

The Role of English Language Culture in the Omani Language Education System: An Ideological Perspective

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One of the powerful ideologies that govern English language learning and teaching in the Sultanate of Oman is the 'colonialist/culturalist' ideology and the various paradigms embodied within it. This ideology is present in the various statements made by the different agents involved in ELT in Oman, in particular *The Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum* (Nunan *et al.*, 1987), referred to in the paper as the National English Language Plan/Policy (NELP). However, many of these statements seem to conflict with the content of the materials produced locally (*Our World Through English* (OWTE), Ministry of Education, 1997–8a, b) and with the suggested means of implementing the programme. The paper critically examines and discusses this state of ideological conflict using data from semi-structured interviews conducted with various key agents in ELT in Oman, pertinent literature and policy texts, and considers the implications for second language material design.

Keywords: colonialist/culturalist ideology, English as an international language, Internet, literature, motivation, NELP (National English Language Plan/Policy)

The Relevance of Culture to Second Language Teaching and Learning

Brown (1994: 165) considers language and culture as 'intricately interwoven'. Also, Peterson and Coltrane (2003) write that language reflects culture. Jiang (2000: 328) claims that '... culture and language are inseparable' and are intimately related. Jiang suggests some interesting metaphors about culture and language taking different views into account. For example, she writes that from a philosophical view, language is flesh, culture is blood and the two make a living organism. She also provides a communicative view and says that language is a swimming skill, culture is water and the two make swimming. Jiang further considers a pragmatic view and states that language is a vehicle, culture is a traffic light and the two make transportation.

Thus, Singhal (1998: 1) states that 'current pedagogy stresses that language cannot be taught without culture and that culture is a necessary context for language use'. She further states that '... culture teaching is essential to language learning' (p. 2) and that '... culture teaching is part and parcel of second language education' (p. 2). Furthermore, Lessard-Clouston (1997: 133) stresses that language and culture are connected and that '... language teaching is indeed culture teaching'. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) write that

'students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms', and that 'linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language' (Krasner: 1999). Peterson and Coltrane (2003) stress that 'in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior'.

Byram (1988) thus argues that the aim behind teaching the L2 culture in our classes is to achieve communicative competence and that the educational value of culture teaching within L2 education is great. Byram's argument is corroborated by the statement made by Samovar *et al.* (1981) about the powerful role culture plays in dictating communication between people and the fundamental role of culture in encoding and decoding messages. Communication is thus governed by various conditions and circumstances, which determine its meaning(s). This, hence, puts culture at the heart of communication. Byram and Risager (1999) argue that communicative competence encompasses a cultural dimension where the language user is capable of mediating between cultures and establish communication, which takes differences into consideration.

Peterson and Coltrane (2003) stress that 'culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of language learning' since 'students can be successful in speaking a second language only if cultural issues are an inherent part of the curriculum'. The two authors go on to suggest a number of cultural activities and objectives that can be carefully organised and incorporated into lesson plan to enrich and inform the teaching content. These are authentic materials, proverbs, role plays, culture capsules, films and literature.

The role of literature

A very important aspect of culture is thus literature. Literature has the power to '... contribute greatly to a learner's understanding of the values and beliefs of a group of people' (Singhal, 1998: 5). Collie and Slater (1987) claim that literature offers valuable authentic materials, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement to the learner. Furthermore, Nostrand (1974: 65) states that '... different literary genres have the power to evoke a quality of empathy and to develop the kind of understanding that is needed if we want to enter the thoughts, motives and feelings of L2 speakers'. Bassnett and Grundy (1993: 7) write that 'literature is a high point of language usage' and that it '... arguably makes the greatest skills a language user can demonstrate'. They see literature as facilitating the acquisition of '... a profound knowledge of language that goes beyond the utilitarian' (p. 7). Furthermore, Ghosen (2002: 175) points out that in addition to being interesting, literature '... is full of examples of real-life language in different situations', '... facilitates integration of the language skills' (p. 174) and contributes to second language acquisition via creating '... an acquisition-rich environment in the classroom context' (p. 175). Ghosen considers literature as providing facilitating new second language internalisation '... by providing a rich variety of linguistic items and a context for their communication' (p. 174). Cook (1983) and Ghosen (2002) however, argue that literature deserves to be considered as content. Cook claims that literature contributes to widening the people's horizons and that it has deep meanings. Also, Bettelheim (1986: 176) points out that literature can promote a gradual understanding of the

self and the world. Ghosen writes that literature helps develop critical thinking and '... offers a natural medium through which students can be introduced to the type of thinking and reasoning expected in academic classes'. Cook adds that literature forms a rich source for discussion.

Adding to this, exposure to the culture of the target language helps learners develop motivation towards learning that language. Motivation is one of the powerful factors affecting second language learning. 'Integrative' motivation is when '... the student is attracted by the culture of the target language community ... and wishes to integrate himself into that culture' (Harmer, 1983: 3). While this is the strong form of the integrative motivation, a weaker form is when the student desires '... to know as much as possible about the culture of the target language community' (Harmer, 1983: 3). Oxford and Erhman (1993: 191) claim that 'high motivation spurs learners to interact with native speakers of the language, which in turn increases the amount of input that learners receive'. They further claim that 'motivation encourages greater overall effort on the part of the language learners and typically results in greater success in terms of language proficiency and achievement'. Scarcella and Oxford (1992: 191) state that 'motivation often leads learners to use a variety of learning strategies that can develop greater skill in language learning'.

The role of the Internet

Davies and Pearse (2000) thus see that the use of the Internet positively impacts motivation in addition to impacting learner-centred teaching. Accordingly, Al-Balushi (1999: 4) writes that there is inadequate use of educational technology in the Omani schools in general and that use of the Internet supports learner-centred teaching since 'teaching methodology in Omani schools still tends to be very formal and emphasizes a largely passive role for students with an emphasis on rote learning'. Savignon (2002) also writes about the communicative uses of English beyond the classroom and says that today

Technology ... has brought the whole world so much closer. English language radio and television programs, many EFL settings, along with newspapers and magazines, English-speaking residents or visitors may be available to visit the classroom. The Internet now provides opportunities to interact with English-speaking peers on a variety of topics and to develop grammatical, discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competence. In addition to prearranged exchanges, learners can check World Wide Web sites for an almost infinite range of information. (Savignon, 2002: 6)

'Information' here can include geographical information, historical, social, cultural, economic and political. Within this vein, Singhal (1998: 5) stresses that '... the World Wide Web now plays a growing role in the teaching of second and foreign languages'. She also states that '... e-mail on the Internet allows language learners to communicate with native speakers' and hence 'facilitates the use of specific language in an authentic setting'. Singhal writes that the Internet is a valuable source for understanding the culture of

the target language and enhancing its understanding. This is since language and culture are '... inextricable and interdependent' (Singhal, 1998: 5).

English as an International Language

English is now the first international language that facilitates interlingual communication, particularly in the age of globalisation. Moreover, Al-Balushi writes that

As an international language, English is perceived by many as the future language of the global village. In Oman – as in many parts of the world – English has become the language of education, technical and vocational training, the workforce, and technology ... English came to be perceived by many Omani officials and authorities as the second language through which all economic, technological, vocational, educational, and communicative functions could be conducted. (Al-Balushi, 2001: 5)

'Globalisation' to Waters (1995: 62), '... involves systematic interrelationships of all individual social ties that are established on the planet ... it involves processes of economic systematization, international relations between states, and an emerging global culture of consciousness'. Globalisation is bringing the world close together whereby the world is becoming a 'small village'. This small village shares educational, economic, political, environmental, medical and social needs and concerns and hence needs a language to help it communicate and interact effectively.

Cultures are fusing and travelling from a place to another everyday through various modes of communication, particularly through e-mail. English is the language of the Internet at present and it helps introduce various cultures to each other. Individuals are using English to transmit aspects of their culture. Functional knowledge of English is considered necessary here. In other words, knowledge of language that is beyond what the textbook usually presents. While language within context diversifies knowledge and experience, textbook-based language narrows chances of knowledge and experience diversification.

Defining the Colonialist/Culturalist Ideology

There is no clear-cut definition of the colonialist/culturalist ideology in the literature. However, it is important for the purpose of this article to attempt and define such term. The term 'ideology' is defined as 'shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups' (Giddens, 1997: 583). Further, Gramsci (1971) argues that ideologies are the cement upon which hegemony is built and are the product of different social practices and history. This indicates that ideology is related to power, as held by a particular group or groups in the society. The relationship of ideology to power is that '... it legitimates the differential power that groups hold and as such distorts the real situation that people find themselves in' (Burke, 1997).

Therefore, if a link is to be established here between ideology on one side and colonialism and culturalism on the other, it can be argued that one aspect of colonisation is the transmission of the dominant group's culture to the

colonised groups in a particular society. Thus, within the context of this research article, the dominant group here can be a force that is either 'internal', or 'external' to the society.

The dominant group, which can be seen as a colonial power as it rules and dominates the other classes in the society, imposes its interest, values, concepts and beliefs upon the public via education and the national curriculum, for instance, which entail certain knowledge. One aspect of the national curriculum is (first, second, etc.) language, which is a powerful tool for the transmission of the interests and values, concepts and beliefs of the dominant group, which stem partly from the culture of the dominant groups and which are delivered via certain modes.

In the case of the external force and with reference to ELT, one can argue that countries like the UK and USA have played a major role in spreading the colonialist/culturalist ideology. While the UK colonised a large number of developing Third World countries some decades ago mainly due to economic interests, the USA, with all its imperialism, economic and political power today, is continuing the role played by the UK in the past (Dua, 1994). These two countries have spread variable aspects of their culture. This came either via actual direct physical colonisation of nations, as it was the case with the UK in the past, or via alternative means like the mass media and the Internet, for instance, as it has been the case with the USA (Al-Issa, 2002). Language has been a powerful tool for the spread of the American and British cultures. The review of the literature above showed the powerful association of language with culture. This is evident in the various ELT materials published and marketed by powerhouses like Longman, Oxford, Cambridge, Penguin, Macmillan, etc., and which are found almost all over the world.

The colonialist/culturalist ideology in NELP

The writers of the National English Language Plan/Policy (NELP) consider exposure to aspects of the English culture as important and necessary for second language acquisition (SLA). They mention authentic materials, which provide 'naturalistic samples' of contextualised language like '... books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, documents, signs, notices, films, television, slide, tape, radio, public announcement, lecture or written report etc.' (p. 14). They further suggest other sources of exposure to culture like '... stories, poems, drama, songs and rhymes' (p. 14). All these are considered to contain a high degree of authentic English and that can facilitate carrying out 'real world tasks' using language. Thus, the authors of NELP believe that the cultural component is vital for second language learning and acquisition. They recommend using various materials (examples above) that are believed to include a varying degree of cultural component.

The writers also suggest that the syllabus should provide exposure to English within the international community, which obviously includes Arab and non-Arab countries; English and non-English speaking countries. Thus, the authors of NELP suggest that acquisition of 'sociolinguistic competence' is a prerequisite for becoming a communicatively competent user of the target language. The three authors of NELP (p. 28) see that one of the goals of the Omani ELT curriculum should be 'to assist students to exploit their knowledge of

English to better inform the world of Oman's people and their concerns, and to be able participate more actively and effectively in English in the international arena.'

The writers of NELP (p. 2) thus look at English as an '... important resource for the country's continued development', a '... means for wider communication within the international community' and a tool that facilitates Oman's and Omani's active and effective participation in the international arena. They also support the inclusion of technology and culture in the English curriculum to stimulate the students' interaction, activate their motivation and vary their exposure to English. Moreover, learner-centred teaching is one of the points the authors of NELP would like to see the Omani ELT system implementing. Use of advanced technology, hence, is considered to help produce independent learners, who rely less on the teacher, while more on their skill, ability and knowledge. Furthermore, use of advanced technology is bound to facilitate contact with and promote exposure to the native speaker of English through various means other than direct verbal and physical contact with the native speaker. This is a point, which the three authors stress in NELP.

Colonialist/culturalist ideologies in the statements of various agencies

An English inspector thinks that he learned English through listening to the native speaker on the radio.

Of course since I was in India, I didn't have much contact with English speaking people. So, my only contact with the native speaker was an indirect one, through the medium of radio. So, I had to listen to the radio to get the pronunciation and I liked the way English was spoken by the British. After listening to their pronunciation, I tried to model my speech according to the way they spoke.

Similarly, another inspector used the radio to maximise exposure to English. He thinks that he learned English through songs. His integrative and intrinsic motivation drove him to learn English.

I remember it was back in the 60s. I learned it [English] through songs too. One of my favourite activities actually at that time when I was young was writing songs while listening to them on radio. I used to write the words of the songs.

These two non-native speakers of English, who come from India and Tunisia respectively and who were born in the 1950s, had integrative motivation then. It is thus obvious that both informants had the desire to know about the target language culture through exposure to the native speaker.

Many Omani youth, especially in the Muscat area – the Sultanate's capital, like listening to English pop songs and are in constant touch with the news of the British and American music pop stars such as Madonna, Michael Jackson, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Kylie, Jennifer Lopez, U2, Paula Abdul, Shakira, Ricky Martin, George Michael, Whitney Houston, Spice Girls, Back Street Boys, Five and many more. These pop singers and many more appear almost on regular basis on various satellite dish channels like MBC 2, LBC, Future, Mazzika, Nagahm, Dream 1, Dream 2, Rotana, Melody

Hits, Bahrain 55, One TV, Zen and ETV on ArabSat and NileSat satellite dishes. There are also other channels like Viva Polska, Hit Channel and Countdown, which can be watched on Hotbird satellite dish. These channels are free-to-air. Satellite TV today is no longer a luxury in Oman as it is available at extremely affordable and competitive prices to all.

Similarly, the following Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Fourth Year English language student teacher has enjoyed interacting with native speakers of English and felt that he had learned a great deal from this interaction. This informant has instrumental motivation at present, while enjoyed intrinsic and integrative motivation during his childhood and adolescence. He goes on to state that he varied his exposure to English and has learnt it from multiple sources.

Actually I learned English not in one day, but through years. In my first year and through specific courses, grammar and literature, then using also listening to the most famous channels BBC and CNN, listening to English FM in Oman Radio and reading magazines, newspapers written in English. Some of them are translated from Arabic to English, also, by using the Internet now in the last two years. I use the Internet very much ... there are specific sites that teach you how to learn English by guiding you to specific systems.

While chances of interacting with the target language culture are usually rare in EFL contexts, this informant successfully created these chances. This success and achievement has its implications for producing skilled and competent language users, who can drive and influence 'Omanisation'. Omanisation is an ambitious government plan that aims at gradually replacing the expatriate manpower with the local one. Motivation to this SQU student teacher was also driven externally by rich, advanced and varied resources.

Moreover, the use of newspapers and magazines is another source of authentic language and culture that this student teacher points out and which the writers of NELP suggest should be included in order to vary exposure to English. There are three daily (*Times of Oman*, *Oman Tribune* and *The Observer*) and one weekly (*The Week*) newspapers published locally in Oman. In addition, the data obtained from the database of the United Media Services – a local distribution company, indicate that there are approximately 110 English medium newspapers and magazines in Oman imported from countries like India, UAE, Bangladesh, Lebanon, USA and UK dealing with topics like computing, technology, fashion, sports, business, current affairs, traveling, cars, electronics, flying, decorating, economics, development, games, health, movies, geography, teenagers, photography and other topics.

The incredible and rapid growth of knowledge at present, particularly via the Internet and the media, necessitates its introduction to the students since students learn English in different ways and for various purposes and exposing them to various types of knowledge through English not only puts the language within a functional perspective, but also demonstrates and emphasises its importance as much as facilitates SLA.

Today in the age of the Internet, satellite TV, video facilities, digital versatile disks and compact disks, accessing authentic English has never been easier. There are shops throughout the Sultanate that rent and sell these technological

items. There are over 10 free-to-air Nilesat and Arabsat satellite channels, which show American and British drama series, comedy series and films. These channels are MBC 4, MBC 2, One TV, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Bahrain 55, LBC, Future, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, New TV, Sudan, Ajman, Infinity and Eritrea. This is in addition to the encrypted movie channels on satellite dishes like Orbit, Showtime and ART, which require a subscription.

Thus, the Omani language education system needs to play its role too in providing such facility. It is noteworthy that teachers in Oman, who come from various (Arab, Asian, African and European) cultural and pedagogic backgrounds, and who form more than half of the ELT manpower in Oman, are not all familiar with the uses and application of such technology.

An Omani General Secondary Certificate (GSC) student describes language teaching as '... to know another culture'. She continues by saying 'I like poems and for me to learn languages is to know other cultures and to contact with people. I think any language, not just English'. She then goes on to question the absence of literature from the syllabus.

Why don't we study poets? I think there are many poems. They are really easy. They don't teach us about rhyme, about English, like Shakespeare, for example. I know Shakespeare is over us and we can't understand him, but just to give us information.

Moreover, another GSC student states that she like literature and idioms. 'I like idioms very much and since my childhood I like the literature and read as much as I can.'

The mention of 'Shakespeare' by the first informant and 'literature' by both informants indicate a colonialist/culturalist ideology held by these two students, which emphasises literature and cultural heritage through which the beliefs and traditions of the British culture are transmitted and reproduced. It is noteworthy that one of the essential components of the Arabic language school curriculum in Oman and the Arab World is literature as in stories and poetry. There is at least one period per week allocated to teaching literature in Oman. Students analyse literary texts, discuss them and memorise them for exam purposes. Many students also develop literary appreciation as a result.

An Indian English inspector holding a Master of Arts degree strongly believes in the place of literature in the ELT syllabus and supports its inclusion in the Omani ELT syllabus in particular for language improvement purposes.

You see, language is a means of expression and the emotive use of the language can come across only in literature. Because here we find very much of factual way of looking at English and I feel if we introduce literature, some students will take a greater interest in the study of language ... I think the students will learn language in a much better way.

Furthermore, English through literature can be sometimes a tool for transmitting the knowledge, values and beliefs of the target English language cultures. It hence serves the colonialist/culturalist model, which stresses the conservation and protection of the cultural heritage. Arabic serves a similar role in education in the Arab world.

The following British Chief Inspector from the English Language Curriculum Department (ELCD) – Ministry of Education looks at culture from a different angle. He describes language teaching as exposure to the various cultures including the English speaking countries.

Exposure to as much of the culture as possible whatever language it is, and especially English. Let's take English, as much as the culture of the English speaking world. This wouldn't narrowly mean British and American, certainly Australian obviously and it should mean other Englishes in the world like India, for example, African English culture, Caribbean English culture.

English today has many varieties and it is an international language. Even amongst the English speaking countries, there are cultural variations. Hence, textbook-based teaching does not and cannot provide access to all these cultures. There is a need for going beyond the textbook. In the neocolonial age English is being accepted as a global language by various cultures. It is being detached from the English speaking countries like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is the language of the international community and a language of wider communication (LWC).

Similarly, the following Omani ELCD Curriculum Officer, who holds a Masters degree from the UK, believes that language teaching is not simply providing access to and opportunities for practising the language skills. It is

... Not just reading, listening, speaking and writing. It's to do with the culture itself. I mean if you want to know English, you've got to understand and appreciate the little parts of English. For example, jokes, idioms, literature. I mean it's not just the language. What I'm saying maybe a by-product. To be able actually to understand and be able to enjoy the language you need to know these things as well.

She believes that there are sociolinguistic rules that govern language use. Language to this informant cannot be used in isolation and without reference to sociolinguistic rules. Language is considered as grounded into culture and society. She does not see acquisition of the four skills happening without reference to the cultural aspect of the target language. Kramsch (1988) argues that language codes cannot be taught in isolation because processes of sociocultural transmission are bound to be at work on many levels. Examples of these levels are the contents of language exercises, the cultural discourse of textbooks and teacher's attitudes towards the target language.

The following Irish English teacher, who attended a Hungarian language improvement course in Hungary stresses that language and culture are interwoven; and that language teaching should include culture too. She sees that this has its implications for globalisation in its cultural sense, where the world is becoming a smaller interconnected community.

Language teaching is certainly about culture and it's difficult to divorce it from culture ... it'll be difficult to know how to use the language properly if you don't have some understanding of the culture. So, I think that they have to interlink a little bit, particularly if you think of the future like the

globalisation and if you're going to be using it with other countries you need to understand the conventions of the language, which are not just a phrase, but it's actually how things are said and how things are done.

'Our World Through English'

Our World Through English (OWTE) (Ministry of Education, 1997–98a) confines language to three types: (1) narrative, (2) descriptive and (3) instructional. However, literature, and particularly 'good' and 'highly generative' literature (Ghosen, 2002), is absent from the material. Literature described this way can provide exposition, imagination, insights and argument. Argument here can lead students to engage in active thinking and critical analysis beyond the mechanical aspects of the EFL system. Critical analysis and analytical thinking are not favoured activities in a transmission-oriented, rote learning and textbook-based context as they mean knowledge questioning ultimately leading to knowledge acceptance or rejection. Thus, according to Apple (1993), standardised textbooks have an ideological dimension. Textbooks are devices for putting ideas and beliefs above criticism (Olsen, 1989). Textbooks are also tools for transmitting cultural, political and economic ideologies of the elite (Havelock, 1989). Control over the minds of the students is necessary for effective transmission of the selective traditions and for producing domesticated natives. Freire (1974) describes this as the 'banking' concept whereby teachers 'deposit' knowledge taken from the dominant culture in the minds of their students, which is particularly the case in Oman.

OWTE gives more attention to the local culture and tries to use the language to transmit knowledge about 'selective traditions' (Williams, 1989) and 'interested knowledge' (Pennycook, 1989). Even the accompanying stories, rhymes and songs are simplified and controlled in terms of the structural and lexical items they present. Access to English is confined to the classroom parameters and to the school texts.

Stern (1992) thus stresses the importance of music as a part of the content of culture teaching. OWTE, however, contains simplified listening tasks, a few songs and rhymes on the accompanying tapes, which attempt to stress certain lexical and structural aspects of the lesson or topic introduced. The tasks, which contain native speakers, are primarily for the students to listen to and try and model their pronunciation. In other words, OWTE restricts access to the native speaker. The students listen to the mandated textbook's language and voice more through the carefully controlled presentation of the teacher, despite the fact that the writers of NELP advocate building flexibility into the material.

Furthermore, the *Teacher's Guide – Elementary Level* (Ministry of Education, 1997–98a) claims that learners learn when they are enjoying themselves and finding things out for themselves, or via discovery learning. In other words, there is emphasis laid on autonomous learning where students actively and dynamically take initiatives, manipulate knowledge and create meaning. However, OWTE is largely teacher-proof and teachers are required to finish teaching it in time as the end-of-semester exams are to a large extent based upon it: 'It is important . . . that you complete the syllabus as this is what you

test' (*Teacher's Guide – Elementary Level*, 1997–98a). OWTE is not accompanied with any material appearing either in a hard copy form or produced as software to facilitate independent learning and varied exposure to the target language in a contextualised manner and to its culture. Teachers are invited to supplement OWTE in case they finish teaching it before time. It is noteworthy that OWTE is designed in a way that guarantees the teacher finishes teaching it by the end of the academic year.

Moreover, the *Teacher's Guide – Preparatory Level* (1997–98b) encourages the teacher to collect texts and articles strictly related to the topics of the textbook and present them in a simplified language. While this allows the teacher some freedom to supplement the textbook, topics still have the upper hand in the Omani language classroom. Emphasis is exclusively laid on selective traditions and particular knowledge, which guarantee the transmission of certain values, ideas, beliefs and traditions through the target language.

In his case study about ELT in Oman, Al-Issa (2002) makes the following points about the ideologies governing language-in-education in the Sultanate. He argues that language in the Oman education system is not a tool for creating and manipulating meaning and that students are fed with prescribed, authorised and controlled knowledge. All knowledge, thus, is interested as it represents the interest of certain individuals and groups. Certain meanings and practices or chosen bodies of knowledge are chosen from the dominant culture and emphasised, reinterpreted and presented to the learners via certain pedagogical models. Teachers in the Omani context are given freedom but within predefined and strict limits and parameters. He further argues that cultural appropriateness still serves colonising the students' minds and values so as to produce domesticated natives, who think within limits and acquire predefined knowledge, but do not criticise, analyse, question or examine.

Conclusion

The discussion revealed various paradigms embodied in the colonialist/culturalist ideology. However, they all emphasise the important place and role of the English language culture, despite the fact that OWTE has failed to take such issue into consideration. The analysis has revealed conflict at various levels between the literature and NELP on one side and OWTE on the other. This conflict appeared evident with respect to the inclusion and exclusion of literature, the nature and level of the songs, rhymes and stories, exposure to the native speaker and use of advanced educational technology to increase contact with the target language culture.

While literature on the relevance of culture to second language learning and teaching and NELP stress the fundamental role and place of culture for linguistic development and its embodiment within language, OWTE, with all the ideologies embodied within it, appears to resist this and present a form of language and a way of teaching it that fails to serve the linguistic development of the students and defeats the ELT policy. In other words, there is an evident gap created at the implementation level, which need to be bridged.

One cannot dispute the breadth and depth of culture. However, careful selection of certain cultural aspects and provision of the necessary equipment and

materials can help meet the variable needs of the students as well as provide adequate exposure to and contact with contextualised language. All this can have its positive reflections and impact upon the development of the learner's communicative competence. To end, it can be argued that there is an urgent need for needs analysis as OWTE has been in vogue for almost 15 years. Times have changed and so have the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of the Omani students, which necessitate a change in the ELT at the decision-making and implementation level.

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