

Understanding “the Other” in ELT: Learning to Categorize Language, Peoples, and Culture

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Abstract

During graduate degree level language teacher training, trainees come to view language in the tradition of the institution’s program. This article contrasts formalist and socio-culturalist traditions in language teacher training, using David Crystal’s description of two forces driving language as a point of reference. Bridging the gap between these two traditions in the tertiary EFL workplace may be beneficial both for collaborative research leading to publication, and possibly for increasing collegiality amongst teaching staff. After exploring the two traditions, Melvyn Bragg’s *The Adventure of English A Biography of a Language* is recommended as an excellent, and approachable, source to bridge the gap between these traditions. Finally, this article concludes with a brief overview of superdiversity, coined by Steven Vertovec, as a direction that collaboration between formalist and socio-culturalist traditions may lead.

Introduction

The training of English language teachers within the inner-circle English speaking nations is different than the training of teachers of history, or music, or even second / foreign language teachers such as French teachers in English Canada because the teacher-trainee's academic background (for example, their undergraduate degree) is usually different than the area in which they will eventually teach. A history teacher, for example, usually has an undergraduate degree in history. A music teacher usually has an undergraduate degree in music education (and not music composition, music performance or musicology). A French teacher in English Canada has a degree in French as a second language. Many people who choose to do advanced degrees in language teaching come from English literature backgrounds (or similar, for example, history), or linguistics (or similar, for example, French). Therefore, the language teacher-training course will instill an idea of the nature of language and language teaching somewhat separately from the undergraduate academic major. Postgraduate qualifications in language teaching are typically between one and two years of intensive, full-time study (or part-time equivalent), which cannot possibly cover everything. People who have taught overseas in an English as a Foreign Language context at the tertiary level for any length of time see differences in the fundamental understanding of language and language teaching amongst teachers. This leads to some questions that could have relevance to workplace collegiality between teaching staff, as well as implications for research collaboration between people with very different degrees in language teaching: 1) What are major ways in which language teacher training programs differ? 2) What could act as a bridge between different types of language teaching program for teachers in international departments within the workplace? And 3) What possible direction could this bridge lead to?

In answering the first of these questions, I will examine two traditions in language teaching by referencing theoretical linguist David Crystal's idea that two forces drive language: the need for intelligibility and the need for identity (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i) to show how these traditions categorize language and language users, which in turn forms the basis of a teacher's understanding of the nature of language, ultimately leading to syllabus and curricular decisions. To answer the second question, I recommend Melvyn Bragg's *The Adventure of English A Biography of a Language* as an excellent, and approachable, non-specialist source to bridge the gap between these traditions. Lastly, as an answer to the third question a brief overview of superdiversity, coined by Steven Vertovec, is provided.

Two forces driving language, two traditions in language teacher training

In an interview with Cambridge University Press ELT, David Crystal, linguistics professor, says that there are two large forces driving language: the need for intelligibility; and the need for identity (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). Understanding these two forces is therefore extremely important for professional language teachers. The first of them is saying that language is merely a tool we use to get things done—it is a code. The second is saying that language is a vehicle through which we express culture, which includes participating in, and developing that culture through interaction and collaboration. Crystal summarizes these two forces by saying that people often have two forms of English—one looking outward (to “understand the rest of the world, and they us”), and one looking inward (because “we need to be ourselves, and not like the rest of the world”), and stresses that his point is that “we need both” (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). In the area of English language teacher training, Jack C. Richards points out in “Content knowledge and instructional practice in second language teacher education” (1991) that it “is not always clear who the relevant experts are” for EFL / ESL teacher trainers. He lists the home department of 147 MA TESOL programs in the United States: English (46), Education / Curriculum (41), Linguistics (25), Foreign Languages (10), ESL / TESOL (6), and Other (19) and remarks that this supports Freeman’s observation that:

Language teacher education has become increasingly fragmented and unfocused. Based on a kaleidoscope of elements from many different disciplines, efforts to educate individuals as language teachers often lack a coherent, commonly accepted foundation. In its place, teacher educators and teacher education programs substitute their own individual rationales, based on pedagogical assumptions or research, or function in a vacuum, assuming -- yet never articulating -- the basis from which they work. ((Freeman, 1989, p. 27) in Richards, 1991, p. 10).

Discussing methodology, Scott Thornbury quotes the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics and discusses six dimensions of methodology. The first of these is “the nature of language” (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019ii). It is first likely because it forms the basis from which all else follows.

In an English as a Foreign Language context such as Japan, there is a higher degree of diversity amongst teaching staff than may be seen in an English as a Second Language context such as Canada. This diversity can be seen in the teacher’s home country, undergraduate degree major area(s), and teaching experience (including not only the length of time in the particular EFL context / country, but also experience in other EFL countries, or experience in

ESL in English speaking nations, things learned on the job from teachers from other countries, and any experience teaching subjects other than English), as well as other factors that contribute to a teacher's identity (gender affiliation, age, etc.). Diversity amongst language teacher training programs is not discussed often, maybe because, as Freeman ((Freeman, 1989, p. 27) in Richards, 1991, p. 10) points out, "teacher educators and teacher education programs substitute their own individual rationales" (emphasis added), making it difficult to usefully use the information in the academy. However, just as decisions about an undergraduate university major will affect the student, and later graduate's, worldview, so too will the kind of study undertaken in an MA TESOL program affect the teacher's outlook on the role of the teacher, and what language actually is.

Going back to David Crystal's forces driving language (the need for intelligibility; and the need for identity), of the need for intelligibility, he says that this necessitates a standard version of the language, and for English the standard version is a written form of the language. Some people speak it naturally, but most people have a regional variety, and learn the standard variety in school (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). Of the second force driving language, the need for identity, Crystal says we have to say who we are, and where we are from. He says that the need for identity drives accents and dialects both at the national and international level (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). These two forces driving language are particularly useful to keep in mind when examining different individual language teacher preparation courses. In language teacher training, there are, broadly speaking, two traditions—the formalist and the socio-cultural. Deborah Schiffon, in *Approaches to Discourse* (1994), writes that these are sometimes differently labelled (p.20). The reason for two traditions in English language teaching is explained by Susan Feez, who writes, "[a]s the century unfolded and more people had the opportunity or need to travel, there was a demand for approaches which taught people how to communicate in a wider range of contexts with speakers of other languages. Applied linguists in Britain and America responded to this demand in different ways" (Feez, 2001, p. 209).

The structure of most university majors is such that it usually entails a course that gives an overview of the area (such as a survey course at the undergraduate level), which forms the basis of the study, followed by courses developed out of individual sections of the survey. This gives the student a deeper understanding of each area covered in the overview course, but it affects language teaching preparation courses to the extent that the information from the opposing tradition may be sidelined, and graduates of one program may not realize that other people learned very different things than they did. Students from one tradition may conclude

that since they did not study it, it must be a minor area, and not worth worrying about. People in each tradition may not be aware of a large number of writer-researchers involved in interesting areas related to applied linguistics and language teaching, and for whom people in the other tradition consider essential.

For formalists, the text that forms the basis of the program is often a linguistics textbook (either a theoretical linguistics survey text or an applied linguistics survey text, they are often very similar). The book may be divided into broad headings such as those in Fromkin et al.'s *An Introduction to Language Second Canadian Edition*: “The Nature of Human Language”, “Grammatical Aspects of Language”, “Social Aspects of Language”, “Writing—The ABCs of Language”, and “Language in the Computer Age” (Fromkin et al., 2001, pp. ix-xix). The language teacher who graduates from this type of program may view the role of English in a university curriculum as being an entry point to Western thought, and the primary role of the language teacher being to teach grammar and vocabulary. Contrasting this, in the socio-cultural tradition of language teaching, the text that forms the basis of further study will likely be a sociolinguistics text. The broad categories of this kind of textbook can be found in Holmes' *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics Third Edition*: “Multilingual Speech Communities”, “Language Variation: Focus on Users”, and “Language Variation: Focus on Uses” (Holmes, 2008, pp. vii) (For a full list of chapters within each of the broad headings of these example textbooks see Appendix). The graduate of this type of program will approach English language teaching as being about various types of peoples in society, with a focus on discourse level genres. Looking through the broad headings in these introductory texts, it may be said that with a study of language families, the formalists are therefore diachronically (through time) focused, while the socio-culturalists are synchronically (at a single point in time—the present) focused. It should not be surprising to find that programs in the formalist tradition are found in linguistics departments (and are a natural fit for graduates of foreign language undergraduate majors), while socio-cultural programs are housed elsewhere, especially in schools of education (and are a natural fit for graduates of English literature and cultural studies majors).

The type of course requirements that universities in a particular geographic area (for example, province, or state) have is affected by governing bodies of the area. In a document by TESL Ontario (<https://www.teslontario.org/accreditation>), the governing body for teaching government-run Adult ESL in Ontario Canada, *TESL Training Topics for Programs Accredited by TESL Ontario*, “first language acquisition / learning” is listed as an essential component of theoretical learning in the area. This immediately situates programs accredited

by TESL Ontario in, or closely related to, linguistics departments, because that is where this type of information is already covered. Further, discourse analysis and genre, which are important in the socio-cultural tradition, are listed as optional in TESL Ontario, and so may not be part of a TESL Ontario accredited program, although diversity is also considered essential. In Victoria, Australia, VicTESOL does not give any accreditation requirements, but directs people to university programs from any of “a number of universities in Victoria” (<https://victesol.vic.edu.au/index.php/faqs/>). However, the Australia Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) lists requirements for English language teachers across all levels of education—primary through adult sectors (<https://tesol.org.au/RESOURCES/#resources-0>). This document is for use with EAL/D (English as an Additional Language or Dialect) learners and in the section titled “Elaboration for teachers and leaders working with EAL/D learners”, teachers are required to demonstrate “understanding the EAL/D learners are in the process of developing for both social and academic purposes”, which seems to imply an emphasis on sociolinguistics, which is the socio-cultural tradition.

As can be seen from the above, there is some overlap between the traditions. Students in the formalist tradition do have one section of the survey in social aspects of the language and may (or may not) be able to take a course on sociolinguistics after that (depending on course availability in any particular year). The difference is that the course they would do in sociolinguistics would be quite similar to the course that forms the basis of further study in the socio-cultural tradition, and the formalists would be approaching the subject material with a lot of information that the socio-cultural program students probably do not have. So for the formalists, sociolinguistics may seem one small part of their training in language teaching, while for the socio-culturalists, it will seem like most of it.

For formalists, language change and variation are explained through language families, normally depicted through tree diagrams, and in which different languages come about across enormous spans of time. To truly understand a language (which is a goal of a tertiary program to teach English native level speakers how to teach the language), it is necessary to know how that language is categorized, and where it came from. For example, English is categorized as a West-Germanic language, and is therefore descends from Proto-Germanic, which is where all of the Germanic language family came from in the same way that French, Italian, Spanish and others all descend from Latin (the form of which is called Proto-Romance in this branch of linguistics). Many different language families (including Proto-Germanic, Latin, Proto-Celtic and others) in turn descend from Proto-Indo-European, the language from which most languages from Europe and geographically out to include the development of some of the

languages of India, and also Iran. For formalists, all languages are equal—they are codes through which human beings communicate, and because of this, dialectal difference is not considered extremely important for language teachers.

For socio-culturalists, on the other hand, current language variety within a single language is extremely important. Rather than learning charts of different languages to explain variation, the socio-culturalists point out that language exists on a continuum. So, students in this tradition do learn about language families, but they learn that languages are far more complex than points on a grid, which is what language trees like the Indo-European language family show. Students in the socio-cultural tradition are taught about dialect chains instead of language families. Holmes describes dialect chains as:

very common across the whole of Europe. One chain links all the dialects of German, Dutch and Flemish from Switzerland through Austria and Germany, to the Netherlands and Belgium, and there is another which links dialects of Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French and Italian. A Scandinavian chain links dialects of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, so that Swedes and Norwegians in adjacent areas can communicate more easily than fellow-Swedes from southern and northern Sweden. The same kind of dialect chains are found throughout India and China. They illustrate very clearly that the arbitrariness of the distinction between ‘language’ and ‘dialect’.

It is easy to see that if we try to define what counts as German vs Dutch or Swedish vs Norwegian or Italian vs French using only linguistic features, the task will be fraught with problems. (pp. 134-135)

It is interesting that rather than group both subdivisions of Germanic languages together, Holmes separates the North Germanic language dialect chain from the West Germanic language dialect chain by inserting a Romance language dialect chain in between. She uses the following example to illustrate dialect chains:

Miriam learnt French and Italian at university and was a fluent speaker of both. As part of her course she was required to study for three months in Paris and three months in Rome. Her time in Paris went well and she decided to take a holiday on her way to Rome, travelling across France to Italy. She was keen to hear the varieties of French and Italian spoken in provincial towns. She stayed in cheap pensions (French ‘bed and breakfast’ places), and she made a special effort to talk to the local people rather than tourists. Her Parisian accent was admired and she could understand the French of Dijon and Lyon. But as she moved further from Paris she found the French more difficult to follow. Near the border between France and Italy in the town of Chambéry, she could not

be sure what she was hearing. Was it Italian French or French Italian? Whatever it was, it was difficult for her to understand, though she had no trouble making herself understood. Most people thought she spoke beautifully – especially for a foreigner! In Italy she found that the Italian spoken in Turin and Milan was very different from the Italian she had learned. As she approached Rome, however, she gradually began to comprehend more of what she heard. And finally in Rome she found some kind of match between the way she spoke and the way the Italians around her spoke. (p. 134)

From this, it can be seen that language families in Europe form more of a continuum than discrete languages. The national variety is the form that is used in the power centre—in the example, the French spoken in Paris and the Italian spoken in Rome. Outside of these power centres, the line between these two languages becomes increasingly fuzzy. This sociolinguistics coursebook uses examples, or case studies, to make its point. This is part of why this tradition is a natural fit for English literature majors. The socio-cultural tradition leans to qualitative research, while the formalist leans to quantitative research. This is not surprising, given the focus of each tradition.

Within EFL teaching departments, this can lead to a situation where the teachers whose training was in the socio-cultural tradition may place importance on varieties of English, even within individual countries (northern versus southern England, etc.) while for those teachers whose program was more in the formalist tradition, this would not be an important issue as far as student learning is concerned. Looking at the full list of contents of the respective textbooks in the appendix, it seems that the formalists study language as a system somewhat disconnected from the people who use that language, whereas the socio-culturalists study the people who use that language somewhat separately from the language (in this case meaning the code) itself. Of course, in practice, neither type of program could be that extreme and still be able to train people to teach language to others.

Going back again to Crystal's driving forces of language: i) the need for intelligibility and ii) the need for identity, of the second, Crystal says the need for identity is what drives accents and dialects both at the national and international level (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). Most of the languages in Europe descend from a single theoretical language-Proto-Indo-European (PIE). This theoretical language family, which spread across Europe and into India, then splintered off again and again leading in Europe to language families such as Romance, Germanic, Celtic, Slavic etc. Then the Proto-Romance language (Latin) broke off and formed into Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian etc. and the different varieties and accents within them. These different varieties are important in the socio-cultural tradition,

and identity is greater than simply the language spoken. This has been exemplified earlier with Miriam's trip through France and Italy.

To bridge the gap between the formalists and the socio-culturalists, teachers need to find common ground. As English language teachers, one way to do this could be through learning about the development of the English language. Historical linguistics, which leads to language families, is familiar to formalists, if their undergraduate major is in a second or foreign language, because the history of that language is often a requirement. However, the history of English is also familiar to graduates of undergraduate programs in English literature, due to studying Shakespeare and texts from different literary periods, and so may be familiar to people in the socio-cultural tradition. The development of English shows that it is a useful language in Western Europe because it is a mixture of Germanic and Romance languages, making some aspects of it familiar to Romance language speakers, and other aspects familiar to other Germanic language speakers. There are many mass-market, popular books for non-specialists on the development of English. In the following section, I will refer to Melvyn Bragg's *The Adventure of English The Biography of a Language*. It is a good example of the genre because it is by a non-linguist, and he writes of English as if it "ha[s] a character and a presence of its own" (Bragg, 2003, p. ix). This may make this history of English more interesting to socio-culturalists than others. There is also a set of BBC documentary-style videos for those who prefer that medium. Again, Bragg is not a specialist in this area. In an earlier interview with Cambridge University Press ELT titled *Professor David Crystal: The Influence of the King James Bible on the English Language*, Crystal (who is a specialist in the development of the English language and has written academic books on it) says that Bragg goes over the top (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2011) in describing the influence of the King James Bible on the English language. Nevertheless, if this book is approached as a non-specialist text useful to language teachers whose research interests lie elsewhere, then the broad strokes of this work provide a background for language teachers from different traditions to come together. Throughout, I will relate this to content that graduates of socio-cultural MA TESOL programs learn. This type of bridge between formalists and socio-culturalists can open up avenues of research for people from each tradition, helping both to become more knowledgeable about language and communication, and through publishing, this can help teachers in their careers by showing continual professional development and professionalism in language teaching and education.

Bragg's The Adventure of English *The Biography of a Language*

The Adventure of English is a useful book for mixing formalist and socio-cultural traditions because it, in a sense, treats the English language as a character. It is a book accessible to a mass audience, in which Melvyn Bragg describes the development of English from its roots in several dialects of West Germanic (West Germanic is a branch, or subdivision, of the Germanic family tree) used by tribes that crossed from mainland Europe to modern day Britain in the first few chapters. Drawing it out as a story, he shows English as developing through different stages. First, several Germanic tribes, the Angles, the Jutes and the Saxons arrived in Britain where there was already a well-established civilization of Celtic people (Celtic is another branch of the Indo-European language family, with its own branches or subdivisions, just as Romance, and Germanic are). The West Germanic tribes referred to them as 'Weales', which led to Welsh, but at the time meant 'slave' or 'foreigner' (Bragg, 2003 p. 5). Bragg writes that less than two dozen words were loaned from Celtic to the languages of the Germanic tribes that would meld into Old English (Bragg, 2003, pp. 5-6). This, along with the nuance used in their words for describing the Celtic people is suggestive of a negative attitude towards the other culture by the people who had arrived to conquer the land.

Starting from 793AD, for almost three hundred years, North Germanic (a branch, or subdivision, of the Germanic family tree) tribes (the Vikings) made settlements and raided the Angles, Jutes and Saxons. At this time, it is likely that some Celtic was still spoken and although the West Germanic dialects were mutually intelligible, the people were not united (Bragg, 2003, p. 17). Old English was a highly inflected language—word endings were case markers in a similar way that German still does today.

When English came into contact with the not wholly dissimilar Danish language, a lot of the inflected endings began to lose their distinctive nature. The new grammatical meld tended to happen in the borderland market towns; words followed the trade. Clarity for commerce may have been the chief driving force. (Bragg, 2003, p. 24)

To be able to trade, these peoples needed to find common ground in their communication. Simplification for speaking with other cultures eventually took root and became the norm for the language. In the beginning, the in-group / out-group distinction of the West Germanic tribes (if not both West Germanic and Celtic groups) caused friction leading to violence. Then, over the course of almost three hundred years, the West Germanic tribes began interacting with North Germanic tribes, with whom the language would have been closer, due to both languages being Germanic. Socio-culturalists view language as driven by society and in

constant change due to interactions of different cultures (gender, age etc.) and through time. Formalists view language change as occurring through contact with other languages. There is considerable overlap in these views, especially if contact with other dialects of the same language is included in the formalist tradition.

Bragg (2003) shows the coming of Christian religion as having had a unifying effect on the West Germanic people, and with it the influence of Latin on the language. “As the Church grew more pervasive in the land...so its overall philosophy flourished and Latin slid under the carapace of English and would never be expelled or ignored again” (p. 9). He continues,

The messages and words of Christianity would feed English for more than a thousand years. It was English’s first encounter with an invading force of thought and slowly, over centuries, overcoming long-held practices and superstitions, English let it in. The tightly bonded local language began to open up. (p. 10)

Learning new ideas from other cultures may be like using a muscle that has not been deliberately trained in the past. It merely needs practice to get used to it. As Anderson and Taylor (2006) write, “Asking whether language determines culture or vice versa is like asking which came first, the chicken or the egg. Language and culture are inextricable. Each shapes the other, and to understand either, we must know something of both” (p. 60). The Christian religion brought with it a changing of power roles. Eventually, it was instrumental in bringing power back to the West Germanic people after the Normans conquered Britain.

The Normans who arrived to conquer England spoke French. Bragg (2003) writes that the Normans who conquered England:

were Norsemen by blood and there could be reasonable expectation that the languages would mesh. But by the time their ships landed at the old Saxon shore of Pevensey - the precise spot where Frisians had landed in 491 - the language they spoke was a variety of French... French had swallowed up their Old Norse (p. 36).

It is important to keep in mind that the French spoken by these people was different than the French spoken in France today, and the variety of French that the Normans spoke was not the variety that would eventually become modern French. It is because of this that some words in English that are said to come from French, like “war”, seem very different from the modern French word “guerre”. However, during Henry II’s reign (1154–1189) other dialects of French, especially Francien (Central French) (Bragg, 2003, p. 45) entered the language of the Normans on Britain due to immigration. An examination of the development of the French language is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is noteworthy that just as English has changed drastically from its beginnings, so have other languages, including French.

Like Crystal, Wierzbicka points out in *Does Language Reflect Culture? Evidence from Australian English*, that “lexicon tends to change more quickly than grammar in response to the ‘social reality’” (p. 350). English grammar changed in response to the Vikings. Lexicon changed greatly in response to the Normans. It should be noted that the grammar of English and that of French was already similar, so perhaps a grammatical transformation was simply unnecessary. Bragg (2003) shows an example of a change in lexicon with the English word chivalry,

Before Eleanor arrived in England the word ‘chevalerie’, formed around the word for horse, had simply meant cavalry... many of the English knew the Norman chevalerie as little more than mounted thugs and bullies.

Now, under the influence of Eleanor, mounted horsemen began their transformation into knights. The word ‘chivalry’ came to mean a raft of ideas and behaviour, infused with honour and altruism...the way the society regarded itself had been pointed in a dramatically different direction, and initially it was nothing to do with Old England or Old English. Neither was needed. (p. 46)

This example of an addition of vocabulary shows the relative power of speakers of each language. Although the English had known French cavalry as ‘little more than mounted thugs and bullies’, the cavalry had a higher social position. The word came to mean something associated with noble ideas, and this sort of change in social perception is of interest to people trained in the socio-cultural tradition of language teaching.

Tomasello, in an article “The Human Adaption for Culture” notes that human culture tends to work with a ratchet effect:

The reason that no single child or group of children could on their own in their own lifetimes create any version of a modern human culture and its material and symbolic artifacts is that human cultures are historical products built up over many generations. Indeed, the most distinctive characteristic of human cultural evolution as a process is the way that modifications to an artifact or a social practice made by one individual or group of individuals often spread within the group, and then stay in place until some future individual or individuals make further modifications-and these then stay in place until still further modifications are made (Tomasello et al 1993a, Boesch & Tomasello 1998). This process of cumulative cultural evolution works because of a kind of “ratchet effect”: Individual and group inventions are mastered relatively faithfully by conspecifics, including youngsters, which enables them to remain in the group until something better comes along. (p. 512)

New phenomenon are added to existing ones. This is what English did with the addition of Norman lexicon:

More subtle distinctions were set in train. 'Ask' – English – and 'demand' – from French – were initially used for the same purpose but even in the Middle Ages their finer meanings might have differed and now, though close, we use them for markedly different purposes. 'I ask you for ten pounds'; 'I demand ten pounds': two wholly different stories. But both words remained. (Bragg, 2003, pp. 58-59)

The socio-cultural tradition is particularly interested in studying power and identity. The social reality of the English people of the time is apparent in this quotation from Bragg. The word for 'ask' in the powerful language is an order to the people without any power, and so the loan word keeps the illocutionary force behind it as part of the usual meaning. Bragg (2003) concludes:

[t]hat was the sweet revenge which English took on French: it not only anglicized it, it used the invasion to increase its own strength... Shades of meaning, representing shades of thought, were massively absorbed into our language and our imagination at that time. (pp. 58-59)

These "shades of meaning" may be connected to Crystal's second driving force—the need for identity. It drives accents, which are markers of in-group and out-group, and people understand accents partially through a speaker's word choice. This in-group / out-group distinction is an important part of the socio-cultural tradition in language teaching. However,

[i]n its later phases, English became a language with an immense capacity to absorb others, to convert others, certainly to take on board other languages without yielding the ground on its own basic vocabulary and meanings...Only about a score of Celtic words had been admitted; only about two hundred Roman words and even now, from these overwhelming Danish invaders, no more than about one hundred and fifty words were added to a national word-choard of about twenty-five thousand. (Bragg, 2003, p. 21)

It took a long-lasting alteration in who had the power to change English, and this change was done in a way that helped the English language grow, whereas other languages that had been used in Britain died. Bragg (2003) writes,

English was a mass without leaders or a strategy, its words sung in the fields and flickering into the manuscripts but no match at all for the French...It was not a language of advancement, a language of power, a language of hard commerce or even of educated conversation. (p. 55)

Socio-culturalists are interested in language variation, different groups in society, and the idea that the language that is taught internationally is based on the language used in the power-centre of that lingua-culture, but that this does not account for the totality of the language used in that lingua-culture. Earlier, the quotation from Holmes showed Miriam, a proficient L2 user of both French and Italian, who was required to study for three months in Paris (the power-centre of the French lingua-culture), and Rome (the power-centre of the Italian lingua-culture). She had no problems in either city, but in places she visited while going between these two cities, she had more trouble. The local varieties of each of these languages is similar to the situation for English that Bragg describes because these are these local languages are likewise, not languages of advancement, power, hard commerce, or even of educated conversation.

When power-centres change, as happens when political entities change, the language may change in ways that are different from the now former power-centre, each develops independently. This leads to variation in accents (for example between northern versus southern England), dialects (for example, British Englishes versus American Englishes), and eventually languages (the change in language from Proto-Germanic to North Germanic and West Germanic, and the division within West Germanic along the dialect chain from German to Dutch to Frisian to English). New in-group and out-group divisions have been created. In the case of the English in the early thirteenth century, this change in power-center gave the language its chance to thrive. Bragg (2003) writes,

A defeat on the field of battle and in France itself in 1204 was the first truly encouraging sign that all might not be lost. John, King of Normandy, Aquitaine and England, lost his Norman lands in a war with the much smaller kingdom of France. The Norman dukedoms, ancestral lands of William the Conqueror, his cultural and linguistic homelands, were part of another empire now. The Norman barons of England had to choose where their allegiance lay: Philip II of France would tolerate no split loyalties. Choices were made. Simon de Montfort, for example, took all his brother's English holdings and gave him his own in Normandy in return.

The French began to be thought of as foreigners. (p. 55)

As French began to become foreign to these people, English began obtaining more formal power within society. For example, the Christian religion was important to the society, and it was administered by Latin speaking clergy. Many of this clergy died due to disease (the Black Death) and were replaced by laymen who were sometimes barely literate and only spoke English (Bragg, 2003, p. 63), but not by French speakers. Also, schooling began to be conducted in English instead of French (Bragg, 2003, p. 65). These types of occurrences gave

English a power that the local dialects of the French and Italian that Miriam heard do not have. As Crystal points out (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i), most people have two varieties of their own language, a regional variety that they may use at home, and the kind they learned at school. Of the languages Miriam studied, for Italian especially, these regional varieties may not be mutually intelligible with the variety used at school. The Norman French who had ruled the society described by Bragg did not leave, however, “‘We have never been conquered,’ Elizabeth I is reported, perhaps apocryphally, to have said. “Save by the Norman,’ replied a bold courtier. ‘But they could not have done it unless they had been us,’ said the Virgin Queen” (Bragg, 2003, p. 33). Eventually the people who would become the modern-day English absorbed the Norman conqueror.

English developed out of West Germanic dialects (in modern times related to Dutch and German) being influenced by North Germanic dialects (in modern times related to Norwegian, Swedish and Danish), and then merging somewhat with a Romance language (French) after the people who spoke this language lost their status. Language teachers from the formalist tradition learn that language change often occurs due to invading forces (Romanian as a Romance language surrounded, and affected, by Slavic languages is a common example) and the history of English is certainly the history of invasions. Socio-culturalists learn that language change through time comes from aspects related to the users’ language: regional and social dialects, gender and age, and ethnicity and social networks (Holmes, 2008, p. 205), noting that “regional variation takes time to develop. British and American English, for instance, provide much more evidence of regional variation than New Zealand or Australian English” (Holmes, 2008, p. 205). With the socio-culturalist focus on qualitative rather than quantitative research, and its emphasis on variation of uses and users, Melvyn Bragg’s *Adventure of English* can be common ground between formalists and socio-culturalists.

Near the beginning of his interview, David Crystal talks about language change (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). He says that teachers do not want to overemphasize it, because it only affects “a couple of percent”. He says that language change happens at different rates at all times. There is a higher percentage rate of vocabulary change compared with other language areas (grammar, he says, has very little change, the basic rules haven’t changed in 500 years; pronunciation change is slow, but sure; spelling does not change much, but punctuation does). It is precisely because the change is so slow that it is useful for English language teachers to look at the development of English itself as a way to bridge the gap between the formalist and socio-cultural traditions. It is also an excellent starting point from

which to look at the modern world and superdiversity, because English developed out of the mixing of many lingua-cultures.

Superdiversity

During the teachers' questions part of his interview, David Crystal is asked if he can speak about the role of the native language on the L2 learning process. He replies that he is no longer fond of the term "native speaker" and gives an example of a German man who marries a Malaysian woman, they have a child and decide that the child's main language will be English (because the husband and wife can only communicate to each other through English). The child now speaks English as a Second Language as his first language (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i).

Steven Vertovec coined the term "superdiversity". In the introduction to *Language and Superdiversity*, Vertovec's definition is quoted:

Superdiversity; a term intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything... previously experienced ... a dynamic interplay of variables including country of origin, ... migration channel, legal status ... migrants' human capital (particularly education background), access to employment, ...locality ...and responses by local authorities, service providers and local residents (2007a: 3) in (Arnaut et al. 2016, p. 2)

Having even a layman's understanding of the development of English (as an academic field called philology, and is part of theoretical linguistics, therefore familiar to those with language teaching degrees in the formalist tradition) can be useful as a starting point for superdiversity (an area of sociolinguistics and therefore more on the socio-cultural side of language teaching). Previously, in his interview, Crystal says that language evolves with technology (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). At that point he talks about social media and mentions that it is not hugely important for language teachers because there is not a lot of change from the overall mass of the language. However, Crystal is a theoretical linguist, not a language teacher, a language teacher might have mentioned access to Internet as playing a role in how willing people are to move to another country, and growth in transportation technology making people more willing to move elsewhere as well. In both of these cases it is because it is easier to reach family (either virtually, or in-person) now than it has been in the past.

In "Drilling Down to the Grain in Superdiversity", Ben Rampton writes:

In the situations that the term 'superdiversity' is used to describe, there has been a 'diversification of diversity'... [i]n socio- and applied linguistics researchers are philosophically well tuned to this, and the critiques of traditional concepts such as

'native speaker', 'bilingual', 'speech community', or 'English' have wide currency ... how far down into the smallest particles do we now need to drill in order to grasp the communicative ramifications of superdiversity? What are the nitty-gritty challenges and implications when it comes to any nose-to-data examination of tiny strips of spoken interaction? Do we really have the tools to follow the challenge of superdiversity down, for example, into the analysis of individual sounds? Indeed, if we are operating in the potentially dizzying ambience of superdiversity, post-structuralism, late modernity, etc. how do we even start to conceptualize what the job of really fine-grained linguistic description actually entails. (p. 91)

All of these questions are relevant to socio-culturalists, who emphasize the study, and teaching, of the language as used in societies. Formalists would be less interested in these kinds of questions, seeing it as part of idiolect. The authors of the textbook for the formalist tradition, *Introduction to Language*, write, "The unique characteristics of the language of an individual speaker are referred to as the speaker's idiolect. English may then be said to consist of some 400 000 000 idiolects, the approximate number of speakers of English" (Fromkin et al., 2001, p. 283). While the formalist tradition does not pay much attention to socio-linguistics, they note that individuals use a language, even their own language, differently. The conclusion on superdiversity for formalists seems to be that while it is interesting, it is not useful for language teaching. In the chapter titled "Polylinguaging in Superdiversity" the authors write:

[i]t is a widely held view that language as a human phenomenon can be separated into different 'languages', such as 'Russian', 'Latin', and 'Greenlandic'. This chapter is based on the recently developed sociolinguistic understanding that this view of language cannot be upheld based on linguistic criteria. Languages are sociocultural abstractions that match real-life use poorly. (Jørgensen et al., 2016, p. 137)

Even without considering the conditions that are described as superdiversity, this view would not be considered extreme in the socio-cultural tradition, as was seen with Holmes' description of dialect chains and her example of Miriam having learned both French and Italian. The authors conclude this chapter: "There is no doubt that the concept of 'national language' is very strong. It is a political fact. The European educational systems would break down overnight if they were forced to teach language the way people really use language" (Jørgensen et al., 2016, p. 152). This relates back to David Crystal's first force driving language: the need for intelligibility (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2019i). It is outward looking: the need to understand the rest of the world, and they, us. Similar to Crystal, the authors of this chapter conclude that language is both individual (because "no two people share

the same words and meanings, the same pronunciations, associate the same meaning with everything etc.”) and social (every feature we do ‘know’ or ‘possess’, we share with somebody else”) (Jørgensen et al., 2016, p. 152).

David Crystal’s two driving forces (the need for intelligibility and the need for identity) reveals a large in-group which includes everyone who speaks English. Inside of that in-group, are smaller in-groups marking different identities, individual speakers belonging to several groups at the same time. As Crystal says, we (teachers of language) need both. Language teachers help learners enter the in-group of the lingua-culture, which necessitates intercultural communication. The first step in intercultural communication is finding common ground. I have made an attempt to find common ground between teachers trained in formalist and socio-culturalist traditions in language teaching through the development of the English language.

Conclusion

Categorization is an important part of organizing information into manageable, but useful, parcels of information for academic study. EFL textbooks divide information into units based on grammar or thematic topic. History courses divide time up into periods, in which a particular culture shares characteristics, art divides colours into the primary and tertiary colours and makes use of a colour wheel, and music divides sound frequencies up into notes which can be combined. The training of teaching a lingua-culture (English, in this case) is an enormous area. A one–or two–year postgraduate qualification in TESOL cannot cover everything. Most of what is studied in courses in either tradition is not used directly in language classes. The courses create a kind of content knowledge, information that grounds the teacher in an area of language so that they may feel like part of a community of practice, and gives them ideas of areas to learn autonomously. One tradition is not better than the other. For department heads, it might seem simple to hire only people who have a background in the same type of language teaching as they do. This is often seen in the hiring practices of universities in the anglosphere. Many schools with graduate degrees in language teaching hire their own graduates to teach in their programs, with an ensuing washback effect: people (most of whom are from the same country, province or state) are being trained to teach language in the way that the particular institution teaches language. Along with socio-cultural, or formalist traditions, there is variation from institution to institution in the role of the teacher; the amount, and kind, of assessment in a language course; and the amount, and kind, of material development teachers are expected to do. The teachers within these programs still cannot be called homogenous: they have different undergraduate degrees, some people may have

postgraduate qualifications outside of, and in addition to, language teaching qualifications. ESL teachers are in a different position than those who teach in EFL positions because part of the language teaching curriculum involves teaching how to thrive in the particular society in which the school exists—the country, the province or state, or even the particular city.

In EFL contexts, one of the advantages is the vast amount of diversity—teachers come from different countries within the anglosphere, they have different training from a variety of different institutions, and in differing traditions. Increasingly, language teachers have graduate qualifications from institutions in countries other than the one in which they were raised and educated to undergraduate degree level, and this could be a kind of educational superdiversity within the inner-circle English speaking nations. Students often look forward to studying overseas, within the lingua-culture that they are studying, and they will likely expect the universities overseas to teach in a manner similar to at least some of what they have experienced at university in their own country. For this to happen, EFL departments need to hire people from both traditions in language teaching. In this article I compared two programs—one from North America, and one from Oceania. The formalist tradition in language teaching is prevalent in North America, while the socio-culturalist one is prevalent in Oceania. Departments tending to hire only from one area of the anglosphere (often their own) would limit student contact with major varieties of English. It could lead to a negative reputation amongst potential applicants, which would affect the department's ability to attract teacher applicants.

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Appendix

**Carleton University CTESL
(Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second Language)
Formalist tradition survey textbook contents**

An Introduction to Language Canadian Edition by Victoria Fromkin, et al.

Part 1 The Nature of Human Language

Chapter 1 What is Language?

Part 2 Grammatical Aspects of Language

Chapter 2 Morphology: The Words of Language

Chapter 3 Syntax: The Sentence Patterns of Language

Chapter 4 Semantics: The Meanings of Language

Chapter 5 Phonetics: The Sounds of Language

Chapter 6 Phonology: The Sound Patterns of Language

Part 3 Social Aspects of Language

Chapter 7 Language in Society

Chapter 8 Language Change: The Syllables of Time

Chapter 9 Writing: The ABCs of Language

Part 4 Biological Aspects of Language

Chapter 10 Language Acquisition

Chapter 11 Human Processing: Brain Mind and Language

Part 5 Language in the Computer Age

Chapter 12 Computer Processing of Human Language

Deakin University MTESOL
(Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
Socio-cultural tradition survey textbook contents

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics by Janet Holmes
Chapter 1 What do Sociolinguists study?

Section A Multilingual speech communities

Chapter 2 Language choice in multilingual communities
Chapter 3 Language maintenance and shift
Chapter 4 Linguistic varieties and multilingual nations
Chapter 5 National languages and language planning

Section B Language variation: focus on users

Chapter 6 Regional and social dialects
Chapter 7 Gender and Age
Chapter 8 Ethnicity and social networks
Chapter 9 Language change

Section C Language variation: focus on uses

Chapter 10 Style, context and register
Chapter 11 Speech functions, politeness and cross-cultural communication
Chapter 12 Gender politeness and stereotypes
Chapter 13 Language, cognition and culture
Chapter 14 Analysing discourse
Chapter 15 Attitudes and applications
Chapter 16 Conclusion