In this paper I provide a response to Papprill’s article in the previous issue of this journal, particularly the following statement (p. 38):

There is a continuing future for the teaching of English as both a language and a literature regardless of country or societal concerns for while international economics and politics demand proficiency in English there will always be a place for trained, experienced and qualified teachers of English, especially those for whom English is their first language as it is only from those than an understanding and familiarity with idiomatic English will come.

In the English language teaching contexts I am most familiar with, the ideas in this statement represent only part of a wider picture which also includes considerable resistance from the “non-English speaking world”. This discussion will be framed with examples from my teaching and research experience, and conclude with a checklist for New Zealanders teaching English language to consider.

Tonga, 1981

Our secondary English Department includes staff from Tonga, New Zealand, Australia, and the Philippines. Only the Filipino teacher is a specialist in ESOL, but the Head of Department is from New Zealand and the examinations are based on the New Zealand curriculum. I am a New Zealand psychology graduate with no teacher training.

Thailand, 2012

I am taking a workshop for teachers of English, including Thai university staff and a PhD student. My class also includes teachers from the university’s demonstration kindergarten school who are from the US, UK, and Australia – all white and male. Some have teaching backgrounds, including one or two with ESOL training, but others come from backgrounds such as the police in New York and body-building in the UK.

These examples appear to show that nothing has fundamentally changed in approaches towards
English language teaching over the last thirty years, during which time the profession has developed and become a large international industry. However, while some aspects have remained (and perhaps even in some cases worsened), there has also been change and development in both theory and practice as post-colonialist ideas have taken hold.

In 1992 Kachru proposed an influential model of World Englishes with three circles of English: the inner circle comprised of the UK, USA, NZ, etc. with “norm-providing” varieties of English; the outer circle comprised of former colonies such as India and Nigeria with “norm-developing” varieties; and the expanding circle comprised of the rest of the world with “norm-dependent” varieties. Also in 1992, Phillipson identified as one of the fallacies of linguistic imperialism the tenet that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker (1992, p. 93), and pointed out that an educated local teacher should instead be the ideal. However, this has remained a controversial issue.

The term “native speakerism” was coined by Holliday (2005, p. 6), and defined as “an established belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology”. It is also linked to the viewpoint that that monolingualism is the norm (Pennycook, 2004, pp. 168-169), and another of Phillipson's fallacies stating that monolingualism is the preferred medium of instruction (Phillipson, 2002, pp. 185-193). The term “native” itself is contentious since English is now spoken in many homes in outer circle countries such as Singapore. The term is now often being replaced by “proficient speaker”, which is less problematic.

The vast majority of English teachers in the world are first language speakers of local languages (although “first language” may also be a contested term for multilingual speakers). Local teachers understand their context, including expected teaching methods, the education system, the language curriculum, etc. In ideal situations they can provide explanations in the language the learners best understand, identify grammatical and other issues specific to the learners’ needs. They can provide good models of bilingual or multilingual achievement, and develop strategies to mitigate against the “hell” of learning English that many learners experience (Lo, 2011).

For my doctoral research I develop a scenario about an imaginary Samoan student in a teacher education course for the NZ primary mainstream. He is critiqued for his non-standard pronunciation and grammar and told that there will be problems modelling correct English for his students. I show the scenario to a Samoan colleague who tells me, “This is my story”.

In Aotearoa New Zealand in relation to te reo Māori there is now a wide understanding of the importance of language as a cultural taonga, of the problems associated with its loss, and of the responsibility of the state in supporting it, since the Wai 11 finding (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986) which led to the Māori Language Act of 1987. A further important step in language policy was making New Zealand Sign Language an official language in 2006. However, there remain issues for both of those languages, and recognising their importance is often not extended to a willingness to support other languages, even the Pasifika languages of the New Zealand Realm (Niuean, Cook Islands Māori, and Tokelauan). Calls for the development of a comprehensive language policy are still unheeded (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013).

There is frequently also lack of understanding of the way in which languages are acquired, as reflected in beliefs about the need to have “native
speaking” teachers as models for students. Through an experimental design, my research noted above included an indirect comparison of teacher educators’ attitudes towards student teachers from Māori, French, Samoan, Korean, Russian and Somali backgrounds. There were statistically significant differences: a Māori student with a strong accent was more likely to be supported and a Russian or Sāmoan and were least likely to be supported (Smith, 2004, p. 258).

**Nepal, 2009**

Children in a primary classroom in a remote mountainous village (far from any tourist trekking trails) recite a welcome in English. The teacher shows us the English-medium materials provided for the curriculum, and explains that she only knows how to teach through English, although her own ability in English is limited. These six-year old children can recite but not communicate in English. However, we also visit other schools including a gumba (Buddhist school) and a madrasah (Islamic school) where the local communities are active in contributing to the maintenance of their languages and cultures in the school system.

**Vanuatu, 2010**

At a village primary school on an outer island where I am part of a research team, I notice a small boy wearing a laminated dunce-type placard with the statement “I must speak English at all times”. Some of the local languages have no written form, the national language Bislama has low status in the education system, and the school has few print resources in any language. Back in the capital town on the main island, international advisors from Europe focus on the relative places of French and English in the new curriculum, although with some recognition of the place of the 110 plus local languages.

It is internationally recognised by many analysts that education through the medium of the children’s mother tongues in their first few years of schooling is the most cost-effective way to ensure that children acquire initial literacy, and to prepare the best foundation for a second or third language (World Bank, 2005; Pinnock, 2009). The social, cognitive and cultural importance of children being able to learn in their own language has been strongly emphasised by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 25), who takes a human rights perspective and points out that “… if you teach minority children through the medium of a dominant language, at the cost of their mother tongue, you are participating in linguistic genocide.”

However, the social and political context often means that children are being taught in a language they do not understand, and more and more often that language is English. The relationships of all of the languages in a particular setting can be examined through the concept of a linguistic ecology (Mühlhäusler, 1996). Such investigations usually show the overwhelmingly negative effects on other languages of an increasing focus on English in education systems and other social environments worldwide. These results have led to English being referred to as a “killer language”, as well as a variety of other metaphors provided by the authors in Rapatahana and Bunce (2012), which include “bully”, “juggernaut”, and “nemesis”.

**Christchurch/Ōtautahi, 1987**

A Japanese student who is studying at a language school in Christchurch where I teach is struggling with pronunciation. I suggest she tries to imagine she is a Kiwi, which she does, and her pronunciation immediately becomes more Kiwi-like. But she seems uncomfortable in that persona and soon reverts to her strongly Japanese-influenced pronunciation of English.

**Timor-Leste, 2013**

In the newest country in Asia, I am in a team evaluating an English language project in a university where there is a strong focus on preparing for the country’s entry into ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). The
only official working language of ASEAN is English, so the main purpose of learning English will be for speaking with people from neighbouring countries.

The number of students studying English worldwide is increasing on a daily basis, and Graddol (2006, p. 15) has suggested that India and China hold the key to the long-term future of English as a global language. However, another important influence will be the use of English as a lingua franca by the ASEAN community, which is gaining in importance as more countries apply to join the ten current members.

ASEAN users of English share certain pronunciation features, such as the reduction of consonant clusters so that first becomes firs (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p. 173). Although these would be classified as errors in “native speaker” models of English, they do not interfere with understanding or communication. This variety of English is therefore “owned” by the speakers in Asian countries, and reflects their own “Asian” identities. As the awareness and acceptance of new varieties of World Englishes spreads with corresponding changes in notions of correctness, English language teachers are needing to adapt accordingly.

The developments in English language pedagogical practices in light of the pressures of globalisation have been summarised by Canagarajah (2005) as shown in the table below. These changes reflect a reorientation towards local contexts, with more dynamic and open-ended approaches to the process of English language teaching and learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shifts in pedagogical practice</th>
<th>From Canagarajah, 2005, p. xxv</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
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<tr>
<td>“target language” repertoire</td>
<td>text and language as hybrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>text and language as homogeneous</td>
<td>shutting between communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>joining a community</td>
<td>focus on strategies</td>
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<td>focus on rules and conventions</td>
<td>negotiation</td>
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<td>correctness</td>
<td>language and discourse as changing</td>
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<td>language and discourse as static</td>
<td>language as context-transforming</td>
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<td>language as context-bound</td>
<td>mastery of grammar rules</td>
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<td>text and language as transparent and instrumental</td>
<td>metalinguistic awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>L1 (first language) or C1 (first culture) as problem</td>
<td>text and language as representational</td>
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<td>L1 or C1 as resource</td>
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Finally, in order to draw the threads of this discussion together, I offer a checklist of questions for New Zealand teachers to consider in relation to their English language teaching, whether in Aotearoa New Zealand or overseas.
A checklist

• Starting point

What is the status of various languages in the NZ context you come from – Māori, English, and languages from migrant and refugee groups?

• Situation

What is the linguistic ecology in the overseas country context your students are from? Where does English fit? What is the status of local languages and lingua franca, and how can these be supported?

• Skills

What knowledge of English language teaching will be necessary in your job? How can you develop any additional skills you need?

• Sustainability

How can you support the English language teaching of your colleagues?

The change and development of English will continue to provide opportunities for English language teachers to engage in many lively debates, as we too change and develop in order to meet the challenges of our profession.

References


