

# What English do we teach? Global voices in a global world

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1

## Where do I come from?

Trainer for 25  
years

Observation of  
what is going on  
the classroom

Knowledge of  
teaching and  
testing industry

Experience of  
my learners

Discussion and  
exchange with  
colleagues

2

## What English do we teach?

- ⇒ Which English do your learners want to learn?
- ⇒ Which English do your schools and language institutes expect?
- ⇒ Which English is tested in exams and assessments?
- ⇒ How well is your teaching context reflected in the materials provided?



3

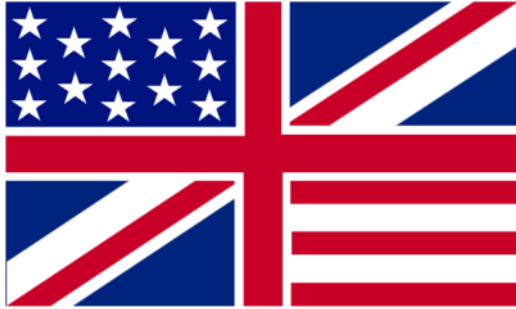
## Conventional approach in materials

- Course books mostly written by British/American speakers
  - Usually people living abroad: international experience
  - Apply own filters to politeness and use of language
  - Human behaviour, but can lead to problems
- Interaction between native and non-native speakers
  - Fair share between the two groups
  - Less interaction between non-native speakers
- Native speakers often presented as experts:
  - Correcting other speakers ("shares, not chairs")
  - Presenting views on how to use language correctly
- Teachers/readers apply own filters, too: expectations?



4

## So, when it comes to teaching...



- Anglo-American content prevails
  - Life in the US and UK, AUS, NZL
  - Writing conventions (emails, CV)
  - Communication conventions
    - Concept of politeness
    - Small talk
    - Use of humour

The language used in text books is also the language taught – in a subliminal way



5

## The curriculum

### In German schools

- British English including topics and culture
- One year American English including topics and culture
- Confusion among students re grammar, spelling, sounds

### In adult teaching

- Publishers change to US standard as more important for clients
- Very often unspoken establishment (e.g. academic writing)



6

# Reasoning

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## Idea: language = country

- Chinese to work with China?
- Speaking English with the Chinese

## Marketing concept

- Selling the UK and the US
- Still belief in native speaker ideal

## History

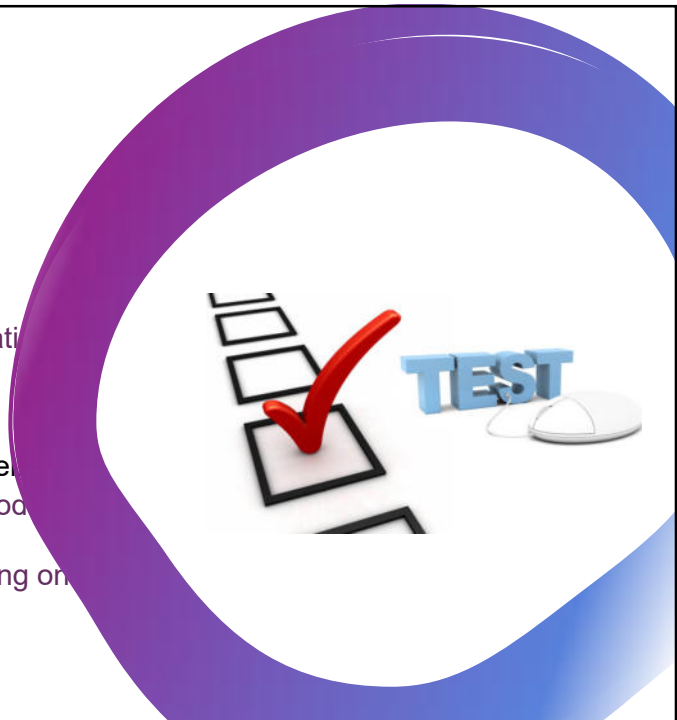
- Colonial past: England as home of English
- US dominant military/business force



7

## Conventional approach in exams

- Testing world dominated by UK and US companies
- Native speaker model still prevailing:
  - British English – received pronunciation
  - US English – ‘white’ English
- But what to test against?
- Examinees expect native speaker model
  - ‘Britishness’ still spread as a role model only in accents
  - No change of identity because putting on ‘Oxbridge’ or ‘white’ US accent

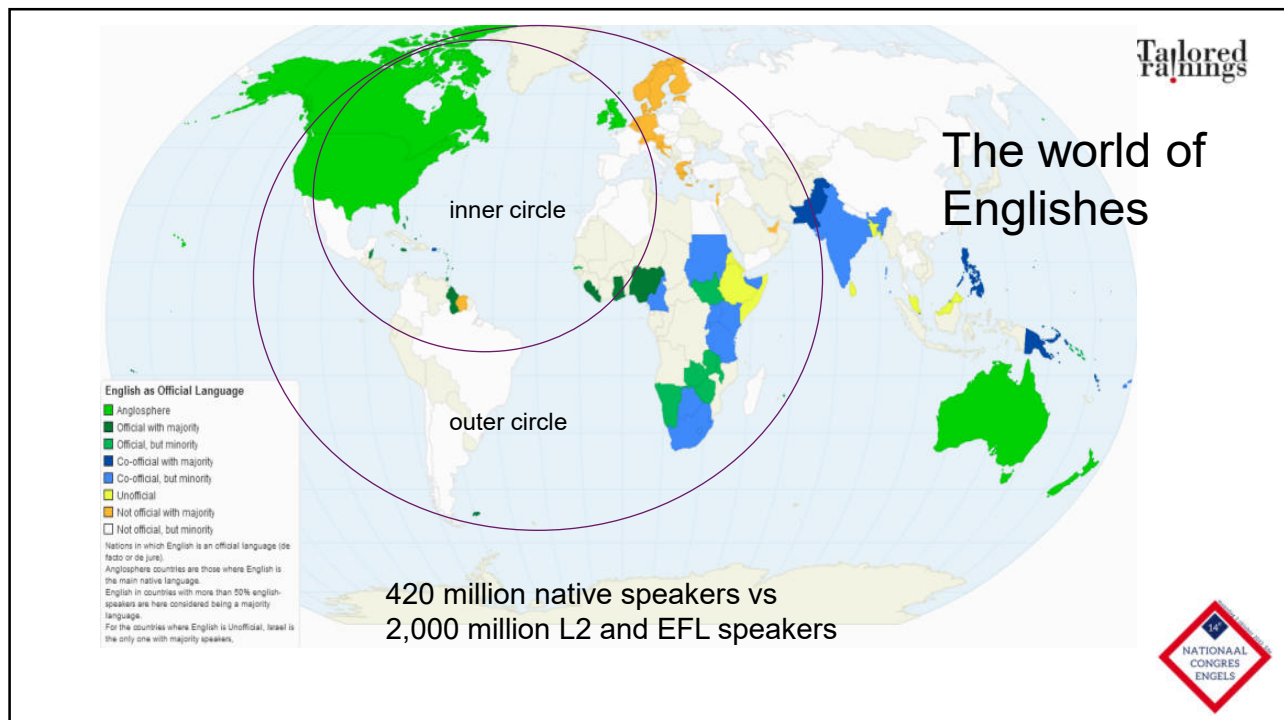


8

## Does that reflect our learners' environment?

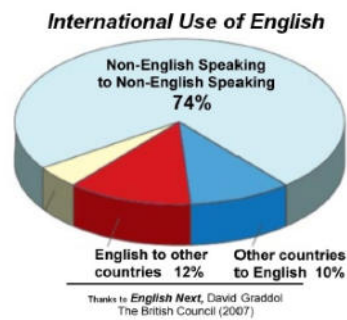
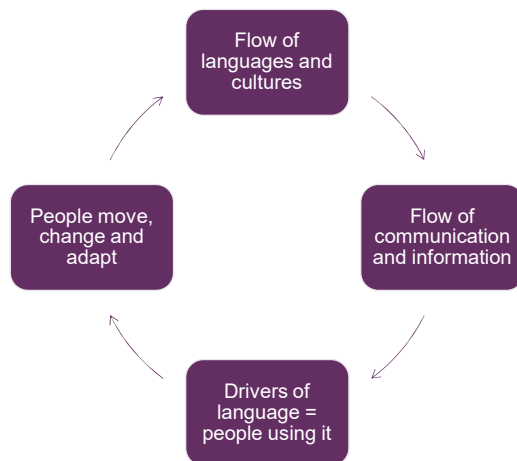
- Who do your learners talk to?
- What English and what communication conventions do they need to learn?
- Do Anglo-American communication rules help when interaction is done between Germans and Polish or Dutch and Chinese?
  - ⇒ Individual success factors and compliments don't work in a collectivist culture
  - ⇒ Empowerment of people doesn't work in a culture with high uncertainty avoidance (concern for rules and control)

9

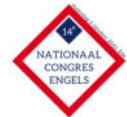


10

## VUCA world: a model of flow



Interaction in travelling/tourism



11

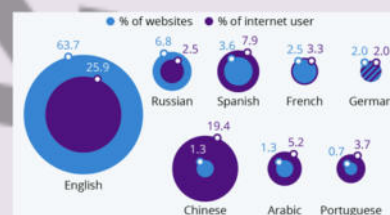
## Graddol English Next

Project of 14 forecasts made in 2006 about the world's most spoken language

1. Decline of English learners by 2020

The best estimates for the number of people who want to learn – or are learning – English are between 98 million and 1.4 billion.

2. English no longer dominant on Internet



12

# The Future of English

## Section 3. Teaching English

\* 13. How would you describe the kind of English you teach your students?

Global

British  
American  
Global  
In some other way (please specify)

\* 14. Do you think that English should be the only language used in the classroom?

Have your say in the teachers' survey!

- British Council looked into Graddol's predictions
- Talked to policy makers and influencers from around the world
- Also asked new questions
  - Will English continue to be the world's most spoken language?
  - Which trends will change how we speak English in the future?

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/future-of-english>

13

## English as a Lingua Franca:

language

communication

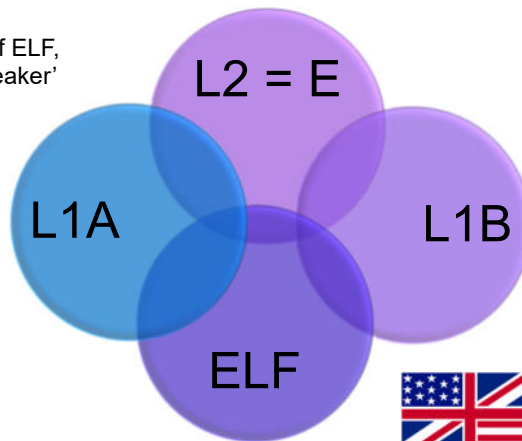
culture

14



## What does interaction look like?

Nobody is a native speaker of ELF,  
i.e. everybody is a 'native speaker'  
of ELF



Scaffolding and  
adaptation needed



15

## Responding to a compliment



- "You did a fantastic job on that essay."
- **Appropriate response:**
  1. "Thank you, I really appreciate your help, too."
  2. "Thank you, yes, I think that went very well."
  3. "Oh no, this was nothing. You're just being nice."
- 1 – in a more collectivist culture where the team must be praised
- 2 – in an individualist culture where personal acknowledgment is important
- 3 – in a compliment-denial culture where own achievement is downplayed

How do Dutch people respond to a compliment?



16



## On Dutch communication culture:



**Direct Communication:** Dutch tend to have a direct communication style, speaking quite frankly and straightforward. This may be misunderstood as rude, especially if one is not used to forthrightness. However, the Dutch tend to view direct communication as a well-appreciated form of openness.

**Communication Style:** Dutch tend to speak in a friendly tone of voice and often in short sentences. Excessive politeness is often viewed as distrustful as it may imply a lack of directness in communication. Dutch also generally avoid over-exaggerating and will often tone

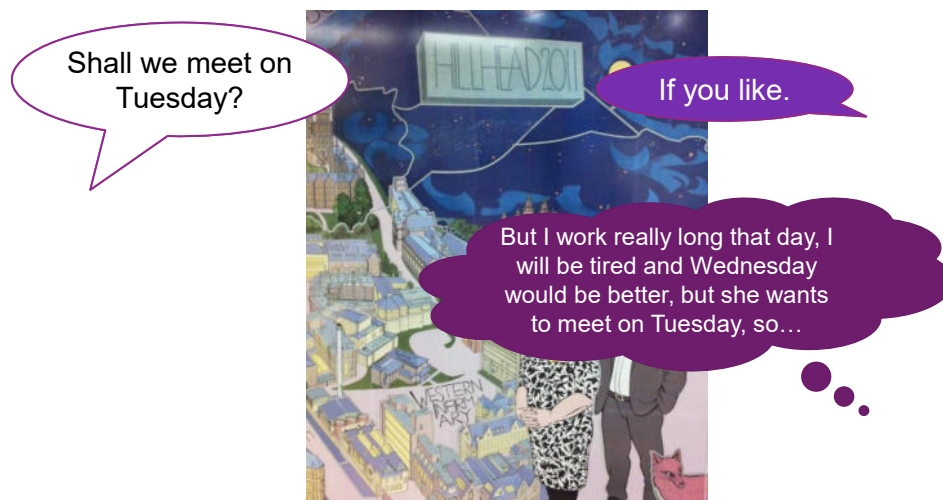
### Dutch Culture

- Is this covered in your materials?
- How would this be reflected in English?
- And what effect do those deviations have on teaching ELF?

<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/dutch-culture/dutch-culture-communication>

17

## A conflict of politeness: applying your own bias and filter



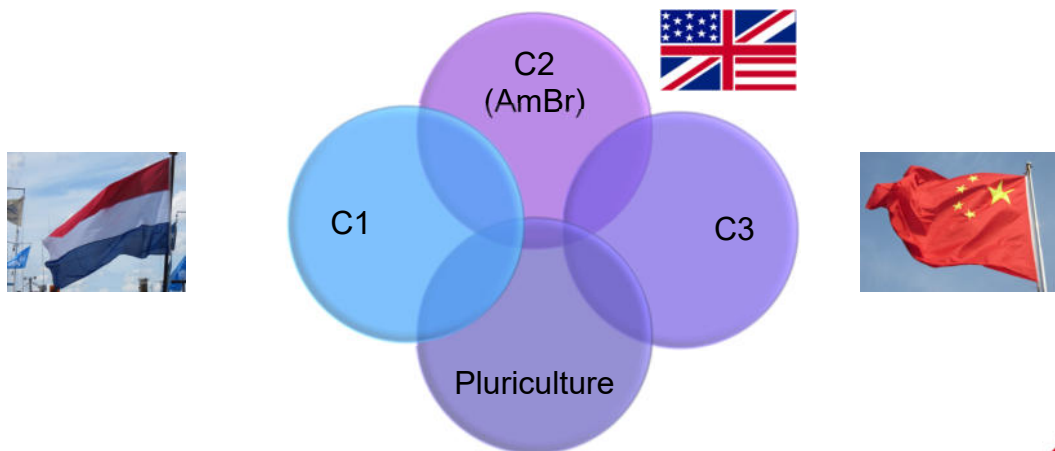
18

## A contract of politeness: both parties agree on what is polite for them



19

## Interaction depends on pluriculture



20

## CEFR: new descriptors

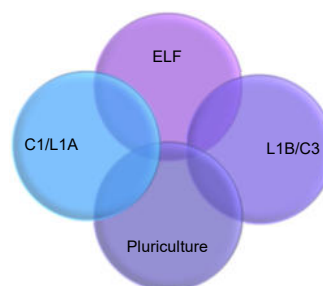
FACILITATING PLURICULTURAL SPACE	
<b>C2</b>	Can mediate effectively and naturally between members of his/her own and other communities, taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences. Can guide a sensitive discussion effectively, identifying nuances and undercurrents.
<b>C1</b>	Can act as mediator in intercultural encounters, contributing to a shared communication culture by managing ambiguity offering advice and support, and heading off misunderstandings. Can anticipate how people might misunderstand what has been said or written and help to maintain positive interaction by commenting on and interpreting different cultural perspectives on the issue concerned.
<b>B1</b>	Can support communication across cultures by initiating conversation, showing interest and empathy by asking and answering simple questions, and expressing agreement and understanding. Can act in a supportive manner in intercultural encounters, recognising the feelings and different world views of other members of the group. Can support an intercultural exchange using a limited repertoire to introduce people from different cultural backgrounds and to ask and answer questions, showing awareness that some questions may be perceived differently in the cultures concerned. Can help to develop a shared communication culture, by exchanging information in a simple way about values and attitudes to language and culture.



21

## Pluricultural focus

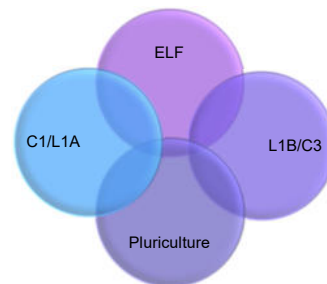
- Intercultural = exchange between two cultures
- Multicultural = presence of cultures in one place
- Pluricultural = handling of different cultures
  - ⇒ supportive in intercultural situations
  - ⇒ focus on situative competence
  - ⇒ assessing and anticipating situations
  - ⇒ striving for common communication culture



22

## Pluricultural competence

- Acting as a **mediator** (key function) in difficult situations
- **Moderating/mediating communication** between people from different cultures
- **Anticipating** possible problems and **developing** solution strategies
- Does not only apply to different cultures, but also to different languages



23

## Pluricultural and plurilingual

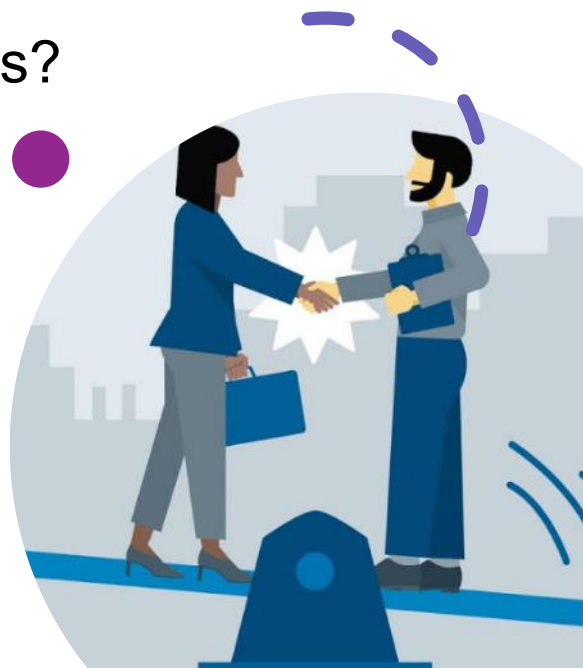
- Cultural aspects cannot be separated from language and communication
- Influences how we interpret what others say
- Important: not only mediating between cultures, but establishing an own, common culture
- plurilingual = speaker moves between different languages (awareness of different L1)



24

## How do we achieve this?

- More focus on interaction and situations in ELF
- Purpose, usage and functionality of language
- Building awareness through reflection and observation
- Metalinguistic skills
- Redefining descriptors in different contexts



25

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## Refined competencies: Writing

- Wording allows for more interpretation

<b>B2</b>	Can write a forceful but polite letter of complaint, including supporting details and a statement of the desired outcome.
	Can write letters conveying degrees of emotion and highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences and commenting on the correspondent's news and views.
	Can use formality and conventions appropriate to the context when writing personal and professional letters and emails.
	Can write formal emails/letters of invitation, thanks or apology with appropriate register and conventions.

Questions to be discussed:

- Whose formality and conventions?
- Who determines an appropriate register?



26



## Refined competencies: Speaking

- Interaction: emphasis on metalanguage and context

<b>B2</b>	Can establish a relationship with interlocutors through sympathetic questioning and expressions of agreement, plus, if appropriate, comments about third parties or shared conditions.
	Can indicate reservations and reluctance, state conditions when agreeing to requests or granting permission, and ask for understanding of his/her own position.
	Can engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment.
	Can sustain relationships with speakers of the target language without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with another proficient speaker.

Focus on reflection: how can my behaviour be understood or misunderstood?  
How do I integrate other speakers in a conversation?



27

## Mediation



Reflection that we bring in our L1



Awareness of L1 of partners (native/non-native speakers)



Adapting language: no specialist jargon



Activities of mediation (text, concept, communication)



Strategies of mediation (explaining and simplifying)



28



## Changes in materials 1

- Higher number of non-native speakers
- Global settings of scenarios
  - ⇒ Widening the range
- Inclusion of intercultural aspects
- Limitations
  - ⇒ We cannot know all about all cultures/behaviours
  - ⇒ Lack of focus on reflection and observation
  - ⇒ Not enough critical reworking of scenarios
  - ⇒ False security is the promise



29

## Changes in materials 2

- Example: revision of business English course for leading online provider
  - ⇒ Stories and names could be internationalised
  - ⇒ “We need more diversity”: pictures exchanged, more Asian and black faces
  - ⇒ Audio and videos files NOT replaced for cost reasons
  - ⇒ *Cost of publishing and exam set-ups: same speakers used again and again*



30

## Changes in materials 3

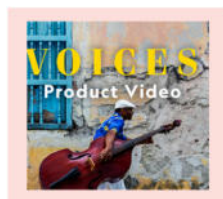
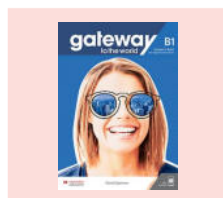
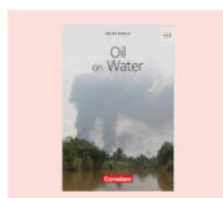


- Regional publications
  - ⇒ Catering more for specific market contexts
  - ⇒ Speakers from key regions people from a country interact with
  - ⇒ In some cases, NNSP outnumber NSP by 3:1
  - ⇒ Focus on pronunciation and intelligibility
- Global resources
  - ⇒ Native speakers becoming more aware of global learners' needs
  - ⇒ Materials e.g. based on TED talks to make global voices heard
    - includes more non-native speakers as experts in their fields



31

## Changes in materials: more examples



- Voices (NGL) specifically designed with a global approach
- Cornelsen adapted *Oil on Water* as a school text book (Nigeria)
- Gateway uses social and emotional learning, critical thinking skills
- Listening: authentic, uncleaned materials
- Practise what you preach: My book on football follows ELF principles



32

## Changes in teaching



More English as a communication means,  
less English as a subject (changes in curriculum and testing)



Integrate learners' own reality (e.g., mediation of own cultural issues)



Focus on sociolinguistics, wider range of phrases for different  
occasions instead of idiomatic/culture-specific language



Need for change in Teachers' Training and school policy



New definitions in vocational training and qualification  
(e.g., specialist in foreign language communication)



33

## What do we need to do?

01

Voice  
challenges in  
materials  
(critical thinking)

02

Teach more  
than language  
(reflection,  
awareness)

03


Design class  
content  
accordingly


04

Involve  
appropriacy &  
different  
registers


34

## What do we need to do?







Build on the situations and encounters of your learners



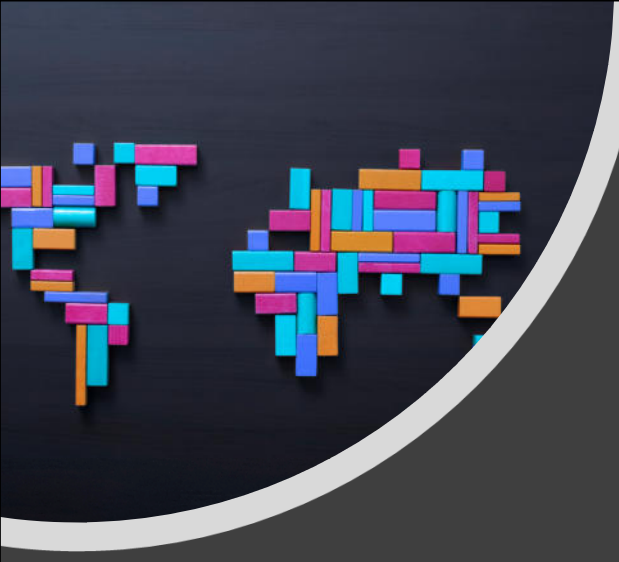
Check your own biases and assumptions as a teacher




Make your learners see that there is no one solution for all




35





## Conclusion

- Our global voices are just as important: heads up, please!
- Our learners need to create a persona/identity in English that allows for a comfortable performance
- We need to stop dividing people along native/non-native speaker lines
- We need to start talking about skills of pluricultural communication
- We must build a wider awareness of the challenges of pluricultural communication



36

18

## Food for thought

- David Crystal. "Should English be taught as a 'global' language?", 18/04/2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLYk4vKBdUo>, and "The myth of the native speaker" 21/08/201, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-kZLP2FWUJ>
- David Graddol. English Next. British Council 2007 <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-next>
- Jennifer Jenkins on ELF – "An introduction to ELF" 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvWCqvXK9Hg&t=23s>
- Katrin Lichterfeld, Dealing with Accent, Identity and Culture When Using ELF. SIETAR Europa 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-yGImpaGII>
- The new CEFR Companion Volume with descriptors. <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>
- Silvana Richardson, "The native factor", IATEFL Plenary 2016, <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/plenary-silvana-richardson>

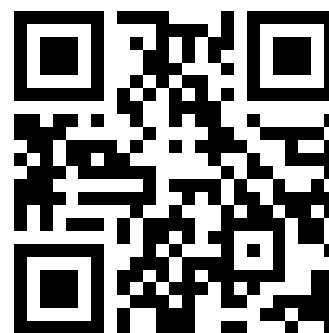


37

Thank you!



- Get in touch:  
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38