10 From global trends to local contexts

Language dilemmas in the ELT classroom

> Learning can, and should, be seen in the context in which it takes place. Learning is not just a mental process, it is a process of negotiation between individuals and society.
>
> (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 72)

This chapter will:

- highlight those contextual factors that are likely to affect English language classrooms, and, indeed, the variety of English that is taught, in any given ELT environment;
- outline key debates surrounding the growth of English in the world, and examine how these debates might affect perceptions of what English *is*, and, hence, what variety of English might or should be taught and learned in specific ELT contexts;
- consider the place of 'real' or 'authentic' English in the language classroom;
- examine how, in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts, an explicit focus on learners' specific language needs affects the type of English taught and learned, and explore the dilemmas this raises for ELT professionals;
- encourage readers to reflect upon whether and how these discussions may be relevant to their own professional context.

Introduction: the world beyond the classroom

The social, cultural and, indeed, political dimensions of English language teaching and learning have been increasingly recognized in recent years. Stern observes that we can investigate the 'sociology' of ELT whereby language teaching is 'an enterprise . . . a set of activities in society' (1983: 269), while Pennycook (2000: 89) notes that:

> classrooms, both in themselves and in their relationship to the world beyond their walls, are complex social and cultural spaces.

Previous chapters have investigated in some detail the social complexity found *within* ELT classrooms. The discussions have also acknowledged, but not yet examined in detail, how all L2 teaching and learning takes place within specific institutional environments and social, economic and ideological contexts. Thus, it is to the relationship between everyday classroom practices and the wider socio-cultural environment that we turn in our final three chapters, for, as Auerbach (1995: 9) maintains:

> the day-to-day decisions that practitioners make inside the classroom both shape and are shaped by the social order outside the classroom.

In this chapter, we shall ask what 'type' of English might be taught and learned in any given ELT context, linking global trends to immediate local contexts and classroom practices; the following chapter will examine how institutional and social factors might affect how this language might be organized for learners through ELT curricula and learning materials; and our final chapter will explore the wider social and educational contexts and potential purposes of English language teaching and learning.

The social context of English language teaching and learning

Given the range of environments within which English language teaching takes place, from state sector, primary level classes in low-resource contexts where most learners might share an L1 to 'technology-rich' commercial language schools where adults who speak a variety of first languages might be taught in small groups, how can contextual factors be conceptualized? Stern (1983), adapting Mackey (1970) and Spolsky *et al.* (1974), provides the framework illustrated in Figure 10.1.

As Stern (1983) notes, at the centre of the framework is the particular language teaching and learning situation, perhaps, for example, an English class in the UK, USA or Australia for adult immigrants, or a primary or secondary school class in, for example, China, Japan or Libya. The school, institution or educational system provides the immediate environment for the language class, affecting classroom practice by providing or instituting, for instance, the language learning curriculum and broader educational policies and values. It is, in turn, located in a neighbourhood or community that provides the linguistic,

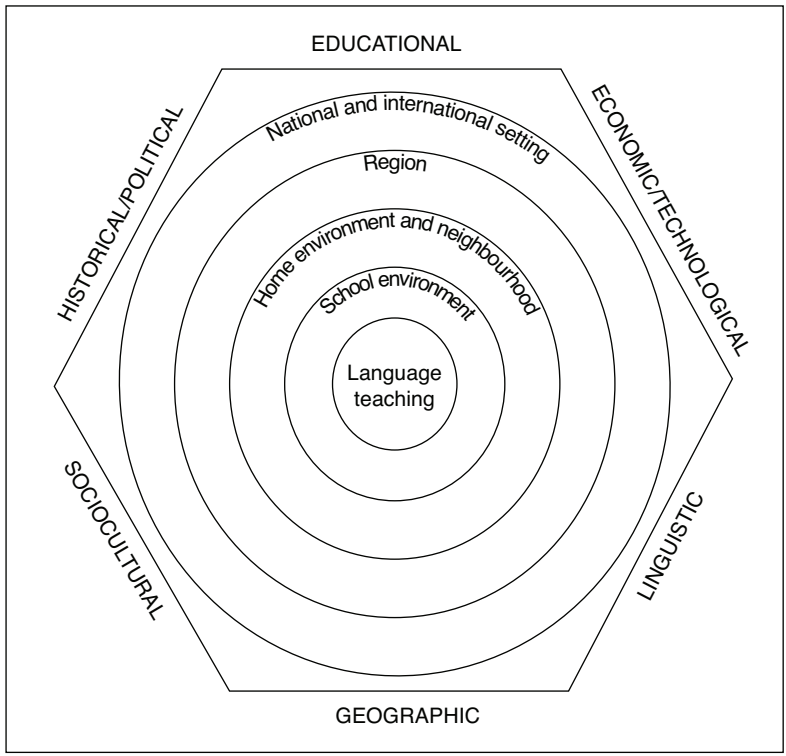

Figure 10.1 An inventory of contextual factors in language teaching
Source: Stern, 1983: 274.

cultural and socio-economic setting within which language learning takes place. For example, whether a community is multilingual or largely monolingual may affect the extent to which L2 learning is seen as a valuable activity or how 'language aware' learners might be.

Beyond this immediate environment, the model highlights the regional, national and international contexts for English language teaching and learning that may influence attitudes and policy, thereby affecting, both directly and indirectly, what happens within educational institutions and the language class itself. In multilingual Singapore, for example, the government promotes English over other official languages such as Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, in order to meet the perceived needs of the global economy. Additionally, however, the Singaporean government also strongly promotes *Standard* Singaporean English (SSE), which is grammatically and lexically similar to Standard British English (with some phonological differences), over a widely spoken *Colloquial* Singaporean English (CSE, or *Singlish*), which

features a range of non-standard language features. The government promotes SSE through school curricula, class teaching and the attitudes and values that underpin the government-supported 'Speak Good English Movement' (SGEM); fearing that CSE will harm Singapore's international competitiveness, the SGEM both promotes SSE and discourages the use of Singlish (Jenkins, 2009). Of course, as an example of the links between ELT classrooms and the wider social context, Singapore is not alone in this approach to English language and English language teaching and learning, as we shall see later in the chapter.

As Stern's model and the example of Singapore suggest, the immediate and wider social context of ELT includes a range of issues that may affect teaching, learning and the L2 classroom. According to Stern (1983), these include:

- *Linguistic factors*: for example, the extent to which English may already be used within the learners' local, regional or national community (as in Singapore), or the degree to which multilingualism is accepted as the norm.
- *Socio-cultural factors*: for example, the perceived economic, political and cultural status of English or a particular variety of English and, consequently, its relationship with other languages in a community.
- *Historical/political factors*: for example, policy shifts towards, or away from, teaching English based on attitudes towards the British Empire and imperialism or towards current US influence in the world.
- *Geographical factors*: for example, Central and South American learners *may* tend towards General American English norms (i.e., the Standard English of the USA); Standard British English *may* have more importance in European countries (clearly, however, as Stern (1983) points out, 'geography' cannot be interpreted too mechanically; perceptions of the esteem and importance of a variety (i.e., socio-cultural factors) will be more influential than straightforward geographical distance).
- *Economic and technological developments*: for example, English may be seen as important for economic development (as in Singapore); or, from a very different perspective, the cost of ELT materials and technological equipment (e.g., computers), and the economic resources available, will affect teaching and learning in many contexts.
- *Educational factors*: for example, the age at which children start school, whether English is a compulsory subject within the

curriculum, the role of other languages within the education system and the number of hours tuition for each school subject.

As Stern (1983: 283) notes, for English language teaching (and, indeed, for all language teaching), 'society and culture are more than background and even more than context'; what happens in a language classroom is inseparable from its socio-cultural context.

Task 10.1 Your classroom and the wider socio-cultural context

Consider the contextual factors that affect language teaching and language classrooms in your own professional context:

- What kind of institution do you work in (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary, state, commercial language school)?
- How does this affect teaching and learning in your classes? In what ways does your institution affect what happens in your classroom, either directly (e.g., by providing the syllabus or materials, allocating a certain number of hours for classes) or more indirectly (e.g., though its values, goals, or objectives)?
- How might the 'typical' home and neighbourhood environment of the learners affect L2 learning in your classroom or institution? For example, is language learning seen as a valuable and interesting social or educational activity; do learners come from largely monolingual or bi- or multilingual environments, and how might this affect learning (e.g., in terms of motivation and beliefs, language awareness or practice opportunities outside class)?
- In what ways do regional, national and international attitudes and policies affect what happens in your language classroom? For example, is English taught as one of several language options, or as *the* primary second or foreign language? Why? What policies are there surrounding a national curriculum or national testing system for English language?
- What historical or political trends affect ELT in your professional context, and how?
- To what extent do economic and technological resource issues affect what happens in your language classroom?

Thinking about English: 'what might teachers teach and learners learn' revisited

In Chapter 4, we recognized that 'what English language teachers teach and learners learn' is a more complex question than it might at first appear; there, we addressed the issue in terms of how *language* is conceptualized (for example, as 'innate knowledge in an individual's mind', as 'a set of sentences' or as 'a skill'). Now, however, we shall explore what is meant by *English*, and discuss the possible implications of these developing understandings for teachers and other ELT practitioners both in the classroom and beyond. As Widdowson (1992: 333) puts it: 'What, to begin with, is this English language we teach? How is the subject to be defined?' The discussion brings together global trends, national and institutional policies and values, and individual learners' needs, beliefs and reasons for learning.

Changing English, World Englishes: dilemmas for the ELT classroom

Introductory questions

The spread of English around the world is well documented. Graddol (2006) notes that English is now spoken by almost 2 billion people, and in almost every country of the world. For some, English is a first language; others use English in countries such as India or Nigeria where it is an 'official' or institutionalized second language (used, for example, in government or law); a third group of English speakers are those who live in countries where English does not have an acknowledged official role, for example China, Germany or Mexico (Jenkins, 2009). Significantly, there are fewer English L1 speakers (approximately 330 million) than L2 speakers in countries where English has an official status (approximately 430 million); these L2 speakers are, in turn, fewer in number than the roughly 1 billion people learning or using English elsewhere in the world (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2009). It is worth noting, however, that these figures are likely to have increased since Crystal's 2003 estimates.

Additionally, there are clearly differences in the *expertise* of English speakers (Rampton, 1990) and the *variety* of English spoken both *within* and *between* these different groups. Some speakers will be able to make themselves understood more effectively and across a wider variety of English language contexts than others (an attribute that does not necessarily depend upon being a native speaker), while varieties and dialects are a characteristic of most English language environments (e.g., in Singapore, as we have seen).

The global use of English raises a number of difficult questions: why has English become so important in the world – a 'happy

coincidence' or a result of 'linguistic imperialism'? Are the benefits of English evenly spread or do some countries (and people) benefit more than others? What are the links between English and globalization? What is the relationship between English and other languages? How has English changed as it has spread, and should we now refer to Englishes? What are our attitudes towards this variation and the different ways in which different groups of speakers use English? Is the fact that there are fewer L1 than L2 and other speakers of English significant? What kinds of communication is English actually used for in the world? And what are the implications of these debates for English language teaching?

These key issues are reviewed in detail elsewhere (e.g., Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2009; Seargeant, forthcoming), and we shall return to the political and ideological questions they raise when we discuss the wider educational purposes of ELT in Chapter 12. Yet some have direct implications for classroom practice and it is to these that we now turn.

In the classroom: which variety?

Traditionally, the question of which English to teach focused on the perceived competition between British and US English; as Jenkins (2009: 119) observes:

> The Englishes that are revered, and are the goal of teaching and testing in many parts of the world are still native speaker varieties, particularly British and North American; the methodologies and materials that are promoted are still those favoured by the ENL [English as a Native Language] centres – communicative approaches with an emphasis on 'learner autonomy' and monolingual (English-only) textbooks; the teachers who are most highly sought after are native speakers of English; and the tests which are taken most seriously measure learners' competence in relation to native-speaker norms.

However, the relevance of this perspective for many ELT contexts has been increasingly questioned. As noted above, there are fewer L1 English speakers than speakers of English as a second language or English speakers from other contexts around the world. Additionally, for many speakers, the purposes for which English is being learned and used have changed, with English increasingly used as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) between non-native speakers who do not share an L1, rather than primarily for communication with native speakers of English (which might still be termed an *EFL*, that is, a *foreign* language, situation). Furthermore, the linguistic characteristics and associated communication strategies used in Lingua Franca contexts may differ

from native speaker norms (Jenkins, 2000 and 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007); Seidlhofer (2004), for example, shows that ELF communication often includes, for instance, non-use of the third person *–s* (e.g., *he play*) and use of a single question tag (e.g., *isn't it?*), features that do not hinder communication or understanding, and which appear to be accommodated by ELF speakers.

Thus, in many contexts, the assumption that British or North American English is the 'natural' variety for English language teachers and learners to focus upon is potentially problematic, or, at least, open to review. Of course, as Jenkins (2009) observes, some learners will always need or aspire to native speaker norms and varieties, perhaps for travel to, or study in, the UK, US, Australia or New Zealand, for example. Yet even here, Jenkins argues that learners should be made aware of the differences between native and Lingua Franca forms and contexts (ibid.). For learners whose main purpose is to use English in their immediate socio-cultural content or as a Lingua Franca, however, it seems possible that native speaker English is less appropriate than localized non-native varieties or a focus on language features that are typical of ELF communication. At the very least, this may mean spending less time (and resources) attending to specific native speaker English features such as question tags or native speaker English idioms, and accommodating a variety of 'acceptable' ELF forms in the classroom. Alternatively, it could, in the future perhaps, mean teaching Indian or Chinese English in South or East Asia, where English language communication may be dominated by these two powerful and influential economies or, for example, Nigerian English in Nigeria, Singaporean English in Singapore and so on (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Meanwhile, Willis identifies six possibilities for ELT in Lingua Franca contexts:

> Option 1: Teach standard (British?) English;
> Option 2: Define a form of 'international English' and teach that;
> Option 3: Offer a range of Englishes in the classroom;
> Option 4: Offer successful L2 speakers of English as models;
> Option 5: Give learners exposure to largely native-speaker English but place a very low premium on conformity;
> Option 6: Include the study of language and dialects in a language teaching programme.
>
> (Willis, 1999, in Jenkins, 2005: 129)

The debates surrounding English and Englishes, the notion of acceptable Lingua Franca language features and the extent to which non-native varieties and variation should be recognized within the ELT classroom are fiercely contested by applied linguists and teachers alike (and, indeed, by politicians, policy-makers and other interested parties in many countries). Variation away from native speaker norms is still

seen as 'worse' rather than 'different' in many contexts, while several applied linguists argue that teaching non-native speaker English fails to meet learners' needs and aspirations (e.g., Quirk, 1990). While this *may* be linked to issues of linguistic clarity and intelligibility, the apparent prestige and status of native speaker Englishes compared to other varieties clearly remains an issue for many. There are, additionally, a number of practical difficulties with the idea of teaching non-native or Lingua Franca English(es), such as resource availability, syllabus and textbook norms and standards, and international testing requirements (as Jenkins identifies, above). Of course, these could be addressed relatively easily if the prevailing discourses, which tend to promote native speaker norms within many ELT contexts, were to evolve. We shall return to this and to related issues, such as the apparently dominant status of the 'native speaker teacher' within language teaching, in Chapter 12.

Task 10.2 In your context: which English?

- Why are learners in your professional context studying English? Who are they likely to communicate with in English, and for what purposes? Are they likely to talk to native speakers or to non-native speakers?
- What are the implications of this for the variety or varieties of English they could learn?
- What variety of English is taught in your professional context, for example, British English, North American English, another variety such as East Africa English or Hong Kong English, and why?
- Is it possible to imagine teaching a different variety of English in principle . . . and in practice? Why/why not?
- Refer back to Willis's options for the ELT classroom in Lingua Franca contexts. To what extent do you think each suggestion is a realistic possibility? Consider issues such as the needs of the learners and their learning preferences; the resources you have available; your institutional approach and other factors relevant to your social context.
- From a critical perspective, the current sociolinguistic realities of English language variation and use around the world often appear to be overlooked by materials writers and publishers, within syllabus and curriculum design, by international testing systems and, it is suggested, by ELT methodologists. How far do you agree with this perspective?

Notions of English, Englishes and ELF therefore require ELT professionals to consider 'whose usage [we are] to take as the model for language learners to aspire to' (Widdowson, 2003: 30); it is to further questions surrounding which 'model' of English might be most appropriate for language learners that we now turn.

Appropriate for learning? Language description, 'real English' and ELT

As Seidlhofer (2003) notes, although the global spread of English and its implications for the ELT classroom are obviously controversial, developments in corpus linguistics and associated advances in descriptions of English at first seem less problematic for language teachers. However, notions of 'real' or 'authentic' language do, in fact, present ELT professionals with a number of dilemmas – whether to teach 'genuine' or 'artificial' language content in class, whether corpus-based language description tends to assert native speaker norms in ESL and ELF contexts, and, more philosophically, whether 'real' language can ever be 'authentic' once it is removed from its original context and studied in the language classroom (Widdowson, 1978; 1998). Although 'authenticity' and 'real' language data are issues that relate closely to debates surrounding ELT textbooks and materials, in this discussion, we shall focus specifically on questions of pedagogical effectiveness and appropriateness, addressing those issues specific to teaching and learning resources in Chapter 11.

'Real English': what and why?

TC

Task 10.3 First thoughts: real and invented language in the classroom

Look at the two transcripts below. The first is a real conversation recorded in a hairdressing salon; the second is an invented dialogue from a popular English language textbook:

- In what ways does the language in the two extracts differ?
- How might you use each transcript in class? What would you focus upon with learners?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each transcript for teaching and learning? Which would you prefer to work with and why?

Example 1

[In the hair salon]

A: Do you want to come over here?
B: Right, thanks (3 secs) thank you
A: Tea or coffee?
B: Can I have a tea, please?
A: Do you want any sugar?
B: Er, no milk or sugar, just black thanks
C: Right
B: I hate it when your hair just gets so, you know a bit long [**C:** yeah] and it's just straggly
C: Right
B: It just gets to that in-between stage [**C:** Yeah] doesn't it where you think oh I just can't stand it any more (2 secs) I think when it's shorter it tends to, you notice it growing more anyway [**C:** Mm] you know it tends to grow all of a sudden

(Carter and McCarthy, 1997: 106–7)

Example 2

[At the hairdresser's]

Jane: . . . Oh, yes, my husband's wonderful!
Sally: Really? Is he?
Jane: Yes, he's big, strong, and handsome!
Sally: Well, my husband isn't very big, or very strong . . . but he's very intelligent
Jane: Intelligent?
Sally: Yes, he can speak six languages
Jane: Can he? What languages can he speak?
Sally: He can speak French, Italian, German, Arabic, and Japanese
Jane: Oh! . . . My husband's very athletic
Sally: Athletic?
Jane: Yes, he can swim, ski, play football, cricket and rugby. . .
Sally: Can he cook? My husband can't play sports . . . but he's an excellent cook
Jane: Is he?
Sally: Yes, and he can sew, and iron . . . he's a very good husband
Jane: Really? Is he English?

(Hartley and Viney, 1978, in Carter, 1998: 46)

The extent to which classroom texts should be 'authentic' (that is, originally written for non-teaching purposes) and tasks should replicate naturally occurring, 'authentic communication' outside the classroom has long been discussed within ELT, especially since the advent of Communicative and Task-based learning (see Chapter 5). 'Authentic' texts and tasks, it is argued, draw upon more realistic models of language use and leave learners better prepared for life outside the classroom. From the 1980s onwards, these debates have been fuelled by the emergence of new and detailed descriptions of English language use derived from the qualitative and quantitative study of corpora, a corpus being a principled (i.e., representative) collection of written or spoken texts stored on a computer (O'Keefe *et al.*, 2007; see also Cheng, forthcoming).

Corpora studies show that actual language use is often quite different to the language features recorded in standard grammars of English, and that naturally occurring spoken language includes many features not dealt with in grammars or English language textbooks (Carter, 1998). Thus, suggesting that many teachers pay little attention to 'the facts' of English language description and, in fact, take for granted a 'mythology' about English language behaviour, Sinclair (1997: 31) argues that teachers should 'present real examples only . . . language cannot be invented; it can only be captured'. Sinclair acknowledges that teachers may think up and use quick, informal examples to exemplify a point in class, but argues that, in the presentation of language models, 'it is essential for a learner of English to learn from actual examples, examples that can be trusted because they have been used in real communication' (2005: *ix*). Sinclair (ibid.) maintains that teachers find it difficult to invent realistic examples, while learners can deal with 'real' language with less difficulty than is often supposed. Thus, according to Willis:

> Contrived simplification of language in the preparation of materials will always be faulty, since it is generated without the guide and support of a communicative context. Only by accepting the discipline of using authentic language are we likely to come anywhere near presenting the learner with a sample of language which is typical of real English.
>
> (Willis, 1990: 127, in Seidlhofer, 2003: 78)

Questions and concerns

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many teachers and applied linguists (indeed, many corpus linguists!) disagree with the suggestion that *only* 'real' language should be presented in ELT classrooms. 'Unreal', scripted or simplified language may be more accessible for learners and, thus, more appropriate, or, as Carter (1998: 47) comments, more 'real pedagogically'; 'authentic' English may be more difficult to comprehend or

produce, and thus less useful or real pedagogically (ibid.). Similarly, Widdowson (1998: 714–15) suggests that:

> The whole point of language learning tasks is that they are specially contrived for learning. They do not have to replicate or even simulate what goes on in normal uses of language. Indeed, the more they seem to do so, the less effective they are likely to be.

Widdowson also argues that language in fact ceases to be 'authentic' when removed from its original context as learners cannot possibly understand it in the same ways as its original users; learners are, by their very nature, outsiders to the original discourse community and to the actual communicative purposes for which the language was used (ibid.). Additionally, as most 'real' language descriptions within ELT are drawn from native speaker usage (e.g., the COBUILD 'Bank of English' Corpus), not only is the language potentially 'unnatural' in many English Lingua Franca ELT contexts, it is 'culturally marked', reinforcing native speaker norms (and, consequently, the status and position of native speaker teachers within ELT), leading Prodromou to ask 'whatever happened to world Englishes?' (1996: 372).

Ways ahead?

Despite these concerns, corpus-based descriptions of English and 'real' language clearly have important implications for language teachers and teaching (Cook, 1998). Yet the extent and ways in which 'real English' is drawn upon in ELT classrooms will depend upon a number of contextual factors including: the extent to which learners, teachers and other ELT professionals (e.g., textbook and materials writers) regard 'authentic' language as both the aim of learning and relevant to classroom life; the learners' social context, their reasons for learning and the relationship between 'real' English and local Englishes; and the availability of relevant resources, ranging from, for example, textbooks based around 'real' English to CALL facilities through which learners may be able to explore corpus data themselves.

Thus, there are a number of ways in which 'real' language data might be used by or with learners, from self-directed language awareness tasks to teacher-led presentations, and very few applied linguists or teachers 'would ever advocate simply dumping large loads of corpus material wholesale into the classroom' (McCarthy, 2001: 129).

English and learners' needs: specific English for specific purposes

The above discussion suggests that decisions about what type or variety of English should be taught and learned are not as straightforward as they may at first appear. In any classroom, the English taught reflects, either overtly or implicitly, both practical concerns and

more 'ideological' perspectives about why the learners are studying English, what they need to know, the most effective ways of helping them achieve this, and the nature and role of English in the world. The ways in which ELT professionals and learners understand these issues are likely to be affected by the range of contextual factors identified by Stern (see pp. 182–5).

In some contexts, however, an additional question is the extent to which learners need to develop their *overall* linguistic competence in English, or whether they might focus in particular on learning the language and skills necessary to meet a *specific* need or to fulfil a particular role, in effect, learning English for a Specific Purpose (ESP).

Like 'general English' classes, ESP teaching and learning takes place in a diverse range of settings around the world. ESP classes can thus look very different in different environments (although ESP learners are generally adults); there is no fixed language teaching methodology. However, what draws ESP approaches together is that, rather than focusing on general language structures, classes and courses are designed to help learners communicate effectively in a specific work or study situation (Robinson, 2004), for example, as hotel employees, trade unionists or architects, or as students undertaking academic studies in English (a context that has its own acronym, EAP, that is, English for Academic Purposes).

ESP thus provides a further perspective on the English that teachers might teach and learners might learn; the language taught is determined primarily by learner 'needs' that can be identified and specified to a much greater degree, it is claimed, than the needs of 'general English' learners (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Analysing learners' current or future language needs (including functional language skills) in a particular context might typically involve shadowing or observing learners in their workplace, and the collection of authentic texts and materials that may later be used as teaching materials. Thus the debates surrounding 'real' and 'authentic' language (see above) are particularly relevant within ESP contexts as learners work to discover and use the preferred forms of spoken or written discourse used by members of the target community, group or profession. Hence, the English that is taught and learned in ESP contexts is essentially genre-based.

Robinson (2004) highlights a number of dilemmas surrounding the teaching and learning of ESP such as: the extent to which ESP classes should include elements of 'general English' and aim to develop learners' broader linguistic competence; whether ESP requires a basic level of language competence (e.g., intermediate) before learners can make satisfactory progress in complex and specialized language; and how far teachers are teaching language, and how far work-related non-linguistic content. Robinson (2004) also questions whether some

ESP programmes, particularly short introductory courses, really develop genuine linguistic competence or merely teach 'language-like behaviour'. For example, airline in-flight attendants attending a one-day ESP course may acquire a limited set of useful routine phrases, but might not be able to create their own original utterances or respond during unpredictable or unexpected interaction (ibid.).

The work-related focus of ESP teaching and learning makes clear the links between the language classroom and wider contextual factors (as documented in Stern's model, see above). Most ESP programme literature and teacher development texts refer to sponsors or stakeholders (e.g., employers, training institutes) who may organize and commission classes for learners (e.g., Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). Meanwhile, the relatively recent development of English for 'peacekeeping' or 'security' programmes in countries and contexts ranging from Angola to Azerbaijan and Latvia to Libya is impossible to imagine without the immense global geopolitical changes of the last twenty years (see, for example, Woods (2006) for further discussion). Additionally, links between ESP, international business and globalization can be seen in the emergence of 'call-centre English' programmes in India and elsewhere (Forey and Lockwood, 2010), where historical, political and economic trends link global trends to local contexts. (It is worth noting how these examples bring into focus potentially difficult questions concerning the relationship between ELT and global power, politics and economics to which we shall return in Chapter 12; see also our earlier discussion of the role of values in ELT, Chapter 3.)

Task 10.4 From teaching English to teaching 'content': thinking about CLIL

This chapter has reflected upon the problematic issue of 'which English' might be appropriate for teaching and learning in any given ELT classroom. *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) approaches, however, suggest that English should not be the primary focus of classes at all. Increasingly popular in many contexts, CLIL involves 'using a language that is not a student's native language as a medium of instruction and learning for primary, secondary and/or vocational-level subjects such as maths, science, art or business' (Mehisto *et al*., 2008: 11). Hence, there is no predetermined language syllabus; learners learn the necessary and specific language for a particular subject as they study its content. Central to CLIL, therefore, is the notion of 'learn as you use' rather than 'learn to use' (ibid.); it is thus similar to immersion programmes and other forms of

content-based instruction, and we can also discern links to ideas, examined earlier, of 'learning through exposure' and the Input Hypothesis (see Chapters 4 and 6). CLIL classes, however, may be more content-driven or more language-driven as appropriate:

- How widespread is CLIL in your professional context? Have you ever experienced CLIL, either as a teacher or a learner?
- What connections can you identify between CLIL and issues and ideas summarized in earlier chapters? For example, what is the relationship between CLIL and *'strong' forms of CLT* (see Chapter 5)? How might CLIL draw upon ideas such as *comprehensible input* and *output* (Chapter 6)? In what ways might CLIL affect *learner motivation* (Chapter 7)?
- It has been suggested that CLIL is more challenging for both teachers and learners than a focus on 'just' language. How far do you agree with this perspective?
- To what extent do you think CLIL might be more suitable for some learners than others?
- In what ways do you think adopting a CLIL approach involves a significant degree of change for teachers who have a background teaching only language, and in what ways do you think CLIL 'cannot be separated from standard good practice in education' (Mehisto *et al*., 2008: 27).
- Most CLIL programmes around the world are taught in English. To what extent, then, might the development of CLIL approaches in schools and other educational institutions promote English *at the expense of* other languages? In other words, how far does CLIL serve to reinforce the dominant position of English in the world by *replacing*, rather than *complementing*, other languages? (See Chapter 12 for further discussion of English in the world.)

Summary: English . . . and values in ELT

This chapter has investigated what is meant by *English*, problematizing an issue that is less straightforward than it might at first appear. The discussion has examined key debates surrounding the Lingua Franca function and forms of English; the extent to which 'real' English should be the goal of, and a resource for, ELT and, indeed, whether 'real' language is a coherent pedagogical concept; and the ways in

which learners' specific purposes for learning can and should be prioritized through ESP. As we have seen, the issues we have examined are subject to fierce debate among applied linguists, teachers and learners, and there are clearly no simple answers to these challenging questions. A variety of global and local contextual factors may affect decisions about what variety of English might or should be taught and learned in any particular ELT environment.

Implicit in much of the discussion is the notion of *values*. Classroom practice and 'ideology' or 'values' are inseparable, not only in terms of *how* teachers teach (see Chapter 3), but also, the current discussion suggests, in terms of *what* they teach. While this is extremely clear when exploring the relative prestige of varieties of English (e.g., Standard British English compared to English as a Lingua Franca), it also an important consideration when reviewing the apparent 'pragmatism' and 'neutrality' of much ESP (and CLIL) teaching, which, from a critical perspective, accommodates a *status quo* view of the world (Pennycook, 1997). Whether one agrees fully with this perspective or not, it does invoke Davies' key question, that is, 'what are we trying to achieve in ELT?' (1995: 145).

We shall return to this question in Chapter 12. However, before we do so, we shall examine the possible ways in which ELT curricula and materials shape and organize language for teachers and learners, again linking classroom practices and interventions to broader institutional and social trends, as we move to the next chapter.