day after Christmas) is a public holiday in England — many sporting events take place, and cold leftovers from the Christmas turkey (eaten on the afternoon of the 25th) are the traditional fare.

> "I was covering a golf tournament in the early summer, and after a hard day's trudging round the Bollinger tent. . ."

Here it is necessary to know that golf tournaments attract very large crowds in Britain, and that there are marquees that serve such things as champagne for those who can afford it, and that Bollinger is a mark of champagne.

"There was a pub round the corner that allowed kids in the bar and sold real draught Bass..."

Most pubs, the reader might not know, do NOT allow kids in the bar. It would be helpful to know what pubs are like, and why they play such a major part in English social life. The reader might deduce that 'draught Bass' is the non-bottled variety of a famous beer, yet fail to see what is so good about that, unless he has recently read John Osborne's 'The Entertainer', where its merits are highly praised by Archie Rice, who spends most of the play drinking it.

"It's going to be a country cat, I said, a hunter; no Kit-E-Kat, only rats and mice and moles and voles..."

Kit-E-Kat is a well-known tinned cat food, not to be confused with Kit-Kat, which is a well-known chocolate biscuit.

"...and a village cricket team that looked in need of a porous Graveney at n.º 7 who could bowl lobs after tea."

The word 'cricket' should warn the reader that he is about to be treated to a series of incomprehensible technical terms and unheard-of famous names. He had better find out all about cricket (and its history over, say, the last hundred years), or stop reading that particular article. The same would apply in the case of the following quotation, found in the Political Commentary, of all places:

"He wears hornrims, looks like a young Geoff Boycott... Imagine a serious student of Brazilian Portuguese who chose to remain in ignorance of football!

POPULAR CULTURE:

"This is a whodunnit, or rather a whydunnit, with the villain portrayed like a cross between Goldfinger and a millionaire pawnbroker".

"Philip Marlowe could hardly put it better. Hello, my unlovely."

"He is a first-person narrator, a Marlowe rather a Holmes."

"DINNERTIME DIPLOMACY IN DUBLIN FAIR CITY" (Headline)

The first three should cause less trouble than the last, nuless the reader remembers the drunk in 'The Clockwork Orange', who was lying on the pavement singing Molly Maelone shortly

before being beaten senseless by the film's hero.

CHILDREN'S CULTURE:

> "...he is totally unreflecting about the past and presents himself as an unreconstructed Biggles."

The foreign student is less likely to have read the Biggles war adventures than the average British schoolboy, and would thus be baffled by this scathing comparison.

> "For a long time China and the Soviet Union have appeared in the West to be locked in the battle between Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Here, as in the following extract, the reader is expected to be well acquainted with Lewis Carroll's Alice books.

> "Hill is denounced for standing 'at the joyous pinnacle of power shared with rulers of totalitarian states and Humpty-Dumpty: words, at least the words REASON and REASONABLENESS, mean anything he wanted them to mean.' "

> "One of the industry's negotiators announced bluntly that the corporation was broke; that its cupboard, like Mother Hubbard's, was bare."

> "There was much huffing and puffing this week over the Government's decision to..."

'Huffing and puffing' is what the giant threatened to do in order to blow the three little piggies houses down:

DIALECT:

> "An old Yorkshire translation of Genesis reads: 'First on, there were nobbut God. He said, Eh up, let's turn't bloody light on!' "

Could many foreign readers really tell for sure whether this is a joke or serious? The context did not make it clear, as it came in a serious article discussing rival translations of the Bible. Of

course, it is a joke, being very current Yorkshire dialect. How many readers can pronounce it correctly?

> "Her negotiating technique seems to be the one perfected by the Kray twins: 'Nice little Common Market you got there, wouldn't want anyfink nasty to happen to it. Now would we?' "

Most English people remember the violent London gangsters referred to, and would be able to imagine their Cockney accent, enjoying the unflattering comparison Mrs Thatcher is subjected to.

SAYINGS:

> "Her tone of speech and stridency of language are unmodified, but her deeds, which now speak louder, have set in motion a process that is likely to result at best in not much more than 'half a cake'."

The proverb cut in half here is 'Half a loaf (or cake) is better than none'. No prizes for guessing who the lady is.

> "I believe the electorate can tell a hawk from a handsaw."

> "More ludicrous is the fact that legislation is so rough and ready, so indiscriminate in its effects, that its enactors are obviously prepared to see any old baby, black or white, thrown out with the bathwater, as long as that baby is female."

This is from an article attacking the new law which prevents non-Common Market husbands of British women from residing in Britain. The expression 'to throw the baby out with the bathwater' implies such great zeal to reform that you get rid of what was perfectly alright along with the the rest.

> "LIVING IN GLASSHOUSES"

This was the headline of an article about art museums in Brazil. By supplying the missing half of the proverb, the reader will

be able to connect it to the ill-fated Museu de Artre Moderna in Rio de Janeiro.

METAPHOR: "One moderate politician with no axe to grind says he has come on by leaps and bounds."
'To have no axe to grind' is a very common expression meaning 'to be unbiassed'.

"CHEAP AIR FARES CAN BRING HIGH FLIERS DOWN TO EARTH"

This headline contains a pun on the expression 'high flier', which can be taken literally as 'people who fly high in aeroplanes', or as 'people with high ambitions'. The article covers both meanings, in fact, reporting on the bankruptcy of a well-known tourist company which for a time was making huge profits flying people to Spain on package holidays.

"Goldsmith threw the book at the magazine."
This means that he directed the full force of the law at the magazine (the satirical weekly PRIVATE EYE, which had been rather uncomplimentary about him).

"When he got off the hook, it was usually on a technicality."

The source of this fishing metaphor is the same as the previou extract, and refers to the defendant escaping the charges.

"Several generations enjoyed the grand imperial banquet.

Ours has been left with the washing-up. As Lord Carrington hangs up the tea-towel, to heartfelt thanks all round, there is a distinct feeling that the Squezy bottle will soon be out again."

Referring to the arrangements recently made for Rhodesia's independence, the writer assumes awareness of the fact that a teat-towel is used for drying up dishes you have just washed, and that Squezy is a brand of washing-up liquid.

"It looked as though Mrs Thatcher was about to perform her first U-turn."

This metaphor has been used rather a lot recently. It means literally to turn your car round to face the way you were coming,

and has been used in connection with the common expectation that the new prime minister will be forced to reverse some of her bolder policies.

"That, too, proved to be a wild goose chase."

A very commonly-used expression for a 'futile search' (in this case, those nutcrackers again).

The above extracts are only a tiny sample of the examples of assumed cultural knowledge that occurred in the newspapers which I examined. Many examples of a similar nature will also be found in any modern novel, play, or poem that has Britain or the British people as its subject. Anyone who doubts this should look briefly at a novel by Graham Greene or Margaret Drabble, a poem by Philip Larkin or Ted Hughes, or a play by Tom Stoppard, comprehension of which is severely limited if one is not steeped in the cultural background taken for granted in English readers.

4. Major Categories of Cultural Knowledge.

In this section I attempt to divide cultural knowledge into departments, in order to facilitate further research, which might be analytical or contrastive. The classification which follows is clearly sketchy and incomplete, and intended to serve merely as a provisional working model. I have made a preliminary division between what might be considered "external", or "predictable" cultural knowledge, and the more subjective, individually variable components. The dividing line is at times rather blurred, and it may be better to view the area as a cline, ranging from extremes of objectivity such as knowledge of geography, to the ultimate in individuality, for instance one's own family's cultural traditions, which might be quite idiosyncratic.

I) GEOGRAPHY	— Names and location of towns, counties, physical characteristics of regions
	— Economical and cultural features of regions and their inhabitants
II) GOVERNMENT	— Monarchy and aristocracy — The political sytem — The legal system
III) EDUCATION	— Characteristics of state and private systems and their respective terminology

— Names and characteristics of some well-known schools, e.g. Eton, Harrow, Winchester

IV) RELIGION	— The various Christian sects, their relative influence and geographical distribution — Main characteristics and terminology of the major sects (e.g. the various terms for the service, clergy, place of worship)
V) CURRENT EVENTS	— Events, issues and people which are or have recently been prominent in the media (e.g. political and social issues, criminal cases, natural disasters)
VI) HABITS	— Eating and drinking habits (what, when, where, and how) — Customs and traditional celebrations (e. g. Christmas and Easter, Guy Fawkes' Day, Shrove Tuesday — also weddings, funerals, birthdays) — Recreational activities: games, sports, clubs, hobbies
VII) CLASS	— The relationship between profession, school, speech, manners, dress, etc., and a person's location on the social scale in the judgement of others. (The British are acutely class-conscious in general, and unable to prevent themselves making highly refined assessments of strangers' social status, even on the slenderest of evidence)
VIII) ATTITUDES	— Some may influence language, e.g. interpretations attached to punctuality, the importance of wealth, taboo subjects, the role of women in society, etc.

The above eight categories deal loosely with what might be summarized as "BRITAIN AND ITS PUBLIC AND SOCIAL LIFE". The remaining six sections are rather more linguistic, and definitely more cultural" in the traditional use of the word. A blanket term might be "QUOTATIONS AND REFERENCES". The importance of this sort of knowledge has considerable linguistic relevance: when a piece of language is recognized as a quotation, it is processed as a unit, otherwise it is likely to broken down and processed in smaller units

in the usual way. Although it is very desirable that students should be very familiar with a wide range of quotations and so forth, this whole area is much more difficult to systematize, as a higher element of individual variation in experience has to be allowed for. As a consequence I shall be somewhat discursive about some of the topics which, as far as I know, have received little or no serious attention from syllabus designers.

IX) HIGH CULTURE — Literature (including English versions of the Bible, and Classical Fables and Mythology)
— British History

Most Englishmen, however philistine they might appear on the surface, have at some time been exposed to the work of Shakespeare, Dickens, maybe Kipling, Blake, Bunyan, Tennyson and Keats, small pieces of which may have stuck in their minds. They may not remember very clearly who wrote whatever it is they remember, and they may get it a bit wrong (this tendency is exploited in comedy). However even in the most unsophisticated of English conversation this pool of common literary half-nowledge is likely to be drawn on. It should not be forgotten that just about all adults can read in Britain, and that moreover many frequently do. Apart from this fact, radio and television bring the classics into the most unintellectual homes at some time or another. They are shared knowledge. The Bible and the ancient classics are not, of course, the exclusive property of the British, but the former in particular is very widely read at all levels of society, and the foreigner may not be acquainted with these works in a language other than his own, especially spoken forms of proper names.

I have included History here, as apart from the fact that most English people have some idea of what Henry VIII looked like and did, and Oliver Cromwell, William the Conqueror, etc., and assume that others do too, various phrases of historical origin have made their way into the language, such as "to turn a blind eye", "to meet one's Waterloo", and more colloquially, "they came rushing in like the Charge of the Light Brigade".

X) POPULAR CULTURE — Radio, TV, Popular Songs, Newspapers, Lowbrow Fiction

A number of widely-known radio programmes have left their mark on the language: audience participation shows, such as "Have A Go" (which gave us 'Give 'im the money, Mabel', in a broad West Riding

accent); halfhour comedy programmes such as "The Goon Show" (which featured the young Peter Sellers, and recordings of which can still be purchased in all record stores), "Hancock's Half Hour", "Round The Horne"; parlour games such as "20 Questions"; these and other programmes had memorable catchphrases and characters which are still imitated, and seem to have entered folklore. In addition there have been immensely long-running serials such as "Mrs. Dale's Diary" (about a doctor's wife), and "The Archers" ('an everyday story of country folk').

Television also has interminable serials which regularly top the audience charts, such as "Coronation Street", which has been going for 25 years, and deals with family life in a northern slum. Then there are the many familiar interviewers, newsreaders, commentators, who seem like members of the family. There is little point in saying to someone: "Stop talking to me like Robin Day", if that person does not know that Robin Day is an aggressive, persistent interviewer, who has made several prime ministers cringe (though no the present one); or in commenting that someone has a Jimmy Hill grin on his face (referring to a famous football commentator, who has a strange pointed beard and a fixed grin on his face); or in drily remarking, as one watches one's married friends having a violent domestic tiff, that "this is better than Match of the Day" — unless semeone within earshot is an ardent telly-watcher (as most English people can be relied on to be).

By popular songs I mean songs that have been popular during the last hundred years or so. Ditties that were all the rage at the time of either of the two world wars seem to have left particularly strong marks on the minds of the people, e.g. "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", "Keep Right On To The End Of The Road", "The White Cliffs Of Dover" — such songs have very powerful emotional associations for many older people, which non-natives should be aware of and respect. Other influential songs have come from such sources as the Victorian music-halls, the Beatles, American musicals. A cheap umbrella of mine was once compared to "the surrey with the fringe on top".

The language of newspapers, their cartoons, comic strips, adverts and individual characteristics, are often introduced into speech or Writing for effect. To say of a child that "He looks like something out of Giles" is to compare him to the unkempt, mischievous children in the large cartoons that Giles has drawn for the Sunday Express for decades. Sometimes people deliberately imitate the sensational hea-

dline language of papers like The Daily Mirror.

I have separated Lowbrow Fiction rfom the rest of Literature for no very good reason other than the likelihood of it being more ephemeral in its influence on the language. I am thinking especially of detective and spy fiction of the James Bond and Sherlock Holmes type, which everybody knows from one of the media at least. We have phrases like "Elementary dear Watson", from Holmes, and "He must think he's James Bond", etc.

XI) CHILDREN'S CULTURE — Nursery rhymes and Fairy Tales
Children's literature
Weekly comics

Nursery rhymes learnt on one's mother's knee by the fireside (or more likely these days heard on cassette beside the central heating) are rich in associations, and widely quoted. The foreign strudent persists in ignorance of Humpty Dumpty's physical plight (he was an egg that fell off a wall) or Old Mother Hubbard's financial difficulties (her cupboard was bare) or The Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe And Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What To Do AT HIS/HER PERIL!

Fairy stories tend to be more international, though details and names may vary confusingly. Who, however, can have any doubt of the cultural status of Little Red Ridinghood after seeing 'The Last Tango In Paris"?

There are some almost universally-read books, however, which, despite the marketing efforts of the Walt Disney Corporation, remain fairly culture-specific: Winnie-The-Pooh (translated, unexpectedly, into Latin by a German doctor who subsequently wrote a book about Santa Catarina called "The Valley Of The Latin Bear") and its equally sensational sequel The House At Pooh Corner will be found on the bookshelves of most British children. The two Alice books, by Lewis Carroll, are now so entrenched in the cultural heritage as to be contenders for inclusion in the High Culture section. Apart from such classics as these and The Wind In The Willows (in which we meet Mr Toad of Toad Hall), there are numerous boys' stories, such as those about William (a rebellious middle-class child from the pre-Punk days), Billy Bunter (a fat public schoolboy — worth reading these books to find out how the class structure operates), Biggles (World War I flying ace), and old-established characters from the weekly comics, e.g. Desperate Dan (eater of cow pie — made with a whole cow), which have tinged the language of several generations.

More recently, in the last decade or so, new children's stories have appeared on television and in comics, such as the Wombles (furry underground creatures who tidy up the rubbish humans leave on the common), the Mister Men, The Magic Roundabout, one of whose main characters is a snail, references to all of which abound in the speech of my three children, at least — signs that language never stands still, especially in these electronic times.

XII) GROUP CULTURE — slang, dialect, accent

It is of course hard to keep up with slang, forever changing, but we might include here the more durable Cockney rhyming slang, e.g. APPLES AND PEARS (stairs), TROUBLE AND STRIFE (wife) — which are quite widely used in jocular style by many educated non-Cockneys. Fewer and fewer people, however, these days speak the true Cockney dialect (as opposed to the accent, which has increased sufficiently in prestige, thanks perhaps to the likes of Michael Caine, Mick Jagger, and Twiggy, to be heard from the mouths of BBC radio announcers). Other sorts of slang are more restricted, more fleeting — the upper-class speech of P.G. Wodehouse novels of 50 years ago, for example, is largely obsolete (yet how is the foreign reader expected to know this?)

Taboo words, the famous four-letter shockers, might belong here ... not mere knowledge of their existence, but awareness of their force — usually almost nil in peer-group speech, but potentially devastating in other situations. Much experience is necessary before the foreigner should venture to employ even the occasional 'bloody'. It can, and probably will, shock, especially coming out of the blue from a rather nice foreigner. There are two important things which should be remenbered about any slang: i) its reason for existence at all is linked to needs for group identity — by using it one is identifying oneself with that group. Foreigners who use slang too freely may encounter some resentment; ii) it is, as mentioned above, constantly changing, far faster than English Language coursebooks and dictionaries can keep up with, and nothing sounds more incongruous than dated slang.

It is necessary not only to recognize slang as such, but also dialect. The use of a non-standard dialect form or accent by a speaker of RP has meaning — usually in informs the listener or reader that humour is intended, though in some cases it may indicate underlying embarrassment or uncertainty. The contrary, anyone else imitating RP, especially the 'posh' advanced variety (such as the Queen speaks), is likely to mean that someone is being made rather nasty fun of

because he is considered affected or standoffish.

xiii) SAYINGS — proverbs
— quotes from real people

It is desirable to know that the old-established proverbs and similes are rarely used in their entirety or seriously. Half is usually enough. and syntactic liberties are entirely permissible. When used whole they have a boring, sententious effect. Foreigners should be discouraged from attempting to use proverbs until they are confident they can do so in the way native speakers do, i.e. elliptically and humorously. Examples of the halving technique are:

Well, you can lead a horse to water ... (low to mid rising tone on last word)

He's a bit of a rolling stone

Quotations from famous people are also expected to be recognized as such, e.g. 'Let them eat cake' and 'We are not amused', from the magnificent Queen Victoria; or Harold MacWillan's 'wind of change', referring to the rather hasty decolonization of Africa in the 50's; or bits of Churchills wartime radio speches ("blood, sweat and tears', etc) which we are now told were delivered by an actor as the great man was busy elsewhere.

xiv) METAPHOR

I am thinking here of both the common idiomatic expressions that may be found in dictionaries, and the more novel metaphors coined on the spur of the moment, but whose origin a native speaker would be able to identify. Examples of the former are: 'to throw in the towel' (from boxing), 'We're batting on a sticky wicket' (from cricket), 'He's had a good inning's from cricket again) — the native speaker has the clue of their literal meaning, which the foreigner is less likely to have. It seems that the truly integratively-motivated student should have wide-ranging interests, if he intends to get right inside the language. He should probably read the horse-racing column, the cricket page, the law reports, the Bridge section ... Much radio and television humour relies on the coining of unsual metaphors, in addition to the mismatch of style and accent (e.g. very formal vocabulary in a non-standard accent).

Individual words sometimes have figurative meanings in English which their equivalents do not have in Portuguese, e.g.

PIG can mean 'glutton', in "Don't make a pig of yourself!"

CAT can mean 'spiteful woman', and has the adjective form CATTY, a near synonym of BITCHY
MOUSY is used to describe timid, unattractive women, while
RATTY means 'treacherous and vindictive'
FROG is a common term for a Frenchman, and so on.

Admittedly, one would expect to find this sort of sort of information in a dictionary, but dictionaries are not organized along pedagogical lines, so that the student is rarely able to find the information he requires rapidly. Dictionaries written specially for foreigners, which might avoid this problem, such as the Longman Dictionary of English Idioms, face another problem by their very nature — how to give the precise meaning of a metaphor within a self-imposed restricted vocabulary (in the case of the work mentioned above, 2000 words).

I do not propose to deal with non-verbal aspects of culture — gestures, proxemics, etc. For a fascinating discussion of this subject the reader is referred to E. Hall's 'The Silent Language'. My concern in this paper is principally with the sort of knowledge an advanced student who wishes to read a wide range of authentic texts might require.

5. The Teaching of Cultural Knowledge.

The reader is probably a little sceptical of the feasibility of actually teaching much of this cultural knowledge to non-natives, and possibly of its necessity in the first place.

Regarding its necessity, this is obvious if one's reading is not to be restricted drastically (as might be the case where a student only wants to read texts on his area of research) — most advanced students would benefit greatly from being able to pick up a newspaper with confidence. In addition, teachers using some of the modern functional courses, such as STRATEGIES or APPROACHES, need a good command of this type of knowledge. Translators, also, require it — in particular those responsible for film subtitles!

If so many different types of person have a use for cultural knowledge, then somehow is has to be taught, in the same way that native speakers have to be taught the culture of Elizabethan England before they can appreciate Shakespeare's plays.

How then can it be taught? What principles will determine selection? First we should look at available didactic material, and we find immediately a very good introductory survey of areas in-

cluded in the first eight categories in R. Musman's 'BRITAIN TODAY'. As well as being entertaining and informative, it suggests further reading on each topic. A book such as this, supported by recent newspapers and magazines, any available films (such as those to be found in the temporarily defunct British Council film library), and collections of newspaper cuttings, such as SPECTRUM, THAT'S LIFE, already offers the foundation of a reasonably thorough course.

The question then arises of who can teach the subject — obviously it has to be a native-speaker with recent experience of Britain, and such animals are thin on the ground in Brazil. But this essentially is a teacher training problem: non-natives can be trained by a native, and subsequently carry out research on their own in order to be able to train further groups.

Careful selection of material will of course be necessary, but largely dependent on the ability of the teacher, of the inclinations of the student, on the availability of materials, on the time factor ... It might have been noticed that I have made no mention of North American culture, a large field in its own right, with numerous points of contrast with British culture. Decisions will have to be made regarding how much weight to be given to each.

However these decisions are resolved, one important ponit should remain clear — that language is an aspect of culture, and cannot be divorced from it. Let us remember the words of Malinowski, written over half a century ago:

"Language is entirely dependent on the society in which it is used".

REFERENCES:

THE LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH IDIOMS (Longman)

SPECTRUM — Swann, M. (Cambridge)

THAT'S LIFE — Duff, A. (Cambridge)

BRITAIN TODAY — Musman, R. (Langman)

RESUMO

Para um estudante da língua inglesa poder ler jornais, revistas, romances,, etc., com compreensão total, ele precisa ter um bom conhecimento da cultura. Qualquer autor pressupõe grande familiaridade com a cultura no leitor, a não ser que ele esteja escrevendo especificamente para estrangeiros. É possível distinguir quatorze categorias de conhecimento cultural, nas quais poderiam ser baseadas materiais didáticos.