CHAPTER VI
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Implications for developing internationally-marketed ELT materials

In view of the existence of undeniably serious cultural resistance in many countries of the world (Suzuki, 1975; Zughoul, 1999; Coskun, 2010) and the consequential irrelevance of native speakers’ model for the learners of English in those situations, ELT materials which choose to remain persistently committed to the promotion and dissemination of the native speakers’ variety of English and are for that reason replete with the western cultural values are blacklisted and rejected by the education officials and educators in those countries. As clearly demonstrated by the findings of the present research, a case in point is the Islamic Republic of Iran where the teaching of the native variety of English which involves the inclusion of large doses of western culture in the ELT materials is seriously resisted so much so that the Iranian education officials, as important decision-makers in the selection and development of ELT materials for Iranian students, said that they preferred the locally designed ELT materials to the imported ones for cultural reasons even if the former would be less efficient or more expensive. The implication of this observation for the development of ELT materials for the international students is that international material developers should take cognizance of this grave concern many world governments, educators and learners have about the incompatibility of the cultural content of internationally marketed ELT
materials with their local cultures and be responsive to the differential needs of diverse learners of English at the international level. One possible way of paying heed to such concerns is to differentiate between materials developed for learners of English as a second language who may have very strong motivation to assimilate into the native speakers’ culture as a requirement for their indistinguishable membership in the community of native speakers and materials developed for learners of English whose motivation for learning English is at best instrumental. The members of the latter group want to learn English to interact more with other non-native speakers than with native speakers of English and use English as an instrument to introduce their own cultural identity to others. The development of materials for the latter group necessarily involves the consideration and implementation of the principles of English as an International Language (EIL). “EIL in fact rejects the idea of any particular variety being selected as a *lingua franca* for international communication. EIL emphasizes that English, with its many varieties, is a language of international, and therefore *intercultural*, communication” (Sharifian, 2009, p.1). The irrelevance of the native speakers’ model has been emphasized by McKay (2003, p. 145) who contends that “English is an international language and because of this fact, English can no longer be linked exclusively to native English-speaking cultures. Hence, there is no need, in the teaching of EIL, to base the content of teaching materials […] on native-speaker models”. The followings are the implications of the findings of the
present research for international ELT material development if it strives to be professionally committed to the real needs of its diverse consumers and not to lose the lucrative market.

1. The cultural content of the instructional materials for English as an international language should allocate a fair share to the introduction of the cultural values of all their intended learners without giving the lion share to one or two cultures.

2. They should be free from all the culturally, politically or ideologically controversial issues that might put one or more groups of their intended learners at cultural, religious or political disadvantage.

3. They should focus more on the development of intercultural communication skills than on bombarding the learners with the cultural content of one target group.

4. They should be designed in such a way that the real needs of their intended learners are not trampled over by the interest of a powerful group.

6.2 Implications for local curriculum development

Whenever internationally-marketed ELT materials are rejected on the grounds that they are culturally, politically or ideologically inappropriate for certain situations and are replaced with locally-developed ones, utmost care must be taken to ensure the technical adequacy of the locally-designed curricula. This is important because cultural safety which is inherently a legitimate concern cannot be achieved if it takes toll on the technical adequacy of the curriculum. A technically weak and professionally inadequate
curriculum cannot be called a curriculum at all because it fails to serve the main purpose for which it is developed. When an EFL curriculum does not successfully fulfill its main responsibility of teaching a foreign language and its beneficiaries do not see it as worthy of their time and efforts, even its best cultural qualities cannot keep its consumers loyal to it and they will surely turn away from it. The results of this study clearly demonstrated the truthfulness and viability of this premise. The results of the surveys showed that the development of the local EFL curriculum in Iran was warmly welcomed on grounds of its cultural safety and the respondents said they were suspicious of the hidden agendas behind the imported ELT materials. However, the highly satisfactory cultural safety of the locally-developed Iranian EFL curriculum failed to keep the beneficiaries of the curriculum and ELT experts loyal to it mainly because its technical aspect was weak and unacceptable. It was the low quality of the curriculum that nullified the strong preference for local materials and made them express preference for the hegemonic, culturally unsafe ELT materials marketed internationally. Unless the local curriculum is technically adequate and generally acceptable, its cultural safety alone cannot save it from fragility and it loses the contest to its hegemonic rivals.

The second implication of the findings of this research for local curriculum development is the importance of ensuring the proportionateness of the null curriculum. Depriving the curriculum of the necessary dose of compatible and non-conflicting aspects of the western or non-western culture is a disservice to the success of cultural resistance. Hyde’s (1994, p.304) remark
highlights an important consequence of “deculturation of the target language”: “I see a danger, an absurdity, and an impossibility, in pursuing this approach [deculturation of the target language] to the point where the English language is only used to reflect what the student already knows”. Even worse, the curriculum might become void of the necessary native culture. These extreme exclusions are surely detrimental to the success of the resistance-inspired curriculum and can significantly hamper its sustainability. A culturally safe curriculum is not the one which is void of native and/or foreign culture. But rather it is a curriculum which is skillfully designed to avert the negative and unwanted influences of the western culture without detracting from the cultural variety of the curriculum.

6.3 Implications for establishing a regional ELT material development association

While the internationally-marketed ELT materials are by their very nature too general to be capable of responding to the differential needs of all their learners with diverse backgrounds, the locally designed materials suffer from such diametrically opposite shortcomings as being too specific to be of interest to more than one group. Whereas the null curriculum of the international ELT curricula cannot be based on a consensual list of inappropriate contents and topics because “one man’s meat is another man’s poison”, the locally developed ELT curricula are not financially cost effective. A trade-off between these two extremes can be the regionally-developed ELT materials which have the best of both worlds. The regionally-developed
materials are neither as overly general as the internationally-developed ones to be doomed to suffer from lack of specificity nor are as overly specific as the local ones to lose the interest of other potential consumers from other nations. It is both cost effective and capable of taking care of the common needs of its member nations. Interestingly enough, the Iranian education officials and high school EFL teachers had a very positive attitude towards the formation of a regional ELT material development association which can serve the common interest of the member nations.

An important implication of this study for countries with a similar cultural concern is that their concerns may never be met unless they take the initiative by forming an ELT curriculum development association and design ELT curricula based on the collective compatible cultural values of all the member countries.

6.4 Implications for teacher education

Even though the Iranian high school English teachers who took part in the attitude survey part of this research showed resistance to the teaching of western cultural values through English and were suspicious of the hegemonic motives behind the teaching of internationally-marketed ELT materials in Iran, their resistance was statistically significantly lower than that of the education officials and some of the responses and comments provided by the teachers showed that they were not well-versed in critical pedagogy. For resistance to the hegemony of English to be successful, it needs the informed practical and
ideological support of, among others, its implementation agents who are the
EFL teachers. The implication of the findings of this research for teacher
education is the incorporation of, at least, a two-unit course on Critical
Pedagogy in the curriculum of Teaching English as a Foreign Language
(TEFL) major at both the undergraduate and the graduate level and the in-
service training programs for the practicing teachers of high school English so
that they will be systematically familiarized with the fundamentals of Critical
Pedagogy which form the foundation of cultural resistance. This will greatly
enlighten the EFL teachers as to the nature of critical pedagogy and will
therefore add to their commitment to the protection of the local culture.

6.5 Implications for further research

Similar studies can be done in other Islamic countries or countries with a
similar concern to find out the nature of the education officials’ attitude
towards the western culture when it comes to EFL curriculum development.
The more ELT experts invest in the study of the nature of cultural resistance,
the more it can lead to a balanced sustainable model of resistance in which
professional qualities of ELT programs are not sacrificed by unskillful or
exaggerated resistance. Equally worthwhile is the survey of the general
public’s and ELT teachers’ opinion in this regard. If all these three groups have
the same concerns in a country or region, then cultural resistance can be said to
be a reality that needs to be respected and addressed properly by the ELT
professionals. Such studies should be seen as a type of needs analysis with
many implications for ELT profession.
6.6 Implications for cultural planning

Indigenizing the development of EFL curricula is only one of the many possible strategies to avert the unwanted influences of the western culture. Since ELT materials are not the only contact Iranian students might have with the western culture and their contact with these manifestations through other means can undermine the best effects of cultural resistance through censoring the imported ELT materials or developing safe local ones, it is essential for the cultural planners to reinforce what is gained from cultural resistance through EFL curriculum development by turning the learners themselves into the most active agents of resistance by means of creating in them the necessary cultural awareness. Only students who are equipped with the invaluable skill of evaluating and selecting the best of what they are exposed to can be said to be safe in the face of the hegemony of the west. Familiarizing the learners with their own native culture is an asset in this regard.

6.7 Implications for standardized language testing

It has been argued throughout this thesis that for many learners of English the native speaker variety of this language is utterly irrelevant and that the guidelines of English as an International language with its multicultural approach to the teaching of English should inform the teaching of English in situations where cultural resistance is a reality. Although at the theoretical level, this argument has found a rather firm footing and has started to receive increasingly more attention than before, its practical requirements tend to remain unfulfilled. As an example, one can refer to the negative backwash
effect of TOEFL and IELTS on the growth and development of English as an International Language (EIL). The above standardized tests are mainly based on the norms and features of the native variety of English and success in them necessitates the test takers’ familiarity with these varieties. Unless the proponents of English and an International Language and World Englishes take very practical steps in designing a standardized Test of World Englishes or a Standardized Test of English as an International Language, the negative backwash effect of IELTS and TOEFL tend to further tilt the balance of power in favor of the native variety of English and thereby hamper the sustainability of cultural resistance through avoiding the native varieties of English. Regional and international testing associations must be formed to make standardized and well-reputed tests of non-native varieties of English to harness the unfavorable backwash effect of TOEFL and IELTS on the growth and spread of non-native varieties of English.

6.8 Implications for the general curriculum

Cultural resistance is a truly cross-curricular undertaking. Although resistance to the dissemination and promulgation of the western culture through English seems to be the business of critical applied linguists, the gravity and magnitude of the task defies any single-handed achievement. Only with the committed and systematic efforts of people in all educational disciplines one can be hopeful about the successfulness and sustainability of cultural resistance. Here are a few examples of the sort of contribution other disciplines should provide to help critical applied linguistics achieve something
worthwhile. The Iranian education officials and high school EFL teachers strongly believed that an important goal of teaching English in Iran should be enabling the learners to introduce their cultural values to other people in the world. This involves the learners’ full familiarity with their own native culture and this cannot be achieved without a major contribution from almost every other course in the general curriculum of the country. In a similar vein, creating critical cultural awareness in the language learners as an important resistance mechanism cannot be achieved through English curriculum alone. It is a responsibility that critical applied linguistics shares not only with all the other disciplines in the general curriculum but also with all cultural organizations.