

Chapter 5

Cultural

Conceptualizations in

Linguistic Landscapes:

Theory and Practice for

Emergent EIL and Intercultural

Communication

Linh Ngoc Truong Pham

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2208-3137>

Vietnam Aviation Academy, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

With the advancement of globalization, English has evolved into an International Language (EIL). This chapter proposes utilizing cultural conceptualization systems embedded in linguistic landscapes to evaluate the extent to which English public signage within a community reflects either native or international cultural identities. A nuanced understanding of these cultural conceptualization systems can empower English speakers to make informed choices when creating or translating public signage, whether the goal is cultural preservation or integration. Ultimately, EIL speakers' ability to interpret, learn, exchange, and adapt to various cultural conceptualizations can be enhanced through linguistic landscape materials integrated into emergent practices of Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL), using both implicit and explicit models of awareness-raising tasks. Grounded in the theories of Cultural Linguistics, Translation Strategies, and ELT Methodologies, the proposed approaches have been shown to hypothetically develop EIL speakers' metacultural competence.

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INTRODUCTION

Through economic, social, and cultural exchanges on a global scale, English has evolved into multiple varieties that deeply reflect the identities of the communities where it is adapted and, eventually, localized. This shift has significantly transformed three perspectives on the future of the English language.

First, the focus of English teaching and learning has moved away from the traditional native speaker model. The emphasis on training learners to sound like a specific native speaker (such as those from English-speaking countries) has gradually shifted toward achieving fluency in cross-cultural communication. Contemporary curricula increasingly prioritize diverse global uses of English, incorporating variations in accents, vocabulary, content choices, and expressive structures, rather than adhering strictly to dominant English varieties like American, British, or Australian English (e.g., Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Kong & Sung, 2021; Corbett, 2022; Beribe, 2023).

Second, English is now viewed as an international language (EIL), with its role rooted in the connection between English and diverse cultural contexts rather than being confined to global communication. EIL is not a static language across different regions, but rather a flexible linguistic and semiotic tool that encodes distinct systems of cultural conceptualization specific to various speech communities (Sharifian, 2017). Cultural conceptualization refers to the process by which concepts are constructed through the selection of stimuli, reflecting shared experiences and focal attention within a speech community (Langacker, 1987, 2014). This conceptual framework underpins the emergence of “World Englishes,” such as Chinese English, Singapore English, Japanese English, Korean English, and Vietnamese English.

Finally, English language teaching (ELT) in this era demands a new intercultural approach. The objective is no longer solely to enhance learners’ understanding of cultural diversity through ELT content to foster positive attitudes and engagement in global contexts, as emphasized in earlier intercultural communication studies (e.g., Byram, 1997; Canagarajah, 2006; Kramsch, 2008). Rather, given the cultural conceptualizations embedded in EIL, intercultural competence must also include the skills needed to navigate how cultural values are expressed through language. Sharifian (2013, 2017) referred to this skill set as “metacultural competence,” which focuses on developing learners’ ability to recognize, explain, and negotiate cultural conceptualizations. This competence is central to the teaching of English as an international language (TEIL).

Therefore, to advance learners to the next stage of English proficiency, exposure to cross-cultural contexts is essential. Xu and Sharifian (2017) argue that cosmopolitan spaces provide EIL learners with greater opportunities to become aware of the diverse cultural conceptualizations encoded in English, thereby enhancing their engagement in intercultural communication. However, in countries or communities with limited

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