

Language Education in the Global Community: Increasing Authenticity in Teaching and Testing

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ABSTRACT

The nature of the global society and the advent of relatively cheap and rapid transport and efficient communication technologies provide new opportunities to make the teaching and the testing of language skills more authentic. The challenge for both has been to bridge the gap between the formal classroom or testing room and how language is used in "real life". This paper discusses an approach to methodology used in teaching different languages in different contexts and the outcomes of those projects. It also considers ways of bridging the gap towards more authentic language proficiency assessment. It also reports on the learning success of a recent group of Korean ESL teachers visiting an English-speaking community for the first time and the use of the ISLPR in evaluating their progress.

THE PRESENTER

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I PREAMBLE

At the time of preparing this paper, the writer was in the tiny Pacific nation of Kiribati, a series of low-lying coral atolls spread out over a vast area where the equator cuts the international dateline. Kiribati has a population of less than 100,000, of whom about 60,000 live in the capital, the series of low, narrow islands linked by causeways called South Tarawa. English is an official language and is considered of vital importance not only for immediate purposes of international trade and communication with the many foreign aid-workers in Kiribati but also because increasing numbers of the people will have to find at least employment and probably homes in other countries. Far more students complete high school each year than are ever likely to find jobs in Kiribati and, if global warming continues, much of Kiribati will disappear under the seas.

There are about 1,400 teachers in Kiribati and ISLPR Language Services was contracted to test the proficiency of all its teachers. The majority of the teachers had learned English in school and Teachers College and were expected to teach wholly in English from Class Four in the Primary School to Form Seven, the last year of Secondary School. In fact, most were unable to do so because their practical proficiency was too low. Strikingly, they made very few grammatical errors in their oral language but their ability to converse was largely limited to the sort of English that is acquired in the formal classroom and, when they were encouraged to talk about other things, their language broke down; most were, at best, 2 to 2+ in Speaking on the ISLPR, which ranges from zero to 5, native-like proficiency. In fact, their learning experience and proficiency reminded the present writer of his own experience of learning French when, after teaching French in school for almost ten years and knowing a great deal about French grammar and literature, he found, on first visiting a French speaking country, that he couldn't go and buy a light bulb, confidently ask directions from a passer-by, or get basic information about everyday things like a motor vehicle. The problem for foreign language teachers preparing learners to operate in the global community is to find how to go beyond providing basic knowledge **about** a language and develop real, practical skills in it. The problem for language testers is to ensure that it is those real, practical skills that are being measured when we claim to be testing language proficiency and informing learners how they would be able to cope in real life in the global community.

II INTRODUCTION

The multicultural nature of many nations and the world and the advent of rapid, efficient and relatively economical transport and communication provide new opportunities to make both the teaching and testing of language skills more authentic. The challenge for both has always been to bridge the gap between what can be presented in the formal classroom and the use of the language outside in "real life". Not least, that "real life" use of the language seems to respond most nearly to what we know about how language is learned, viz. through use and social interaction. The present writer's response to these issues has been to develop a "community involvement" approach to methodology, which has been successfully applied in both small and large scale teaching projects, and, in testing, to focus on direct proficiency assessment. This paper considers ways of bridging the gap towards more authenticity in both teaching and testing using the locally available community, the global community, and the facilities of modern technology. The need is to understand how real language learning takes place, how the natural acquisition processes can be stimulated and enhanced through appropriately designed language teaching, and then to think creatively and imaginatively about how to use the capacities of modern technology to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and testing.

III THE UNIVERSAL AIMS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

A survey of language teaching around the world shows that, universally, language education policies and syllabuses endorse at least three goals for language education: the development of language proficiency, the development of cultural understanding, and the fostering of positive

cross-cultural attitudes [see, for example, Ingram *et al* 2008: especially Chapters 1 and 2]. In Australia, a key language policy review referred to “intercultural awareness and engagement” as “the underpinning rationale” for language teaching [Erebus Consulting Partners 2002: 192 – 193]. The present Prime Minister, who wrote the national policy on Asian languages in 1994, stressed both language skills and cultural understanding:

It is critical that Australia attaches the highest priority to the adoption and implementation of a long-term strategy to ensure that the Australian workforce of the future is equipped with language skills, and associated skills of cultural awareness, of direct relevance to our national economic interest. [COAG 1994: 14]

Since becoming Prime Minister, Rudd has reiterated that view in both words and action.

In **Japan**, the *Senior High School Course of Study in Foreign Languages* makes frequent references to fostering “a positive attitude toward communication with foreign peoples”, the need “to foster an attitude of respect” for foreign cultures, and the need to “deepen international understanding ...” [1999 Course of Study, Foreign Languages (Senior High School), Chapter 8, p. 39]

In **Europe**, the Council of Europe’s Recommendation R(82)18 states that:

.. it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to overcome prejudice and discrimination ... [Recommendation No. R(82) 18 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers]

In **Brazil**, the great applied linguist, Gomes de Matos, has written:

Language users/learners should learn how to interact and to be interacted with in human-dignifying, peace-promoting ways. [Gomes de Matos 2002/2003: 5]

Numerous international conventions of the **United Nations** endorse the importance of teaching languages in order to foster international understanding and tolerance. In one document citing the “guiding principles” of the conventions, UNESCO states that it:

... supports language as an essential component of intercultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights. [UNESCO 2003: 30]

It goes on to emphasise that language learning should provide “opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs” [UNESCO 2003: 33].

In brief, language education serves many purposes: the development of practically useful levels of language skills needed by the society and its members, maintenance and strengthening of the identity of different racial, linguistic and cultural groups, the development of intercultural understanding, and the fostering of positive cross-cultural attitudes. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to ask whether language education is, in its teaching and testing practice, seriously addressing such goals even though, as we have just seen, most language policies and language syllabuses seem to endorse them. In illustration, reference will be made to large scale surveys of teaching practice and cross-cultural attitudes in Australia and Japan and a variety of teaching projects that implemented the proposed methodology [see Ingram *et al* 2008].

IV EXAMPLES OF TEACHING PRACTICE

In late 2008, the present writer and three colleagues published a book entitled *Fostering Positive Cross-Cultural Attitudes through Language Teaching* [Teneriffe, Australia: PostPressed; 2008],

which reported on studies of language teaching principally in Brisbane, Australia and Akita, Japan. In Brisbane, the target languages were a variety of Asian and European languages while, in Japan, the target language was English. The studies principally aimed to examine the relationship between the students' cross-cultural attitudes and their learning experiences but, incidentally, also looked at the teaching strategies used, the factors that most influenced course design and actual teaching methods, and their relationship to the stated goals. In fact, both studies revealed a considerable mismatch between the goals of the policies and syllabuses and what actually went on in the classroom while the students' preferred activities were more closely aligned to the policies and syllabuses. The outcomes were as significant for language proficiency development as they were for cross-cultural attitudes.

The studies are reported in detail in the book [see Ingram et al 2008: especially Chapters 3 to 6]. In brief summary, the outcomes included:

1. The cross-cultural attitudes of both groups of students were quite positive towards all ethnic and racial groups, including indigenous people in both countries (Aboriginals in Australia and the Ainu in Japan).
2. There was no evidence that the language teaching itself had had any significant effect on the students' attitudes.
3. However, in the Japan study, there was more opportunity for the students to interact with native speakers during trips abroad and some evidence emerged of a positive effect, even though the duration of the stay abroad was generally short and mostly undertaken in a group.
4. It was also evident that the nature of the programmes and especially the activities favoured by the teachers were not conducive to the improvement of either cross-cultural attitudes or language proficiency. In both Brisbane and Akita, curriculum design and methodology were largely traditional, focussing on formal learning even though the teachers themselves seemed to value (but did little to encourage) interaction with native speakers and cultural understanding. In fact, activities such as language evenings, language camps, the internet and email that could give students opportunities to use the language for real, student-initiated and informal communication and that could readily be planned to include interaction with native speakers were ranked lowest in frequency of use. In fact, "contact with the language outside of school time" ranked last in order of priority in course design yet that is the time when contact with native speakers and informal use of the language for normal communication could most readily be planned to occur in, for example, community-based tasks, internet activities or language camps.
5. At the same time, the changes that students wanted to see in their programmes tended to be towards activities known from research to be more beneficial for the development of language proficiency and positive cross-cultural attitudes [see Ingram et al 2008: especially Chapters 1 and 2]. These were similar in both studies and included such activities as interaction with native speakers either face-to-face or over the internet and the use of language-based games. The students also wanted more focus on the teaching of culture but no increase in the formal aspects of language teaching such as pronunciation, grammar, reading and writing (the dominant activities in traditional language programmes). In brief, the students wanted their language classes to be more oriented towards real-life communication, contact with native speakers, and active use of the language.
6. Thus, both studies suggested a predominantly formal, teacher-centred and traditional approach to language teaching especially in Akita though there was more attempt in Brisbane to use communicative activities. In both places, students were given few opportunities to use the target language creatively, informally or in uncontrolled

situations approximating normal social interaction. Consequently, there was little evidence that language learning had had any positive effect on cross-cultural attitudes while proficiency development was no better than in most traditional courses. In brief, though the teachers' expressed attitudes conformed reasonably well with the aspirations of language policies and curricula around the world, the methodologies were not such as to realise those aspirations in practice.

V LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND TESTING

The book referred to earlier [Ingram *et al* 2008] discusses at some length the sort of methodology required to achieve both proficiency and positive cross-cultural attitudes. Here the general methodology and its theory won't be discussed except for one crucial element if teaching is to meet the global aims and respond to the sorts of issues discussed in this paper's preamble.

Language is essentially a tool to carry out communication tasks between people in particular situations or contexts. The relationships between the interlocutors, the nature of the situations or contexts, the nature of the tasks, and the purposes for which the tasks are being carried out prompt the language that occurs and determine its form. Formal classrooms and testing rooms are inherently limited in the situations that can occur, the relationships that can exist, the range of tasks that are possible, and the breadth and depth of culture (both the general culture that underlies the language and the personal cultures of the individual speakers of the language) that can be experienced. In the early 1970s, the present writer published an article called "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" [Ingram 1974] and these ideas were further developed into a "community involvement" approach to methodology. The "community" in which learners can be involved as an integral component of their language learning is not only the immediate social or geographical community around the school but includes the virtual community of the country and contexts where the language is spoken that can be created on a computer screen as well as the global community accessible via travel and technology.

In this approach, the core learning activity is "community involvement" or "community interaction" in which learners are given continual opportunities to interact with speakers of the target language and to use it for real communicative purposes and normal social interaction, whether face-to-face or over the web [see Ingram *et al* 2008: Chapter 6]. In this approach, there are three broad (but obviously overlapping) forms of community involvement (CI) with a fourth that applies to all the other three:

Extramural CI activities extend the language learning beyond the classroom in activities that essentially enable learners to re-experience their own environment and concepts through the foreign language, e.g., field trips, excursions, local newspapers, magazines, radio and television in the target language.

Formal CI activities are a formal course requirement that mandates interaction with speakers of the language. This interaction may take a range of forms from very simple, directed tasks such as asking directions through to extended enquiries about some topic of interest. This might occur through face-to-face interaction in the local ethnic community, during travel abroad or mediated electronically by telephone, videoconferencing, web cameras, internet chatpages, and so on.

Informal CI activities are ultimately the most desirable and involve normal social interaction with native speakers, at home or abroad, in ordinary social situations such as parties, excursions, home visits, or work experience in a company where the language is used. The internet also provides many opportunities for informal interaction [cf. Trim 1997: 62].

Mediated CI activities are activities that fall into all of the above categories but are mediated by technology: the internet, email, chatpages, videoconferencing, telephone, and so on. In Japan, the Ministry of Education encourages schools to set up their own homepages in English for such purposes. In Europe, the Council of Europe has laid great emphasis on encouraging interaction amongst the people of Europe and on the use of technology to assist in this by building partnerships between schools in different countries [see Ingram *et al* 2008: 160 – 162].

Clearly the advent of relatively cheap and rapid international travel also extends the “community” to the global community. In addition, similar “community involvement” activities can also occur in the week-end language camps and language evenings that some Modern Language Teachers Associations in Australia run or, on a grander scale, the English camps or English towns that some Korean authorities have established. As in the “mediated community involvement”, there is potential for similar “virtual” facilities to be provided more economically using computers and “cyber cities” in which learners interact with native speakers, initially real native speakers but, potentially as the technology evolves, virtual ones.

Integrally involved with this concept of “community involvement” and its justification is the importance of culture learning. Culture learning is a vital part of any language program, it plays an important role in fostering positive attitudes, and it is essential for proficiency development [cf. Ingram 2008: Chapter 6]. Through systematic culture teaching combined with community involvement to experience the personal culture that governs the everyday lives of real speakers of the language, learners can transcend the stereotyping which formal culture teaching risks creating and which often forms the basis of negative attitudes, to realise the individuality that exists within the universality of a culture. So far as proficiency development is concerned, the culture is the meaning system that underlies the language and, without it, the language is reduced to nothing more than verbal algebra and, as was noted in the preamble, the situations within which students can operate are reduced to the limited situations of the classroom.

VI DOES IT WORK?

Testing will be discussed more fully shortly. So far as teaching is concerned, this approach to methodology has been implemented in practice in a number of projects over recent decades.

The approach was first applied in a large-scale *migrant English program* across Australia catering for more than 100,000 students at any one time. This was a modular programme using themes responding to the survival needs of newly arrived immigrants. The central teaching-learning activities took the form of community involvement in which the students were set tasks to carry out in the community, ranging from such simple things as asking a passer-by for directions to informal interaction with, for example, community organisations who visited the migrant hostels or invited learners to their homes or social gatherings. The basis of assessment and accountability was in terms of the ISLPR. Nunan [1988] has commented on the significant proficiency gains that were made by learners in the programme.

Second, the approach was implemented in a *College French course* in Brisbane. The central learning activity was “community involvement” in which students set up meetings with French speakers in the Brisbane community and discussed some topic of mutual interest with them. Afterwards, the students presented a detailed oral report to the class and submitted a written report to the lecturer. In most cases, this formal activity led to informal social interaction with the community members in their homes or in a social event. The course also contained formal teaching of the language in response to student need, another segment focussed on different registers of the language, there was a course of French and Australian social studies taught in French once a week, and opportunities were given to listen to daily Radio Australia newsbulletins in French and to view and discuss French films or slide shows. Regular discussions were held on intercultural relationships and attitudes and games were used that highlighted issues of

relationships between dominant and smaller societies. The outcomes were very positive. The students became more willing to use French in conversation, their confidence increased greatly, and they willingly met with French people at work or in their homes. Their overall proficiency improved greatly and there was strong evidence of a positive effect on their cross-cultural attitudes. In addition, the community members they interacted with gained in their understanding of Australians and Australian society and expressed their pleasure at being involved in the project.

Third, in the late 1990s, the approach was implemented in the teaching of *Asian and European languages* at Griffith University. Without going into details here, the outcomes were very positive and similar to those just described [see Ingram *et al* 2008].

Fourth, Shirley O'Neill, one of the co-authors of the book referred to earlier [Ingram *et al* 2008], implemented the approach in a university course in which *Taiwanese and Japanese* students interacted. Again, the outcomes are discussed in the book but, in brief, they were similar to those just described for the other projects: enhanced language skills and more positive cross-cultural attitudes. The important point is also made, however, that the course needs to be long enough for students to overcome the inevitable culture shock when another culture is first encountered and for them to develop a more balanced perception of the other culture and its people.

In brief, one has to conclude from the research, the underlying theory, the large scale surveys referred to earlier and the teaching projects just mentioned that language learning alone does not automatically achieve proficiency or positive cross-cultural attitudes but the methodology is important and can be designed, especially including community involvement, both to foster positive cross-cultural attitudes and to develop proficiency. However, one must also emphasise that no single feature of methodology is effective on its own but a combination of elements, including selected aspects of traditional and communicative approaches, is essential.

VII LANGUAGE TESTING

If language teaching focussing on the development of practical language skills is to be successfully implemented, it is essential that language testing conform to the same principles as those that determine teaching methodology. If not, the tests won't measure relevant skills and, worse, high stakes tests will start to override teaching methods, as IELTS and TOEFL have done through the popular Preparation Courses. In testing, as in teaching, the basic determinant of how we test should be the nature of language and how we use it. No matter how statistically nice tests might be, if the activities do not reflect the way language is used in real life, the gap between the tests and practical proficiency will be great and, whatever else the tests might do, they cannot tell us much about a learner's practical real-life use of the language. Nevertheless, the design of a test also depends on the immediate purpose of the teaching or testing and, since language is a system of systems, for certain purposes, not least learning needs analysis and formative testing, analytic tests of various types retain a place in teaching even if less so in proficiency assessment. Here, the focus of the discussion will be on the assessment of proficiency or practical language skills.

In all language testing but especially in proficiency assessment, the problem, like that in language teaching, is to bridge the gap between the language test and real-life language use: to no small extent, the history of language testing is a history of the attempts made to bridge that gap. The inherent irony of language testing (indeed, of most academic testing) is that one traditionally tests one thing in order to say something about something else. By testing candidates' language knowledge or their ability to apply that knowledge in specific language tasks in tests in the formal context of the testing room, we assume that the results will give us information on their ability to use the language in other contexts, not least in real life. Yet we know as teachers and testers that there is often a gap between students' ability to perform in tests and their ability to use the language in real-life situations: effectively, the tests lack authenticity.

Intuitively, we would be more convincing and the tests more immediately informative and interpretable if we could observe the candidate performing in a real-life situation, control the situation so that we make sure that we observe the full extent of the learners' ability, and so assess the adequacy of their performance in the actual situations (or samples of the actual situations) in which they will use the language. However, to do so, has generally been considered impracticable and testers have focussed on the sorts of tests that they can manage in the testing room and have sought to relate either the items or the results to real life performance statistically through various forms of validity.

In other papers, the present writer has discussed both the history of language testing and such major tests as IELTS and TOEFL in terms of authenticity (i.e., the extent to which the tests bridge the gap to real-life language usage) [e.g., Ingram 2003]. Suffice it here to say that tests that make use predominantly of multiple-choice itemtypes, gap filling, or short answers with a limited range of possible responses are remote from authentic language use. IELTS, which the present writer helped develop in 1987-88, is a compromise test which has identified the types of academic tasks and contexts in which learners will use the language in academic programmes but these are then assessed largely in limited itemtypes that are controlled for statistical purposes, generally fairly objective in their design and scoring, and applied in the context-poor pencil-and-paper test situation; inevitably they leave a substantial gap between the test, its results and real-life language usage and ability. That is not to say, of course, that such tests are not "high quality" nor that they are not well-designed within the context of their test type but all tests are compromises and, for wholly defensible administrative and cost-effectiveness reasons, most large-scale tests choose to compromise on the side of the tests' reflection of the nature of language and real-life performance and rely heavily on statistical validation to justify the test design and each item's performance: the gap between the test and real life language performance remains considerable.

VIII *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR®)*

Largely in response to the limitations of language tests just discussed, the present writer and Elaine Wylie developed the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR)* in the late 1970s, they have researched them ever since, they have developed versions for many different purposes, and they have initiated an internet-based alternative administration procedure that enables it to be readily administered worldwide and in situations that enable candidates' language ability to be observed in virtual situations approximating more closely to real-life language use.

Motivation to develop the ISLPR came especially from the need to find ways to bridge the gap between language tests and real-life language ability, first, in specifying the foreign language skills students brought to university after five years of secondary school foreign language study. Second, in developing a new national ESL course for recently arrived migrants in Australia, we wanted to be able to specify the sorts of language abilities that learners had on entering and exiting from ESL classes and we wanted a broad developmental framework within which to systematically develop a series of courses graduated through proficiency levels. Third, we wanted a tool that would serve a similar purpose in developing and assessing "proficiency-based" foreign language programmes in Queensland secondary schools. It was to meet these needs that Elaine Wylie and I developed what became known as the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR®)* [Ingram and Wylie 1979/2007]. In this approach to assessing proficiency, attempts are made to bridge the gap between assessment and real-life language ability, and to elicit and measure real-life language performance. Language proficiency is considered to encompass the tasks that learners can carry out and how they are carried out and, as far as possible in a test situation, the focus of the assessment is on real-life tasks.

Since the ISLPR has been described in detail in other papers, including ones already presented in Korea, rather than describe it again here, the focus will be on what was done to bridge the gap between proficiency testing and real-life language use. Reference will also be made to a project

in which the ISLPR was used to measure the success in proficiency development terms of a short course for Korean EFL teachers visiting Australia.

First, the ISLPR is a scale that describes how a second or foreign language develops from zero to native-like proficiency. It seeks to capture the intuitions that speakers have about language ability but, through the descriptors, to constrain the assessor's intuitive judgements to achieve commonality in those judgements and in how the levels are stated.

Second, it provides performance descriptions in terms of the practical tasks that learners can carry out and how they carry them out, i.e., its focus is on actual tasks that learners can carry out, not on artificially contrived "itemtypes" that often bear little resemblance to what people do with language in real life.

Third, the ISLPR seeks to describe the way in which a second or foreign language develops so that, not only are the tasks identified and used authentic but the developmental path described is as authentic as research into language development can make it.

Fourth, language is situation-dependent and pre-determined tests often break down because a learner has simply not experienced a particular situation or the test is set at a proficiency level too high or too low for the candidates: again authenticity suffers. The ISLPR, on the other hand, is highly adaptive and the basic assessment procedure can readily be applied to the assessment of any language, for any specified vocational or other purpose, and for learners at any level.

Fifth, the best informed assessors of language ability are the learners themselves and so a variety of self-assessment versions of the ISLPR have been produced for use in "low stakes" contexts.

Sixth, one effect of the long and varied research as different versions have been developed and as the ISLPR has been used for different purposes in different contexts is that the authenticity of the descriptors has been continually re-examined, the scale continually re-evaluated, the reliability of the assessment procedures have been tested, and the assumptions underlying the scale and the assessment procedures have also been continually re-evaluated [see Ingram 1985, Lee 1993].

The standard means by which the ISLPR is used to measure proficiency is in a face-to-face interview in which each learner's language is elicited and matched against the scale's behavioural descriptions. In this approach, the actual items used are less important than the fact that the learner's real language behaviour is elicited for observation and matching against the scale descriptors. Because the ISLPR focuses directly on language behaviour in practical use of the language and the assessment procedures seek to elicit such language, the gap between the assessment and its results, on the one hand, and real-life language use, on the other, is reduced and authenticity increased. In recent research, virtual situations have been used to further increase authenticity.

IX TESTING KOREAN EFL TEACHERS

From March to July 2009, IUC Institute of TESOL received 45 Korean teachers of English for a short course in English language and culture and the teaching of English as a second language. The programme was run in conjunction with the Geonggyi English Village, where the teachers had spent a short time before coming to Brisbane. About half the programme consisted of English language tuition provided by the Griffith English Language Institute while the Southbank Institute of Technology provided a short course in TESOL. The teachers were accommodated in shared hotel apartments, approximately 20 minutes from the University and Southbank. They were given pre- and post-course ISLPR proficiency tests in March soon after their arrival and July shortly after the programme finished. The tests were standard ISLPR Speaking and Writing tests shortened to 10 to 15 minutes for Speaking and 45 minutes for Writing.

Overall, the teachers showed useful development in both their oral and written language. The pre-course and post-course results are shown in the Appendix. On average, their S proficiency increased by just over half an ISLPR step and their W by a little more. 20 of the 45 teachers increased their S proficiency by 1 whole ISLPR step, 2 by 2 steps and, in W, 14 increased by 1 step and 7 by 2. One ISLPR step is, for example, 3 to 3+. One could assume also that their cultural knowledge of Australia also developed. Listening and Reading proficiencies were, unfortunately, not measured for reasons of cost and time – “unfortunately”, because one might speculate that Listening might have benefited at least as much as Speaking because, even if they were too shy to speak with the people around them, they would hear a great deal more language than they would utter whenever they turned on the TV, sat in a bus or sat in classrooms.

In a project of this sort, it is difficult to say categorically what proficiency changes could reasonably be expected. In a full-time ELICOS course of 250 hours over 10 weeks, the usual “rule of thumb” used is that the average student will improve by about one ISLPR step, for example from 2 to 2+ in the various macroskills though some will show greater improvement and some little or none. The actual extent of their progress will depend on a number of factors including general education, language learning aptitude, cross-cultural attitude, social and psychological distance, quality of teaching, accommodation (students in homestay interacting daily with native speakers progress more rapidly than students living in hotels or in apartments shared with other students of the same language background), and other experiences including the extent to which those experiences are rewarding and increase or decrease social and psychological distance, the amount of language use the experiences provide, and the extent to which they contribute to increased cultural knowledge and understanding.

In this group of teachers, one could assume that all were well educated. We had hoped to run a pre- and post-course attitude survey with them but it proved impossible to run the post-course survey because of time constraints. This would have been of particular interest because one group of the students had had an unfortunate encounter at a bus stop with a group of louts in a passing car. This had upset them for a time and undoubtedly slowed down their settling into Australian society and would have aggravated rather than reduced social and psychological distance. In addition, culture shock is an inevitable and, in fact, necessary part of visiting a new country for the first time and being immersed in a new culture and it takes time, growing cultural understanding and agreeable interaction with target language speakers for learners to overcome it.

For reasons of cost and convenience, the students were accommodated in an apartment hotel with 4 or 6 of them in each apartment. While this arrangement undoubtedly helped them in their initial settling into a new country, after classes, they were again in a Korean-speaking environment with no incentive to speak English. Thus, their English speaking experiences were largely limited to the classroom. Even at week-ends, most of them kept together and, from the final interviews the present writer conducted with them, only a very few took the initiative to go off and do things by themselves, meet up with Australian students, or, as in a few cases, go to a regular English-speaking (rather than Korean-speaking) church on a Sunday where, after the service, they could meet with Australians and at least converse with someone over a cup of tea. After the course and occasionally at week-ends, a few also took the initiative to book tours. Again, in the interviews the present writer conducted, those who had set out to go individually on such tours benefited more than those who went with colleagues with whom they spoke Korean most of the time. It was also disappointing that GELI failed to arrange for the teachers to meet up with Australian students on campus or community organisations such as church groups, Rotary or another service organisation or, for those interested, sporting clubs. In other words, the extent to which the teachers’ English proficiency, cultural understanding, and recovery from culture shock developed depended very much on the initiative they had shown to break away from the group and take advantage of the English speaking community surrounding them. With subsequent groups, this sort of interaction is starting even before the teachers come to Australia through on-line discussion groups with personnel in the IUC Institute of TESOL.

Nevertheless, despite aspects of the programme which the IUC Institute is seeking to improve for future groups, the overall proficiency change was satisfactory. Anecdotally since the post-course attitude survey was not possible, discussion during the ISLPR interviews suggested that the students had an overall positive experience, their cultural understanding had improved and, for the most part, their cross-cultural attitudes had also benefited. The ISLPR proved to be a useful instrument to demonstrate the proficiency change.

Finally, it is worth noting that a similar approach to evaluating teacher upgrading courses is being adopted in the major project in Kiribati referred to in the Preamble. There, 140 Kiribati Teachers College lecturers and teachers in in-service programmes and 120 pre-service students are being given pre- and post-course ISLPR assessments as one basis for the evaluation of their English upgrading programmes. It is also relevant to note that the course design emphasises the central role of “community involvement” in the participants’ language learning.

X CONCLUSION

If we are serious about meeting the language needs that arise from the emergence of a global society, it behoves us as language teachers to take seriously the goals that language policies and syllabuses around the world espouse; we must develop and implement methods that will enable those goals to be achieved and that will enable students to acquire real, practical language skills and cross-cultural attitudes and understanding vital to the survival of the global society.

The approach to methodology for both teaching and testing discussed here and illustrated in the various teaching projects referred to have grown out of an understanding of the basic determinants of methodology in the nature of language and of the language learner, and the relationship between the learners and the local and global societies in which they live. Applying those basic understandings to language teaching and testing led to a “community involvement” approach to course design and methodology and a focus in testing on real-life language tasks and the language forms that carry them. The advent of the new technologies has also vastly increased the scope of the “community” in which learners can be involved as they experience the language and strive to communicate in it. Those technologies also facilitate testing approaches that start to bridge the gap between the testing room and real-life language use. Fundamental to this, however, must be the realisation that language is essentially a tool for purposeful communication between people.

APPENDIX

TEACHER	MARCH SPEAKING	JULY SPEAKING	VARIATION in ISLPR steps	MARCH WRITING	JULY WRITING	VARIATION in ISLPR steps
1	3	3	0	3	4	2
2	3+	3+	0	3+	3+	0
3	3+	4	1	3+	3+	0
4	3	3	0	3+	4	1
5	2+	2+	0	2+	3	1
6	DNS	3	-	DNS	3	-
7	2+	3	1	3	3	0
8	2+	3	1	3	3+	1
9	3	3	0	3+	4	1
10	3+	3+	0	3	3	0
11	2+	3	1	3	4	2
12	2+	3	1	3	3+	1
13	3+	3+	0	3+	3+	0
14	2	2+	1	2	3	2
15	3	3	0	3	3	0
16	3+	4	1	3	3	0
17	2+	2+	0	2+	3	1
18	2	2+	1	3+	3+	0
19	3	3+	1	3+	3+	0
20	2+	3	1	2+	2+	0
21	2+	3	1	3	3+	1
22	2+	3	1	2+	2+	0
23	4	4	0	4	4	0
24	2	DNS	-	3	DNS	-
25	2+	3	1	3	4	2
26	3	3+	1	3	3	0
27	1+	2+	2	2+	3+	2
28	2+	3	1	3	3+	1
29	3	3	0	3	3	0
30	3	3	0	3	3	0
31	2+	2+	0	2+	3	0
32	3	3	0	2+	3	1
33	3	3	0	2+	3	1
34	2+	3	1	3	3	0
35	2+	2+	0	3+	3+	0
36	3+	3+	0	3	3	0
37	3	4	2	3	3+	1
38	3	3+	1	2+	3+	2
39	3	3	0	3	3	0
40	3	3	0	3	4	2
41	2+	3	1	2+	3	1
42	3	3+	1	4	4	0
43	3	3+	1	2+	3	1
44	2	2	0	2	2+	1
45	2+	2+	0	3	3	0
Number showing no measurable increase in proficiency			21			22
Number increased by 1 ISLPR step			20			14
No. Increased by 2 ISLPR steps			2			7
Average increase in proficiency			0.58 (i.e. just over ½ an ISLPR step)			0.65 (i.e. just over ½ an ISLPR step)

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