# THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE CULTURE ON LITERACY

Session 3

Effective Communication:

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies
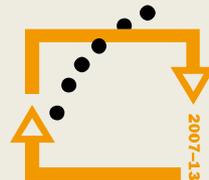
BUZZ

- I am going to lecture …

- …with pauses for you to buzz in pairs

Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis

the study of how a person's first language and culture influence his or her writing in a second language.

Figure 17.1. Patterns of Written Discourse (Kaplan, 1966:14).

English   Semitic   Oriental   Romance   Russian
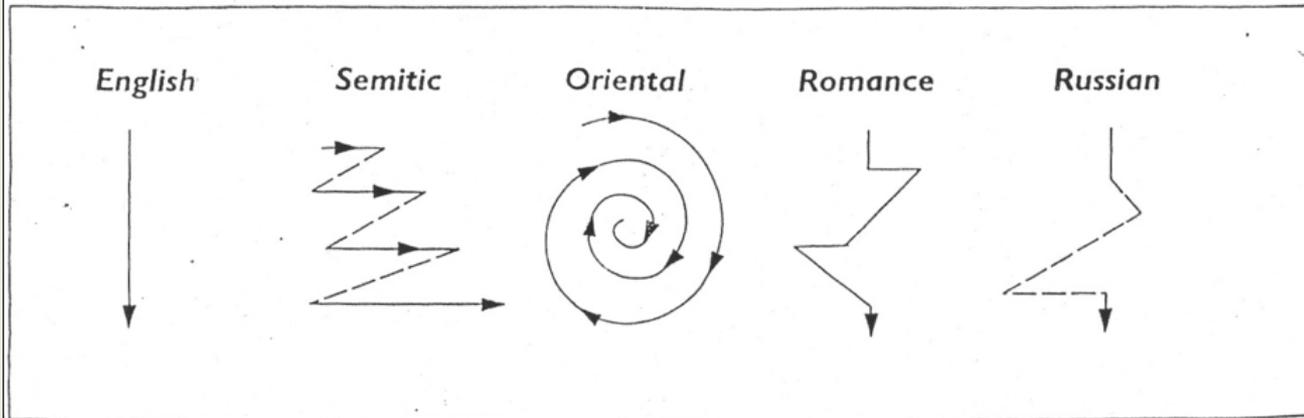
Kaplan (1966), text production is influenced by different 'cultural thought patterns' (represented schematically in the 'doodles'), and a comparison of these patterns can predict the kinds of problems learners face when writing in their L2. Much criticism – broad truths? Since modified his view to include frequency & learned conventions.

Conner (2002) introduced term intercultural rhetoric: small cultures, other genres

Cultural Dimension Theory

Hofsetede (1986)

- Individualism/collectivism

- Power distance

- Masculinity/femininity

- Uncertainty avoidance

Culture: Unhelpful? Misleading?

- Normative, essentialising stance
- Students have identities beyond the language and culture they were born into
- Cultural iceberg
- Implications of inferiority/superioity
- Cultures change
- there may well be greater intracultural differences than intercultural differences (eg China vs India at TVU

BUZZ

What are the implications for your teaching?
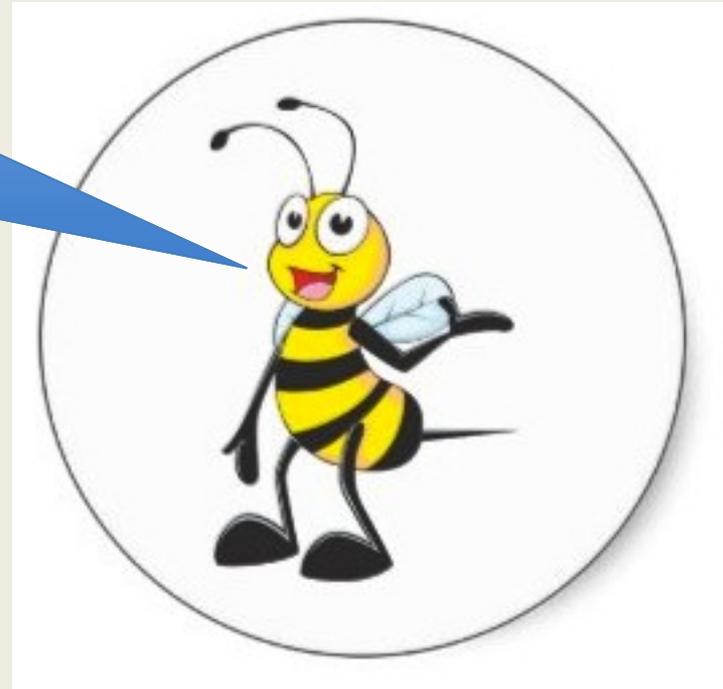
Academic cultures?

- No 'basic' context-less language (Bloor & Bloor, 1986).

- Discourse communities & genres (Swales, 1990)

- Communities of practice/situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

- small cultures (Holliday,1999)

- Ways of Thinking & Practising (Entwhistle,2003) ETL project

- disciplinary identities (Hyland, 2012)

- Academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006) inc. power, identity, agency

- No one's mother tongue (Bordieu & Passeron, 1994)

Situational & Disciplinary Contexts

Influence of L1 cultural, educational and linguistic background

General English language background

General HE UG/PG Academic English conventions

Institution-specific academic language and conventions

Discipline-specific academic language and conventions
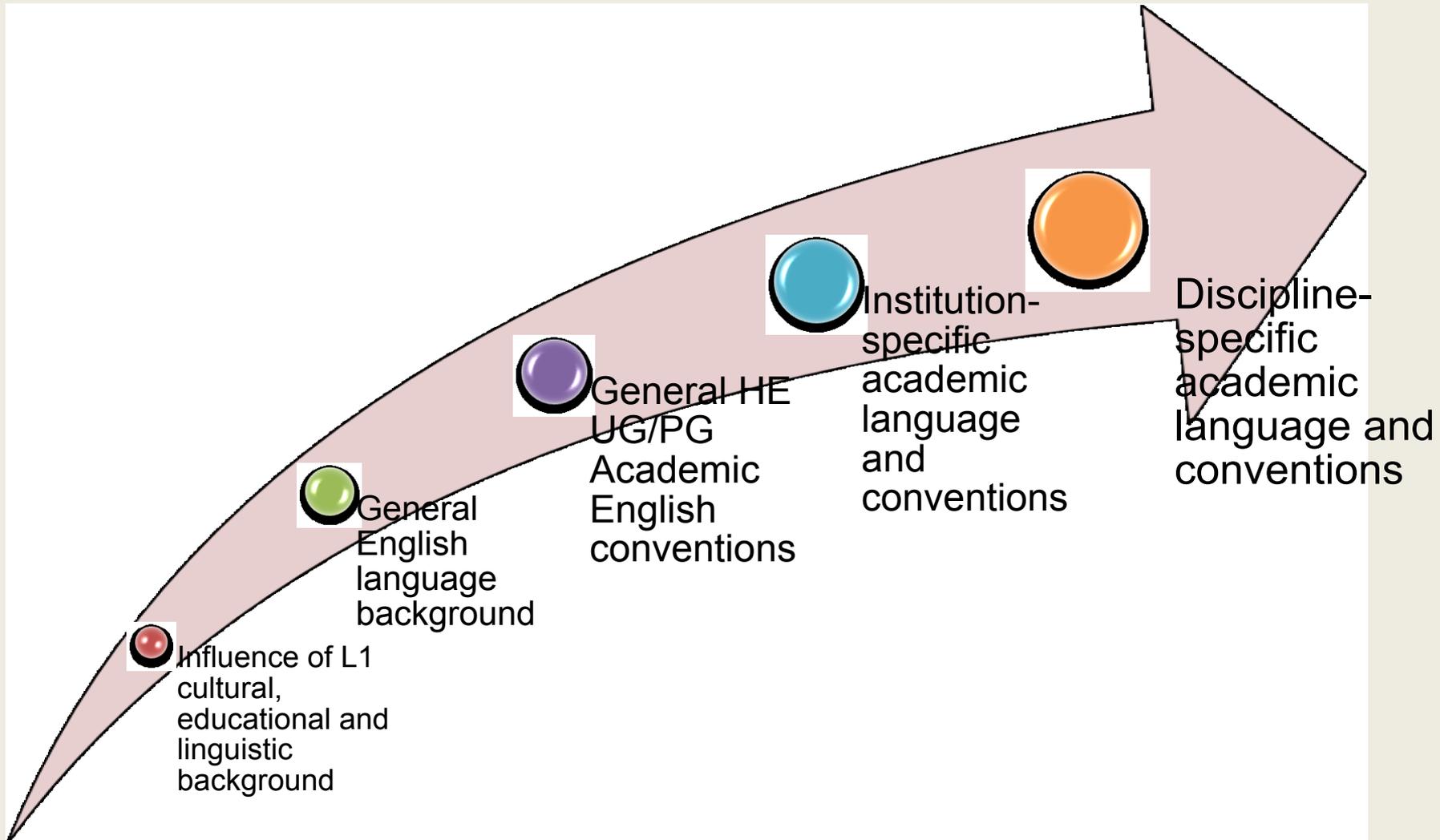
Previous Learning Experience

- In Chinese society – and in the classroom – the priorities are that each person must be part of a group or community; learning interdependency, co-operation and social awareness; becoming oneself in relation to significant others; expressing that which is socially shared rather than individually felt; creating on the basis of mastery rather than discovery. (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996:177-8)

Student Views on UK HE

- 102 students : Choice between 4 questions
- 38 : 2 factors influencing student success
  - 18 independent study (1 asking for help)
- 35 : biggest challenge facing students
  - 13 independent study (1 communication)
- 14 : compared UG studies in 2 countries
  - 3 mentioned independent study

BUZZ

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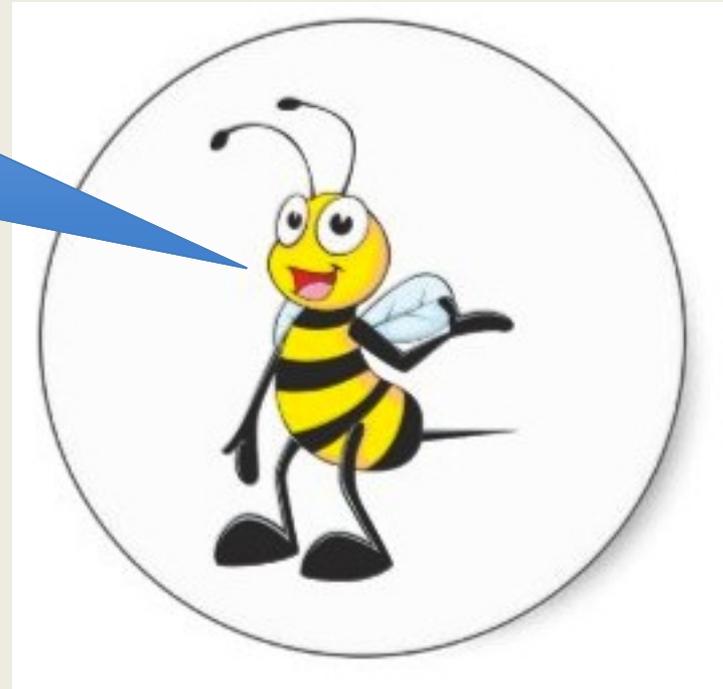
Acculturation?

Learning culture is similar to learning a language, and, just as language defines our ability to understand and explain what we observe, so culture is a means of framing both propositional ('know-that' types of statements) and procedural ('know-how' statements) knowledge of that which surrounds us (Duranti, 1997)

Byram and Morgan (1994), transculturation: 'recognition of the validity of different cultural viewpoints while remaining at ease with one's own culture' (Lantolf,1999, p.28).

Socialisation?

- The writing practices of the academy, which are so familiar and unremarkable to many insiders, are actually disciplinary peculiar ways of representing reality. (Hyland, 2012)

- A growing awareness of disciplinary discourses helps socialise students into academic practices and valued ways of thinking and expressing. (Hyland, 2012)

- There are multiple varieties of what counts as 'English' and that required for specific purposes in specific contexts will need spelling out and justifying more carefully in the new global world. (Blogpost by Brian Street, 2013)

- Academic identity is often painfully constructed (eg Lin, 2000) & Diane's Brazilian PhD

But we've told them.....

- '...tend to have problems comprehending and putting into practice the abilities of an independent learner. This is mostly due to the lack of information that these students are given before starting their courses...' UOB

- 'A strong and unanimous theme running throughout the interviews with both groups in our sample was their insecurity with respect to our expectations of them as postgraduate students, and their desire for significantly more guidance from tutors with respect to these expectations' (Lord and Dawson 2002)

- 'lots of tell, not enough show.' (Lea & Street, 2000)

BUZZ
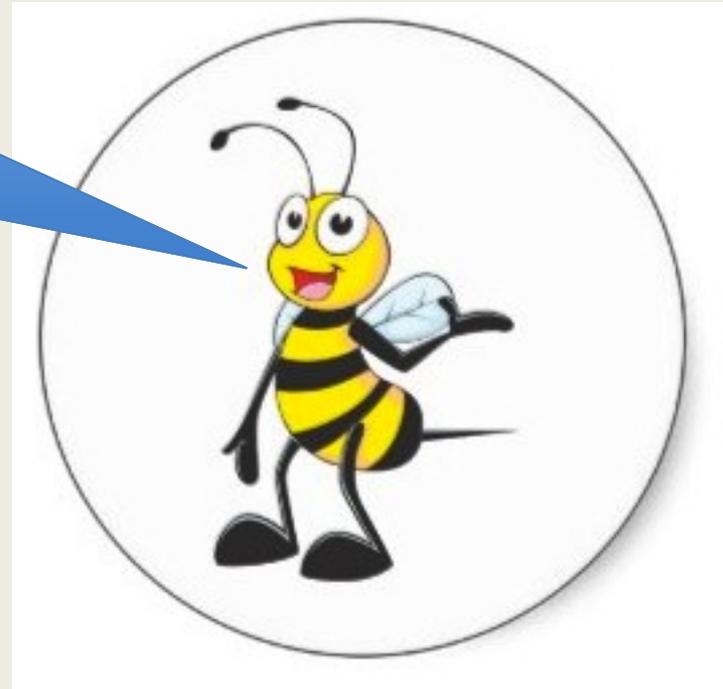
Can we be expected to find out about each of our student's PLEs?

No: Be self-aware

- Meta-cultural sensitivity (Louie, 2005)
- Critical cultural awareness (Deardorff, Byram)
- Cross cultural competence
- Cross cultural communication
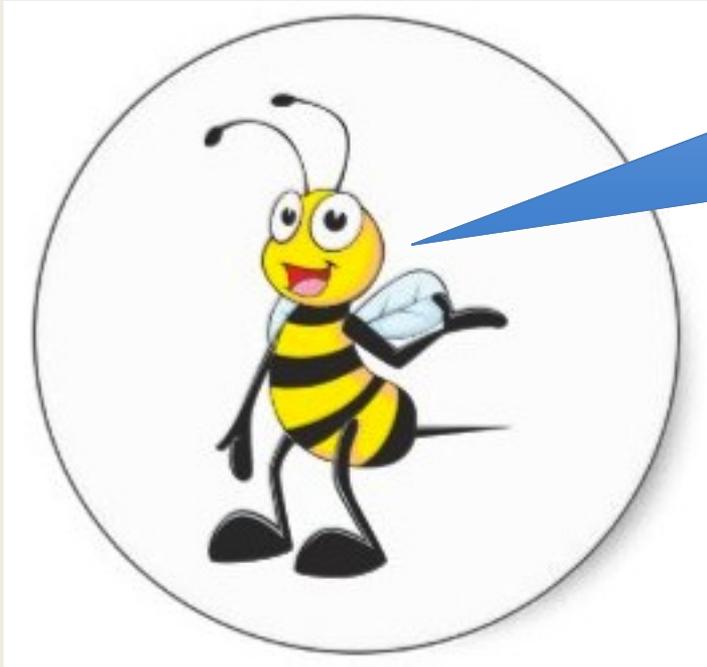
The story of one cross-cultural traveller

- Parents = manual workers, left school at 14
- Government grant to private girls' secondary school
  - Caroline, Sharon
- University in Edinburgh, Scotland
  - Vonnie vs Sam
- Year abroad in Belgium & Spain
  - Radouan, Hiroe, Ann, Francis, Gaspar – LRU, CGC
- 5 years in Greece – EFL exam classes
  - Eleni
- 5 years in Spain – EFL ninos, jovenes, adultos (Sevilla, Madrid)
  - Richard
- 5 years in Turkey – EAP private university
  - Erhan
- 6 years in UAE HE
- 2 years in UK FE
- 6 years in UK HE

How many cultural boundaries can you spot?

Critical thinking is…

Different lecturers tell me different things when I ask them what critical thinking really means.

I have been told by my supervisor that my work lacks critical analysis. I really don't know what critical analysis means

As I have never been told by any lecturer how to apply critical thinking to my study, I am not sure whether I used it when I wrote my assignments. Low marks for my coursework possibly mean I did not use it.

I really suffered when I read my supervisor's feedback about my literature review. I thought I did a good job, but my supervisor asked me where my opinion was

Chinese Masters students in Plymouth who did UG in UK

Feedback is too late

- S: ..but I worked so hard on this... I've put in so much evidence to support my argument...

- T: yes, but you've only considered one perspective

But is awareness enough?

'Being critical means I can construct my arguments logically. But I can't as my vocabulary and grammar skills are not good enough to form clear sentences. Most of time I know how to argue in Chinese but not in English.' (Huang, 2008)

What factors affect the learning experience of students?

- **Linguistic (the use and understanding of English, communication with others)**
- **Cultural (customs, expectations, behaviours, values)**
- **Academic (teaching, learning and assessment practices)**
- **Epistemological (what constitutes knowledge and how it is acquired)**
- **Social (interpersonal relations, acceptance by others, inclusion)**

A Changing World (Hyland et al, 2008)

SESSION 4

- Round up

- Preview tomorrow's sessions

RATIONALE FOR ACTIVITIES

- My ideas on usefulness of these 8 activities from different perspectives

- Your ideas on how to adapt them to your context (if time)

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

THINK:

Pick a post-it from the wall that you find interesting

    – not your own!

Is it a cultural, linguistic, academic, epistemological or social issue?   What needs to be made explicit? Any strategies?

PAIR:

Discuss your ideas with a partner.

SHARE:

Share key points from your discussion with the group.

SO…

- 'learning is individually constructed, socially supported, and culturally mediated' Ryan & Hellmundt, 2005

- EXAMINE 'CULTURAL' ASSUMPTIONS

- BE EXPLICIT about 'systems of beliefs, expectations and practices about how to perform academically' Cortazzi & Jin 1997 in Carroll 2005

- Notice & use surprises

This will help more than just international students!

TOMORROW

- Teaching & learning strategies
  - TIS website and work stations (PRE-READING!)
- Assessment strategies
  - CATs
  - Criteria & rubrics
  - Feedback
- Effective communication
  - Own documents
  - Course evaluation & application cards