

## 2 Final frontiers in applied linguistics?

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### **Abstract**

*'I am enough of a purist', said Pit Corder, at the beginning of *Introducing Applied Linguistics*, to believe that 'applied linguistics' presupposes 'linguistics'; that one cannot apply what one does not possess.' He would not, I think, have excluded the complementary view – cases where applied linguistic questions make linguists refine or rethink just what it is they possess. This process seems to be increasing, as applied linguistics continues to extend its boundaries. My paper cites some currently unanswerable questions, then illustrates from areas where applied questions are motivating a reappraisal of established linguistic concepts. Because Corder's focus was language teaching and learning, my main illustration is from this area. Global pedagogical reaction to the proliferation of 'new Englishes' requires the development of a domain of cultural linguistic studies which has hitherto been somewhat neglected and which does not sit comfortably within either semantics or pragmatics. I suggest some of the dimensions that a model of applied cultural linguistics would need to take into account.*

'I am enough of a purist', said Pit Corder, at the beginning of *Introducing Applied Linguistics*, to believe that 'applied linguistics' presupposes 'linguistics'; that one cannot apply what one does not possess.' I commissioned this hugely influential book for the short-lived Penguin Modern Linguistics series in 1970, and I remember discussing the range of the book with the author. What about the opposite, impure direction, as it were? Agreed, you need to know your linguistics before you can develop a mature and sophisticated applied linguistics; but should one not need to know applied linguistics before one can develop a mature and sophisticated linguistics? Should there not at least be a discussion of cases where applied linguistic

questions make linguists refine or rethink just what it is they possess? There should, we agreed; but at the time, and given the focus of the study – language teaching and learning – we couldn't think of any. Nor was there much motivation to do the thinking: the climate of the time was against it. Even the pure direction had been recently questioned. A couple of years previously, Chomsky had stated very firmly that he was, 'frankly, rather sceptical' about the relevance of theoretical linguistics for language teaching (1966:43; see also Corder, 1973:143). He didn't rule it out; he simply said that it hadn't yet been demonstrated. But for Chomsky to express frank scepticism was enough. A generation of career linguists was turned off applied linguistics at that point.

That was 30 years ago. A lot has changed. We now know that a sense of what we need to possess, in linguistics, can partly come from a sense of the answers we are trying to provide in applied domains. So often we have found that linguistic models don't work well, or at all – that a linguistic description lets us down just at the point when we most need it. This was my repeated experience in the development of an applied clinical linguistics; it is, as I shall illustrate shortly, an ongoing experience in an applied Internet linguistics. In fact, I think most of my linguistic life has been devoted to worrying about applied linguistic questions, chiefly in clinical, educational, literary, and lexicographic domains, and finding the linguistics a bit leaky. I don't know about you, but I never had any particular career target in becoming an applied linguist. When I was little, and people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I never said 'an applied linguist'. And when I did grow up, and became a linguist, the applied linguistic persona, like Topsy, just grewed. People simply would not leave me alone, to get on with my first love, what Corder calls the 'first-order application of linguistics', the task of linguistic description. They kept asking fascinating questions, and expecting answers. Questions like 'what's linguistically wrong with that child?'. Or, in a different domain, I made a personal discovery of the crucial and still rather neglected role of English adverbials by trying to answer the question, 'Is it really true that the English present tense has 16 meanings, and if so how on earth do you teach them?' (Crystal, 1966). There is nothing worse than to see the facial expression of innocent hopeful expectation – the one that accompanies 'You're a linguist, you'll know!' – change to one of disillusioned disbelief on hearing the response 'Well I don't, actually.' We then try to salvage some face by offering to 'do some work on it'. That, I suspect, is how new communities

of applied linguistics come to be born. The frontiers are ever widening.

The rate at which unanswerable questions continue to arise makes me wonder whether there will ever be a 'final frontier', as Trekkies put it, in applied linguistics. I get these questions perhaps more than most, because when you dare to write general encyclopedias about language, people assume you know everything – whereas in fact all you know is where to look things up – and ask you. Here are some of the questions which I have received in the past few months – and I identify the not-yet-existing community of applied linguists which should be answering them.

A community of applied theatrical linguists. To answer questions like: Why are some actors' vocal performances more effective than others? What was it exactly that made John Gielgud's voice so memorable? And how can we use this information to improve the standards of acting? Is there any way we can improve the teaching of regional accents to actors? (I have a son who is an actor, and this was a repeated question from him and his friends in his training year. But there is not even a high-quality linguistically informed tape that one could recommend.)

A community of applied musical linguists. To answer questions like: Why are some languages suitable to opera and not others? Why is English the language of pop music? Is there something about the structure of English which makes it suit rock-and-roll, or reggae? Could we devise a more linguistically representative and diverse (i.e. non-English) Eurovision song contest in the light of this information? A forthcoming television documentary by the (I kid you not) Cat-in-the-Hat production company will be elucidating this last question.

And at a conference in Brussels in July on Internet security in the face of increased threats from hacking, fraud, and cyber-terrorism, a wide range of questions was being addressed to do with methods of spam exclusion, porn filtering, forensic linguistic identification of forged messages, and so on, all of which presupposed a descriptive linguistic frame of reference for what I have elsewhere called 'Internet linguistics', and which hardly yet exists. Applied Internet linguistics. Or rather, one branch of such a community – Applied Forensic Internet linguists.

And there are other branches of this last community, for other questions relating to other areas of application which have yet to be explored. What kind of language should we use on the Internet? How can Internet language be taught to children? How does the arrival of the Internet impact on children's abilities to read and write? Applied Educational Internet Linguists. There are others. This is an especially productive area. In fact I would hazard that, in a generation's time, Applied Linguistics as we know it will look very different, reflecting the range and ramifications of a technologically interactive world in which the options made available through the Internet (spoken, by then, as well as written) will become a primary linguistic force.

Linguists have hardly begun to look at these questions. And if they did they could not answer them because the relevant thinking has not been done. Let me take these three examples in turn. Linguists cannot address such questions as the difference between Gielgud's and Olivier's voices because they do not have a sufficiently well developed system of transcription to capture the full range of prosodic and paralinguistic features of the voice. Even the one Quirk and I devised for the Survey of English Usage back in the 1960s would not be able to handle everything we hear on stage (Crystal and Quirk, 1964). In clinical linguistics, there was indeed such a transcriptional development, a decade ago (Ball, Code, Rahilly and Hazlett, 1994), when a set of extensions to the IPA was proposed in order to handle the range of deviant phonetic effects encountered in speech and voice disorders. But nothing has happened on the theatrical side. The conventional phonetic system of transcription is inadequate to handle the contrasts of theatrical speech; but because it works well enough for everyday speech (with an exception I'll point out in a minute) phoneticians have no real motivation to develop new perspectives – at least, not without pressure from applied linguists.

Reflecting on what would be needed, transcriptionally, to investigate the musicological questions, reveals another area of ignorance. The overlap between music and speech has been another neglected topic. In the 1970s the Departments of Linguistics and Music at Reading held a series of joint seminars in which this question was discussed. It was motivated by the arrival for a term of a Canadian composer, Istvan Anhalt – a composer in the Berio, Stockhausen tradition of experimental acoustics – who was anxious to find

ways of more accurately transcribing the full expressive potential of the voice in speech, and he hoped phoneticians would be able to help. I found my prosodic and paralinguistic transcriptions being used in ways never previously conceived of, as part of a musical score. I am not sure just how far this approach can go, but I know it has not gone very far. Even the most basic features of music encountered in speech are not yet capable of transcription in an agreed way. I am not here talking about intonation, sometimes described in a metaphorical way as the musical property of speech – 'metaphorical' because our voices do not need to be tuned to concert pitch before we begin a conversation. I said 'features of music' – musical quotations or catch-phrases would be a more accurate way of putting it – where a musical extract is given a generalized linguistic interpretation. A common contemporary example is the theme from *Jaws*. The jocular expression of an approaching dangerous social situation is often conveyed by its ominous low-pitched glissando quavers. Transcribe that. Or (to take other examples I have heard over the months in conversational settings – not always very well performed, but sufficiently recognizable for me to note them down): the theme from the *Twilight Zone*, *Dr Who*, *Dragnet*, the shower-room scene in *Psycho*, Laurel and Hardy's clumsy walk music, the riff in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the opening motif of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. The extract may be highly stereotyped and brief. Someone who arrives in a room with something special may accompany it with 'Ta-raa', or the racecourse riff, or the whistled motif from Clint Eastwood's Spaghetti Western films, or the chase music from a Keystone Kops film. Devotees of *The Prisoner* cult TV series introduce its musical motifs into their speech to the point of boredom. None of these are currently transcribable – not least because they presuppose an absolute musical scale, whereas speech presupposes a relativistic transcriptional scale (Crystal, 1971).

My third example is from Internet technology. I am delighted to see a focus on computer-mediated communication at this conference, the first major gathering I am aware of in this country. But isn't it interesting that this should be at an Applied Linguistics conference? If anything gives the lie to the principle that we must apply only what we possess, it is this domain. For the Internet raises a fundamental question for linguistic theory – namely, whether the binary model of linguistic communication which recognizes speech and writing only is valid. Elsewhere I have argued that it is not, that Netspeak is neither speech nor writing, but a unique medium (Crystal,

2001). It is not like traditional speech because, for example, it lacks the property of simultaneous feedback, cannot handle non-segmental sophistication (notwithstanding emoticons), and permits the monitoring of and contributing to multiple conversations (in chat rooms). Nor is it like traditional writing because, for example, it displays dynamic change (animation on screen, for example), it is primarily non-linear in character (through hypertext links), and its technology permits unprecedented graphic behaviour (such as email framing). Several notions from linguistic theory are going to require revision, in the light of what computer-mediated communication enables language to do. And we are only at the beginning of this technological revolution. We ain't seen nothing yet.

Pragmatics is a case in point. Anyone who operates with a Gricean notion of conversation – I believe there are still some around – knows that there are four maxims underlying the efficient cooperative use of language. Let me remind you – and please reflect, while I am doing so, on the extent to which these maxims characterize Internet linguistic behaviour as you have experienced it. My quotations are all from Grice (1975). The maxim of quality: try to make your contribution one that is true – specifically, do not say what you believe to be false, and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. The maxim of relevance: make your contributions relevant to the theme. The maxim of quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange; do not make it more informative than is required. The maxim of manner: be perspicuous, and specifically, be orderly, be brief, and avoid ambiguity. This rosy view of pragmatic behaviour of course was only ever intended as a perspective within which actual utterances – often full of lies, irrelevance, ramblingness, and ambiguity – can be judged. But something fundamentally different seems to have happened on the Internet, where interactional anonymity has released conflicting notions of truth as norms, ranging from outright lying and fraud through harmless or harmful fantasy to mutually aware pretence and playful trickery. The phenomena known as spoofing and trolling, where messages are sent with the intention of causing communicative disruption (Crystal, 2001:52), undermines the maxim of quality. Lurking (entering a chatroom with no intention of contributing) and spamming (sending unwanted messages) undermine the maxim of quantity. Flaming (aggressive messaging) challenges the maxim of manner. The random nature of many chatgroup interactions challenge the maxim of

relevance. The notion of 'conversational turn' needs to be fundamentally reappraised. It is difficult to know what to do with the egocentric sites known as blogs, Weblogs, which often break all four maxims at once. We have to deal here with a totally different world, for which we will need an empirically informed Internet pragmatics. Until that happens, those who are trying to answer applied questions are working in the dark.

But my main example here, in the context of a Pit Corder lecture, has to come from the field of language teaching and learning. It is now well known that the phenomenon of Global English has given rise to a range of new varieties and emergent regional standards which is causing teachers of EFL around the world not a little disquiet. 'At least I knew where I was when there was just British and American English' is a typical complaint. Traditional distinctions, such as that between first, second, and foreign language use, are breaking down faced with the immense number of new learning situations which have arisen – varieties of English that are so code-mixed now that it is difficult to know whether the label 'English' can continue to be accurately applied; partners who each learned English as a foreign language and who now use it as a lingua franca of their home, with the result that their children learn English as a foreign language as a somewhat unusual kind of mother tongue. Such scenarios were absent or unusual in Pit Corder's day, but are routine today. And to teach them – or, at least, to teach students how to cope with them – teachers require fresh models. Once again, we might expect them to turn to applied linguists for help, and for the applied linguists to switch on their linguistic personae to provide it. But if they do, they will be disappointed, for linguistic theory has only a primitive sense of the way language functions to express cultural identity

A primitive sense? I do not think I exaggerate, notwithstanding everything that has happened in sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics over the past century. Here in Wales, people repeatedly ask the rather basic question, 'How much is language influenced by culture?'. This is a question Pit Corder explored in his book (p. 70), and I needed an answer to it too in order to help clarify the debate raging in the world of endangered language, when I was writing *Language Death* (2000). Here in Wales, virtually every edition of the *Daily Post* (a newspaper chiefly read in the north of the country, where the issue is high-profile and sensitive) has someone in the letters column arguing over the question of whether one

needs to speak Welsh in order to be Welsh. Black-and-white answers are given: I can be Welsh without any Welsh at all; I can only be Welsh if I am fluent in Welsh. The reality, as we know, is somewhere in between, needing to recognize different kinds and degrees of bilingualism and the true complexity of linguistic functionality. There are aspects of Welsh – and we may now generalize, or of any – culture which are totally or heavily dependent on expression in the indigenous language, and there are aspects which are not. The indigenous language is intrinsic to such culturally distinctive domains as poetry and song; it is hardly so in such equally cultural domains as dance and cooking. I wanted an informed figure, a percentage estimate, of just how much of culture depends on an indigenous language for its expression. I found only one person daring to stick his neck out: a Mohawk leader, who said two-thirds (MacDougall, 1998:91). A guess, of course. We do not really know the answer to this rather basic question. That is why I use the word ‘primitive’.

The reason for the difficulty, I suspect, is that linguistics has provided us with only two conceptual domains to get to grips with the ‘language and culture’ question – semantics and pragmatics – whereas we need a third. Indeed, the vast majority of traditional debate on it has been semantic in character, relating to such questions as mental categorization, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and so on – this is the only context in which Pit Corder could have discussed it, in the early 1970s, with pragmatics still a decade away. But the arrival of pragmatics does not deal with all aspects of the question. The point can be illustrated with reference to the notion of ‘comprehension’. The present-day distinction between semantics and pragmatics has been helpful in drawing our attention to two levels of interpretation that are needed to elucidate this notion, but the Global English scenario is drawing our attention to the need for a third, cultural level. A common idiom provides an example. The semantic level: if I say, *it’s raining cats and dogs*, the idiom requires the achievement of what we might call *semantic comprehension* if it is to be grasped: ‘it is raining heavily’. The pragmatic level: it is a commonplace of British English that one talks often about the weather, so that it would be appropriate to say these words by way of conversation even to strangers, say, at a bus-stop. To know that one may do this is to have achieved *pragmatic comprehension*. Traditionally, that would be enough. But the Global English situation now draws attention to the importance of a level of *cultural comprehension*. I recall a conversation with a

friend from Singapore once, who was visiting me in Wales, and when I said ‘It’s raining cats and dogs’ he looked at the rain and said ‘You don’t know what cats and dogs are like until you’ve been to Singapore’. Some years later I went, and understood, culturally, what he meant.

The term *understanding* can itself be approached in the same way. If I say ‘I understand English’, it means I understand the semantic meaning of the words. If somebody says ‘I understand what you’re saying’, it means that although they have understood the semantic meaning, there are some pragmatic problems about acting on it. Recently, for example, in a negotiation between two parties, a financial offer was made by Mr X to Mr Y, to which Mr Y responded with exactly that: ‘I understand what you’re saying’ (also, ‘I hear what you’re saying’). There was a semantic understanding, but not yet a financial understanding – in the sense of an agreement. And, to illustrate my third level, if someone says – perhaps as a result of something Mr Bush has just said – ‘I shall never understand Americans’, then a deeper sense of cultural understanding is involved.

Here is a South African political example, taken from the pages of an English language Sunday newspaper (Branford and Branford, 1978/1991): ‘It is interesting to recall that some *verkrampte* Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once *bittereinder* *bloedsappe*.’ If we replace the unfamiliar words by glosses we get an intelligible sentence: ‘It is interesting to recall that some bigoted Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once die-hard members of the United Party’. You now understand the semantics of the sentence, but you do not yet know anything about its pragmatic or cultural sense. At a pragmatic level, just how forceful are such words as *verkrampte* and *bittereinder*? I have no idea if these are emotionally neutral or extremely rude. If I met such a person and called him a *bittereinder* *bloedsappe*, would he be delighted or punch me on the nose? Can the words be used for both men and women? I have no sense of their pragmatic force. Nor do I have a cultural sense, because I do not know what the United Party was, in its politics then or now. Does it still exist? Whereabouts on the political spectrum is it? How does it relate to the names of other political parties? Here, the encounter with global English does not automatically mean global understanding: rather, it shows us just how much we do not understand.

How would we get to understand the full implications of that sentence? There is only one way: to find out about the South African situation, its

history and politics. That means we need to engage in its study, in an encyclopedic (as opposed to a linguistic) sense. A few weeks in South Africa, or routine discussion with South Africans, or regular exploration via the Internet, would soon sharpen our sense of the cultural force behind such sentences. Only then, once we have understood the culture, will we know how to use such sentences as the above and truly appreciate the meaning of the words. So, rather than a grasp of South African English leading to South African cultural understanding, it appears to be the other way round: South African cultural understanding leads to a grasp of (the semantics and pragmatics of) South African English. In actual fact, it is a combination of both directions which we use in teaching and learning: unfamiliar words can alert the learner to the existence of a distinctive situation, and exposure to the situation will help sharpen the sense of the new words. But the basic point is plain: language alone, in the sense of semantics and pragmatics, is not enough. It points you in the direction of global understanding, but leaves you well short of that goal.

Just how short requires that we develop a model of the way in which cultural differences are realized through language. They are not all of the same kind, and they make different demands on the learner – which in the case of global English diversity means all of us. From a pragmatic or cultural perspective, there is no difference, in principle, between the demands being made upon me (as a native speaker of British English) as I encounter South African English, and upon others as second or foreign language learners. I am just as lost as they might be. Indeed, I may be more lost than them, especially if their country was one which had close ties with South Africa. Doubtless educated speakers of Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe, for example, have a closer intuitive understanding of South African political language in English than I do; and the point is even stronger if we consider mother-tongue speakers of Xhosa or Zulu within South Africa itself. When it comes to global English and global understanding, we are all ultimately in the same boat – first, second, and foreign language speakers alike. Indeed, foreign learners may have a better cultural intuition about English language use than native speakers.

A model of linguistically mediated cultural difference would have to recognize several types of context, each of which makes a different kind of demand on the English learner. I shall restrict the examples to vocabulary – though the points apply also to other language levels. The model would

need, firstly, to make a distinction between (a) language which relates to categories of the real world and (b) language which relates to categories of the imaginary world. In the first domain, it is the world which creates the language; in the second domain, it is the language which creates the world. The English vocabulary of tennis is an example of the first domain: we can experience a game of tennis, and in the course of doing so learn the associated terminology. The English vocabulary of quidditch is an example of the second domain: only by reading about this imaginary game in the Harry Potter books can we have any experience of it. But in both of these examples, we are talking about phenomena which are found throughout the English-speaking world. New Englishes have no impact here: the terminology of tennis or quidditch is the same in England, the USA, South Africa, Singapore, or wherever the games are played.

The problems come to light when we encounter activities which are either (i) found throughout the English-speaking world, but with different vocabulary associated with them in different places; or (ii) found only in certain parts of the English-speaking world, and thus presenting unfamiliar vocabulary to anyone from outside those areas. An example of (i) from the real world is the lexicon of eggs, which took me aback when I first visited the USA (*once over easy, sunny side up*, etc.), as this vocabulary was not at the time routinely used in the UK. I remember being asked ‘How do you want your eggs’, and answering ‘Cooked?’. Another example is the lexicon of weather-forecasting on British vs. American (etc.) television: ‘there is a 90% chance of precipitation on Tuesday’ vs. ‘get your macs on tomorrow, it’s going to bucket’. An example of (ii) from the real world is the vocabulary of baseball (opaque in the UK) and cricket (opaque in the USA) – areas, note, where the vocabulary is also used outside of the immediate context of the games (as with UK *He played that with a straight bat* or USA *That was out in left field* meaning ‘unexpected’). These are both contemporary examples. There is an additional dimension where the examples refer to previous periods – referring to historical events of the past, famous dead people, old cultural practices, and products that are no longer manufactured.

A similar breakdown is relevant for the imaginary, creative world – of literature, cinema, folklore, advertising, and so on. Here too there are activities which, as above, are either (i) found throughout the English-speaking world, but with different vocabulary associated with them in different places; or (ii) found only in certain parts of the English-speaking

world, and thus presenting unfamiliar vocabulary to anyone from outside those areas. In this world, under (i) we find the distinctive language (vocabulary, slogans, catch-phrases) associated with a particular internationally known product. Milk, for example, is doubtless advertised everywhere; but the television slogan *Drink a pinta milk a day* became a catch-phrase in the UK only, and led to the item *pinta* in British English. The Heineken lager slogan, *Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach* is another example (Crystal, 1995:389). A non-advertising context would be 'Space – the final frontier', known wherever there is a Trekkie, which I am told is everywhere, including the titles of papers at BAAL conferences. Under (ii) we have the vocabulary associated with any local product or project, such as a television series which did not travel outside its country of origin, and which yielded catch phrases known only within that country (such as the exasperated 'I don't believe it!' said by the curmudgeonly Victor Meldrew in the series *One Foot in the Grave*). Here too the distinction between present and past time is relevant, but especially so in the case of literature, where the need to interpret the past local culture of a text is routinely accepted procedure in, for example, work on a Shakespeare play. Once again, of course, the distinction between first, second, and foreign learner does not apply. Mother-tongue readers of Shakespeare, as well as those from other backgrounds, have to be taught explicitly about the features of Elizabethan England reflected in those plays.

There must be tens of thousands of pragmatic or cultural linguistic features, but very few have been collated in reference works, and those which have always display a bias towards British and American English only. The *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (Summers, 1992) is a brave attempt at opening up the area, but this is a dictionary of the language as a whole into which '15000 encyclopedic and culturally significant words' have been incorporated; it is not a book which focuses on culturally mediated linguistic difference. Thus it includes the names of countries and cities, for example, which are of encyclopedic relevance but not (usually) culturally variable. Russia is Russia in all parts of the English-speaking world. On the other hand, it does contain many examples which are distinctive in their local cultural resonance. There are localities with additional meaning: the political associations of *Whitehall*, *White House*. There are shops and streets with different associations: the fashionable associations of *Macy's* or *Harrods*; *Oxford Street* in London vs. *Oxford Street* in Sydney, *Soho* in London vs. *Soho*

in New York. There are the names of newspapers and magazines: what is the resonance of *The Sun* in the UK? of *The National Enquirer* in the USA? There are differences in the names of institutions and organizations, companies and products, fairy tales and nursery rhymes, radio and television programmes, historical notions, and so on. It is so easy to be misled. I know several Brits who have gone shopping in Oxford Street in Sydney, expecting to find the type of product sold in the onomastically equivalent location in London, only to be faced with a rather different and somewhat embarrassing product-range. I imagine some British travellers in New York would find its Soho something of a disappointment, for the opposite reason.

To provide a detailed example of the sort of language any model of cultural comprehension would have to deal with, I take from the beginning of letter J in the Longman Dictionary the items using the word *jack* which are culturally restricted. (I should add that I do not know just how restricted – how widely known they are in the different territories of the English-speaking world.)

Quite widely used (but not everywhere) are the nursery rhymes *Jack and Jill* and *Jack Sprat*, the folktale *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and the name for frost, *Jack Frost*.

UK-restricted is the former UK television programme for children, *Jackanory*; the British girl's magazine, *Jackie*.

In North America we find the fast-food restaurant chain, *Jack in the Box*, and the North American hare, *jack rabbit*.

Also UK, though of course known elsewhere, is the English murderer, *Jack the Ripper*; and the name of the flag, *Union Jack*.

This is not a bad start; but a quick look at the same word in the *OED* shows that there are dozens more culturally restricted usages. A small selection includes:

In North America *jack* can be a lumberjack.

In the USA it can be a game of cards (*California jack*).

In Newfoundland it can be a type of schooner.

In parts of South and South-East Asia it can be a type of breadfruit.

In South Africa it can be a type of bird (*idle jack*).

In Australia it can be a laughing jackass, or a slang word for being bored.

In New Zealand, *to jack up* is to arrange or organize.

In the UK, *I'm all right Jack* is the trademark expression of the self-complacent worker.

As I have said, when a country adopts a language, it adapts it. The interesting question is: just how much adaptation takes place? My examples suggest that there is much more than we might expect, and that it is increasing as time goes by. Moreover, as English comes to establish itself in different parts of the world, the range as well as the depth of differential usage is increasing. And we ain't seen nothing yet, for the creative literatures in most parts of the English-speaking world are in their infancy, and it is in the poems, novels, and plays of the future that we will see much of this vocabulary reflected (as the commonwealth literature already available has shown). My examples, moreover, have been only from vocabulary. When discourse as a whole is included in the equation, a new dimension of adaptation manifests itself, complicated this time by the influence of the languages and cultures with which English is in contact. The issue, for example, of forms of address (should one use first name, title, and so on?) will develop additional complexity as English comes to be influenced by the conventions of the countries in which it is used. A single worldwide naming practice is highly unlikely. We must expect to find many more examples of the kind illustrated by the familiar German practice of using both *Professor* and *Doctor* in front of an academic's name. The same proliferation will emerge in relation to many other domains of behaviour, such as whether one gives a toast after or during a meal (and if so, for how long and on what range of topics?), or the subjects which may or may not be used as phatic communion (weather, health, personal appearance, quality of clothing, the cost of house furnishing, the amount of one's income, etc.). So many things – as the idiom goes – 'don't travel'. Humour doesn't. Irony doesn't. Many television programmes don't. Adverts don't.

All of this gives the lie to the simple-minded notion that English imposes its cultural background on the minds of its learners. Cultural imperialism

there certainly is; a capital M in Moscow stands as much for Macdonalds as Metro now; but the above examples reinforce my elsewhere-stated view that there is no correspondingly powerful notion of linguistic imperialism. All the evidence points in the other direction – that as English spreads it finds itself being rapidly adapted to the cultural mindsets of the peoples who have chosen to use it. Culturally neutral varieties of standard English also exist, of course – in relation to science and technology, in particular – but they are not as universal as is commonly thought, and it has been in ELT, it seems to me, where the greatest sense of this development exists.

So here we have yet another example of a community of applied linguists – ELT specialists – which is challenging linguistics to come up with a solution. There are theoretical implications in all of this, but the primary challenge in my view is to develop a descriptive linguistics which is not just stylistically informed and pragmatically aware (as recent reference grammars and dictionaries undoubtedly are, e.g. Biber et al., (1999); Summers (2003)), but one which has a full sociolinguistic dimension, including an explicit and comprehensive framework of cultural distinctiveness.

I leave the last word, almost, to Pit Corder. 'Learning a language', he said (p. 105) is not just a question of learning to produce utterances which are acceptable, they must also be appropriate. Linguistics has a lot to say about the former. So far it has little to say about the latter.' That was in 1973. Thirty years on, we have seen the way frontiers have been pushed forward in dealing with this question, first in semantics then in pragmatics. Pit would, I believe, be very happy to see the progress which has been made in explicating the notion of appropriateness in these two areas. But there seems to be no limit to the frontiers involved in this subject of ours. In the 1980s I wrote a paper in clinical linguistics called 'Sense – the final frontier?', thinking that the final solution to my applied problems in that domain would lie in semantics. A decade later I wrote another one, in which I saw pragmatics as the final frontier. Now I find myself rethinking again, with sociolinguistics. And in another decade, what? A neurolinguistic final frontier, perhaps? The conclusion is inescapable. There are no final frontiers. Applied linguists will continue to BAALdly go where no linguist has been before.

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