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Foreword

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Journal of English as an International Language. This issue, like the previous issues, touches upon the different aspects of the issue of English as an International Language and presents our readers many important research findings. The first article “A Cultural Framework of “Chinese Learn English”: a critical review of and reflections on research” by Eunice Tang ‘provides a guide to analysis or discussions concerning the ways Chinese learn English. It gives an overview of the history, ideology, structure, centralisation, development and political maxims of English teaching and learning in the Chinese education system and discusses the characteristics of Chinese learners, the English language teaching environment and the contemporary classroom practices in China. It also aims to shed lights to English native teachers on developing teaching or classroom practices appropriate to these Chinese learners’

The second article “From EFL to ELF: Spotting the Blind Spots” is presented by Mohsen Shirazizadeh and Mohammad Momenian. The researchers, in their articles, argue that in their ‘attempts to set more realistic and democratic goals for English learners in Outer and Expanding Circle countries, “ELF researchers” might lose sight of many probable challenges. ELF is, then, criticized with regard to five facets of native speaker, culture, critical pedagogy, assessment and public attitude. These critical points are put forth in order to help ELF reach a sounder and more defensible position among theoreticians as well as practitioners’.

The third article “Reader Response and Ethnicity: A Difference That Makes a Difference” by Yu-ju Hung ‘investigates how readers’ ethnicity influences their responses to texts portraying their own ethnicity and texts describing another ethnicity. Ten Taiwanese students’ reading responses of two picture books are examined and discussed. Educational implications for teachers, course-book writers, and policy makers are also suggested to improve English readings, multicultural readings, and education in general.’

The fourth article ‘Intercultural Rhetorical Pattern Differences in English Argumentative Writing’ is presented by Jack Jinghui Liu. In the empirical study Liu ‘examines the rhetorical pattern differences in English argumentative essays written by high school juniors in China and the United States from the perspective of intercultural rhetoric...The findings revealed that the rhetorical patterns were flexible, as both Chinese and American students placed their thesis statements in four different places. The deductive pattern was most frequently employed for both groups, followed by the inductive pattern, and the non-deductive and non-inductive pattern. Even though both groups preferred deductive patterns, American students preferred showing the thesis statement as the first sentence, and Chinese students preferred placing the thesis statement anywhere in the first paragraph. The findings indicated that English writing instruction and textbooks were the most significant factor of influencing rhetorical patterns in both contemporary Chinese and American students’ English essays. Further intercultural rhetoric research on ESL teaching is suggested’.

The fifth article “The Role of Attitudes and Identity from Nonnative Speakers of English towards English Accents” by Diana Fauzia Sari and Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf “looks at role of attitudes and identity from nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English from Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Korea and Iran towards their English accents and of other NNSs concerning their English accents and how the results fit into Jenkins’ (2005) ideas of lingua franca English which focused on their attitudes to identification with NNS and native speaker (NS) English accents, their perceptions of others’ attitudes and identification, and their beliefs about teaching these accents.”

The sixth article “Segmental analysis of speech intelligibility problems among Sudanese listeners of English” by Ezzeldin Mahmoud Tajeldin Ali and Vincent J. van Heuven” aims to “investigate the problems of speech intelligibility of Sudanese university learners of English. The whole work was done on the basis of segmental analysis of vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters of English so as to explore the types of perception errors made in the areas under concern. Ten Sudanese learners of English (both male and female) were selected for the experiments.”

The seventh article “English Language Teaching in China today” is presented by Tian bo Li and Gillian Moreira. The researchers, in their articles, “consider the development of the English Language Teaching industry in China”. They “examine the private English language learning industry, how it has grown and in what directions, and the impact of the demand for English on English teaching in public schools.” Their research “has revealed how, in the face of competition from the private sector, methodologies in public schools have improved, shifting from being examination-oriented to being language and learner-centered. English language teaching and learning is thus concerned not only with the development of general writing, speaking, reading and listening skills, but also with the acquisition of specific market-oriented competences and knowledge of other cultures.

The eighth article “Strategies for learning English in a cross-cultural learning environment: East Asian students in one UK University” by Wen Li Wu, Michael Hammond and Ann Barnes “discusses the experiences of East Asian students (n = 40) taking a full time Master’s course at a University in the UK from 2004 - 2005. A mixed methods case study approach was taken with data gathered through three rounds of questionnaire surveys of the whole group and a further three rounds of interviews carried out with a broadly representative sample (n = 8) over the course of a year. The experiences of these students were examined under three interconnected themes: language, socio-cultural environment and academic culture.” The article “reports on how participants described the strategies they used for developing their language skills, in both everyday use and academic contexts. These strategies involved independent private study, acting on feedback from more knowledgeable others and participation in groups or social activity.” The paper suggests that a mix of strategies can be effective for language learning.

Dr. Ahmet Acar

Chief Editor

English International language Journal



Title

A Cultural Framework of “Chinese Learn English”: a critical review of and reflections on research

Author

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Biodata

Dr. Eunice Tang is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include multi-media language teaching and learning, vocabulary input and treatment, English curriculum and teaching in China, and pre-service teacher education.

Abstract

The dramatic rise of Chinese learners in the western classrooms and growing number of western teachers in the Chinese classrooms have raised awareness among researchers, educators and teachers about the “cultural shock” that both learners and teachers face when transiting to a different educational system with a different teaching and learning philosophy. However, no judgement or interpretation can be correctly made on learning behaviour and teaching practices without an understanding and respect of the Chinese characteristics of teaching and learning. This critical review provides a guide to analysis or discussions concerning the ways Chinese learn English. It gives an overview of the history, ideology, structure, centralisation, development and political maxims of English teaching and learning in the Chinese education system and discusses

the characteristics of Chinese learners, the English language teaching environment and the contemporary classroom practices in China. It also aims to shed lights to English native teachers on developing teaching or classroom practices appropriate to these Chinese learners

Keywords: Chinese learners, Confucius, English teaching, culture of learning, learning behaviours

With the dramatic rise in the number of undergraduate or postgraduate students from mainland China in the western classrooms and a growing number of native English teachers in the Chinese classrooms, there are concerns that Chinese learners do not seem to benefit as much as they should from the educational settings where East meets West. There seems to have clashes in education philosophies and a mismatch of teaching and learning styles between native English teachers and Chinese learners (Zhou & Fan, 2007; Simpson, 2008). Although there is increasing awareness among western educators and teachers of the relationship between their cultural background and the rate of adaptation, no interpretation and judgement can be correctly made on learning behaviours or teaching practices without an understanding and respect of the Chinese characteristics of teaching and learning. This critical review of the Chinese phenomenon of teaching and learning provides a guide to analysis or discussions concerning the ways Chinese learn English. This paper also gives background knowledge to native English teachers to select teaching methodology and establish classroom practices appropriate to Chinese learners so as to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The English Environment in China

In China, foreign language acquisition takes place primarily in the classroom. Hu et al. (1994) studied the acquisition of English at university level. They suggested that the foreign language classroom was the medium where most learning took place. As such, the foreign language classroom is depicted as an acquisition-poor language learning environment where no authentic materials and tasks were observed (Wong, 2007). Furthermore, Hu et al. (ibid) indicated clearly in their study that English is a school language in the English lessons only. It is never a language in

other lessons at school nor at home. It is not even an important language at work (Ma, 2000). In fact, there is no other English learning opportunity except probably the “English Corner” which is a popular out-of-class activity oral practice in the university (Gao, 2007). Although some students will gather in the evening to practise English, native speakers are few and far between. Foreign language proficiency is achieved principally through formal teaching and teachers and the textbooks are the principal sources of foreign language knowledge. The English teachers are indigenously Chinese, trained in Chinese institutions by Chinese teachers.

The English language learning environment in China can be described as ‘input-poor’ environment defined by Kouraogo (1993) as a place where FL/SL learners have little opportunities to hear or read the language outside or even inside the classroom. Gui (1985) has drawn attention to the uniqueness of the English teaching environment in China. Before the open door policy in 1977, there was no English-speaking community and even nowadays, the availability of English medium newspapers, magazines, radio programmes, TV programmes is still limited. Crook (1985) added that library resources in universities are not helpful to learners. Books are protected from student readers and the majority of the books are written in or translated into Chinese while it is difficult to obtain official approval to purchase books written in English.

For English learners in China, learning English is instrumental. A knowledge of English gives individuals opportunities for higher education, for career advancement, for better jobs with better pay in foreign-funded joint ventures, and for study and travel abroad (Gui, 1985; Dzau, 1990; Wu et al., 1992; Pang et al., 2002; Gao, 2008). The falling demand for interpreters and the growing need for a high level of English proficiency in trading corporations have great impact on the educational policies. The expansion of international business requires graduates to be proficient in the productive skills of writing and speaking. Learning English is viewed as the key to open the door to opportunities for self-development and material gain.

For the country, education is of strategic importance. Teaching and learning English as a foreign language is a tool for the achievement of national, political and economic goals (i). As Adamson and Morris (1997) suggested, there has always been a strong link between macro national

priorities and the role of English. Macro policy decisions made by the central government subsequently direct the “genesis and orientation of curriculum reform initiatives” (25). In the Chinese context, the curriculum development and pedagogies promoted have been influenced and even determined by political decisions (see Gui, 1985; Dzau, 1990; Hayhoe, 1984; Adamson & Morris, 1997; Lam 2002; G. Hu, 2005a; Y. Hu, 2007). In response to the Party’s decision to accelerate the modernisation process, since 1985 a series of ELT reforms has been launched at different levels of schooling to meet the challenge of the 21st century. These syllabuses reflect the mainstream notion of developing the ability to use English as a tool for communication, as well as the country’s policy to use language as a mean of acquiring knowledge from the west.

The Realisation of “Chinese Essence”: teaching in a Chinese way

Historical background

Cortazzi and Jin (1996a) described the “culture of learning” as “taken-for-granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values and beliefs about what constitutes good learning, about how to teach or learn” (p.169). Western and Chinese educators and researchers seem to agree about the “culture of learning” associated with Chinese learners, teachers and educational programmes. Chinese learners are always described as “rote-learners” who are “passive”, “spoon-fed”, “quiet”, “unquestioning”, “motivated”, “obedient”, “disciplined” and so on (Thogersen, 1990; Biggs, 1996; Biggs, 1999). Chinese teachers are often portrayed as authoritative and dominant (Thogersen, 1990; Scollon & Scollon, 1994; Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Biggs, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Li, S.Y. 1999) while the education system is often described as examination-oriented (Thogersen, 1990; Cleverley, 1991; Lewin et al., 1994; Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Wong 2007). The commonly held opinion is that the teacher in China is in control of knowledge and delivery, while learners listen and remember, and that examinations are of crucial importance, the ultimate goal for teachers and learners.

Cleverley (1991:1) pointed out that “adequate understanding of contemporary schooling requires a prior accounting of the contribution of men and women long dead which still shapes the acceptability of change and reform”. The learning habits and teaching patterns observed in the contemporary Chinese context are regarded as having particularly deep roots. Many researchers

and educators have told us that modern education in China is heavily influenced by history, traditions and culture (Cleverley, 1991; Thogersen, 1990; Price, 1992; Hoobler & Hoobler, 1993; Tu, 1993; Lewin et al., 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1994; Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Brooks, 1997; Biggs, 1999; Simpson, 2008).

In the 19th century, the motto for self-strengthening was “Chinese learning for fundamental principle; Western learning for practical application”- *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*. By “Chinese learning” was meant “the Confucian orthodoxy”(ii). This historical collection of trends in philosophy continues to have an enduring relevance in modern Chinese society. This can be illustrated by the speech made by the Chinese Vice President, Mr. Hu Jintao, during his official visit to Malaysia. He quoted Confucius’ sayings in the *Analects* as doctrines of the foreign policy of China (TVB News, 24 April 2002). The Confucian influences are also perceptible in the education system and are reflected in its teaching practices and learners’ behaviour (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Reynolds & Farrell, 1996; Zhou, R., 1992), classroom discourse (Scollon, 1999), the curriculum (Price, 1992; Thogersen, 1990; PRC State Education Committee, 1993; PRC State Education Committee, 1996), teacher-learner relationships (Zhou, Y., 1992; Chen & Drover, 1997; Ouyang, 2000) and textbook writing (Adamson & Morris, 1997). However, any cultural explanations attributed to Confucianism in interpreting empirical data have to be cautious to avoid oversimplification and overgeneralization (Wong & Wong, 2002; Shi, 2006).

Confucius viewed education as a means to achieve personal perfection and to become a “gentleman”. He had little regard for the teaching of practical skills, but was primarily concerned with the perfection of the traditional virtues.

The Master said, “The gentleman has morality as his basic stuff and by observing the rites puts it into practice, by being modest gives it expression, and by being trustworthy in word brings it to completion. Such is a gentleman indeed.” The Confucian *Analects* XV:18. (Lau, 1983: 153)

According to Confucius, moral values were transmitted from the teacher, who set a moral example, acted as a natural centre for teaching, and conveyed the moral principles recorded in texts or learned

from antiquity. The teacher's main duty was to transmit ideological qualifications leading to moral superiority. The transmission process was unilateral; the teacher was the master and the learners were the disciples.

The teacher is someone who is in control of knowledge and delivery and the learner has a duty to study. Confucius believed that one's ability was a controllable learning factor. It could be increased or improved through internal attributions, such as effort, diligence, determination and discipline. Thus achievement and failure in learning were considered as a personal responsibility.

The Master said, "I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it." The Analects, VII:20. (ibid:61)

To facilitate the creation of a successful learning environment, it was the learners' duty to construct a harmonious atmosphere by being obedient, co-operative and polite. They had to observe closely the role and relationship principles which are significant themes of the Confucian concept. Any changes in the role and the relationship would be treated as improper and disrespectful of authority and the patriarchal and hierarchical patterns.

In the local community, Confucius was submissive and seemed to be inarticulate. In the ancestral temple and at court, though fluent, he did not speak lightly. The Analects, X:1. (ibid:87)

The Master said, "A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says, and should love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of his fellow men. If he has energy to spare from such action, let him devote it to making himself cultivated." The Analects, I:6. (ibid:3)

In the old days Confucian teaching was based on moral principles which were irrefutable dogmas. The best way to remember them was word-by-word memorization. This didactic teaching was reinforced by pressure from the examination system (iii) which required excellent memory and knowledge of the Classics. The washback effect of the examination, therefore, prescribed the teaching

and learning methods. Examination was important in the Confucian era as it was regarded as the only way to select top officials to serve the bureaucracy and to achieve sagehood. Good education produced good men and through examination, sages would be selected to serve the government and to change the society. Success in examinations was rated highly by society.

Tzu-hsia said, "When a man in office finds that he can more than cope with his duties, then he studies; when a learner finds that he can more than cope with his studies, then he takes office." The Confucian Analects XIX:13. (ibid: 195)

Although the moral precepts of Confucius have been challenged, suppressed and restored during different political periods, his thinking and ethical values have been the ruling ideology of Chinese society for the last 2000 years. As noted by Scollon & Scollon (1994:6), these philosophical patterns are "pervasive and of great historical depth and complexity" to Chinese learners of English. The theory of teaching and learning foreign languages is inculcated with history, culture and traditions. The present ideology of foreign language teaching and learning is not a new principle but has historical, developmental, and cultural roots.

Enduring culture

The Chinese phenomenon of teaching and learning are affirmed by a strong inclination towards homogeneity and collectivity. The concept of standardisation or uniformity is reflected in the unified national syllabus, the choice of textbooks, the reliance on teachers' books, group lesson planning, public showcase lessons and a set of socio-culturally acceptable teaching practices for students with different abilities, needs and interests across the country. It is also prominent in the examination system which is a main feature in the Chinese education structure.

Curriculum

The terms "syllabus" and "curriculum" are interchangeable in the Chinese context. Both are translated as "kecheng" in Chinese. The definition of "kecheng" is two-fold. It shapes the knowledge, skills and experience that teachers use in teaching and students use in learning (Lewin et al., 1994) and specifies teaching qualitatively and quantitatively (Hong, 1990). For example, the College English Syllabus for Students of Arts and Science is the national syllabus for some 4 million non-English major university

students. It stipulates 280 hours of teaching for the non-English major in the first and the second years of university. In addition, it designates another two hours of homework after each hour in class. The syllabus also specifies the extent and content of the teaching of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, writing and speaking. Inventories of vocabulary, a grammatical summary, functions and notions and micro-skills are attached to control the content and the dimensions of teaching. Guidelines for teaching, including appropriate approaches and emphases, advice on the setting up of 'second classrooms' where teacher and learners gather to practise English outside class time, and the use of teaching aids, are included for the teachers' reference.

When there is a syllabus reform in China, a new set of "recommended" textbooks appears. College English, written by renowned professors from famous universities, has been the most prestigious textbook series at university level since the release of the College English syllabus in 1986(iv). In China, there is no other way for most people to learn a foreign language except from the textbook (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). As the national examination is designed to test the students' textbook knowledge, it is impossible to teach without the textbook.

Richards (1993) stated that "textbooks and other commercial materials in many situations represent the hidden curriculum of the ESL course" (p.43). The ideological assumption is that the textbooks and the teachers' book can train teachers to be aware of the latest teaching theories and approaches and to learn the pedagogy. They reflect the objectives, the syllabus, the teaching and learning philosophy. In his study of Hong Kong secondary school English teachers, Richards finds that these teachers, indigenous Chinese, regard textbooks as a primary source of teaching ideas and materials. The textbooks provide practice activities, a structured language program, the language models, and information about the language that they need for their lessons. They thus relieve pressure on the teachers as far as planning, preparing, organising and designing are concerned. However, Richards warned that over-dependence on textbooks would lead to negligence of students' needs and deskilling of teachers: there would be a reduction in the teacher's role and a reduction in the quality of teachers' decision making and pedagogical reasoning.

This textbook-centred approach to teaching reflects some education realities in China.

For the authority's point of view, the textbook:

- i) is an effective medium to transmit new teaching philosophy and methodology,
- ii) ensures standardisation of teaching in diverse settings (in terms of resources, facilities, teacher qualifications and command of the language),
- iii) assures the breadth and depth of input for the national examination.

From the teacher's point of view, the textbook:

- iv) provides relevant and necessary knowledge and language input under conditions where teaching resources and innovations are inaccessible or limited,
- v) provides guidance on how and what to teach,
- vi) ensures appropriate and adequate teaching for the national examination,
- vii) accords with traditional teacher-centred and textbook-centred teaching methods.

The revised College English syllabus (1999) stated that the teaching materials are intended to provide the best language examples for classroom teaching. The textbook is presented as the centre of classroom teaching, the classroom is presented as a place for practising the target language. Again, the traditional teacher-centred and textbook-centred methods are consolidated.

In China, syllabuses are the standards to assure the realisation of national goals or curriculum reform, to regulate English teaching for 87 million secondary school students and 13 million university students (Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, 2004), and to prepare them for the national examinations. Teachers treat the syllabus as a directive document that no teaching should and can deviate from without approval from higher levels. They all adhere closely to the published syllabus and the recommended textbooks. The relationship between the syllabus, recommended textbooks, and the teacher is top-down linear trilateral. The politically engineered curriculum directs the content, format and the philosophy of the textbooks. With the help of the teacher's book, the textbooks dictate the teaching methods of the teacher and standardise the learning content.

A nationally unified teaching syllabus with central guidelines on what, when and how to teach seems an inevitable necessity for a big country with diverse teaching and learning environments.

Unfortunately, this degree of control allows very little flexibility in the content, time schedule, teaching method and teaching materials.

Teaching Approach

Although syllabus changes have been made from time to time, the new input does not seem to have a major impact on the philosophy of education. In the first draft of the revised College English Syllabus (1998: 7), the committee reminded the writers and teachers of the importance of the inherited, long-established and effective teaching experience in China alongside borrowed western methods of language teaching. The old Chinese ideology that the teacher is the source and supplier of the knowledge remains, despite reform and requests for change. This established belief and the experience in learning Classical Chinese naturally sustain the Audio-lingual and the Grammar-Translation approaches when teaching and learning the foreign language (Ma, 1999). (see Appendix 1 for the summary of EFL development in China)

Li, Z. (1999), an experienced university English teacher in China, commented that the Chinese classroom still exhibits a traditional teaching approach. Teachers stand in front of the classroom while large numbers of students sit in rows of desks facing the blackboard. The teaching method is dominated by the lecture mode. Students memorise information provided by the teacher through lectures and reproduce it in some kind of examination. Success in learning is attributed to traditional virtues, such as personal modesty, self-discipline, and obedience to authority.

In 1997 and 1998, a total of twenty secondary school teachers from both key and ordinary schools teaching junior forms English in Guangzhou and Shanghai were observed after trialling the communicative syllabus for a few years (Ng & Tang, 1999). These schools were using the same textbooks Junior English for China, the classroom setting was identical and the classroom practices seemed to be well-established. The teaching procedures and the methods of delivery were rigidly similar among teachers as they all followed the procedures and methods suggested in the teachers' book, involving a five-step method of teaching: revision, presentation, drilling, practice and consolidation. This typical format was orchestrated by the methodology underlying the textbook, or written in the teacher's book.

Standardisation of teaching was also reinforced by group lesson preparation. Each week, all teachers teaching the same level discussed the schedule, planned the lesson and observed teaching. The teaching schedule and methods used among teachers teaching the same level in the same school were uniform as set in the standardized lesson planning session. Teachers also attended public showcase lessons arranged by the Provincial Education Committee, aiming at copying the teaching skills of the model teacher.

Similarly, at university, collective lesson planning is organized by the teaching and research group. Teachers teaching the same level prepare Chinese translation of the vocabulary, lay down a detailed lesson plan, discuss the emphasis of the teaching points, prepare quizzes or examinations and exchange their experiences of teaching. It appears that standardization is a guarantee of quality teaching.

The educational realities force teachers to stick closely to the national syllabus and the recommended textbooks and to sustain the teacher-centred approach. This teacher-centred, textbook-centred and standardized approach accords with that reported by Ross (1992). Ross argued that the conformity of teaching through uniform lesson planning and public showcase lessons helped equalize every student's learning conditions in diverse teaching and learning environments.

Learning Behaviour

Imitation and repetition are common in Chinese classrooms. They characterize all EFL classes at secondary school. Imitation is emphasized when doing oral work. The teacher demonstrates pronunciation and intonation in an exaggerated manner. Then learners mimic together and an individual learner is asked to produce an exact reproduction. As Wong (1988) pointed out, Classical Chinese was traditionally learnt through imitation. Learners were expected to follow the teacher closely, and if they could do exactly the same as their teacher did, the transfer was deemed successful and the learners were believed to have learned their lesson.

Repetitive practice has become a means to achieve imitation. Today it is usually conducted in the form of oral drills and written exercises. Since imitation is taken to mean successful learning, oral

drills are considered an important classroom activity for learners to follow and remember. In teaching pronunciation, intonation, and useful expressions, it is common to hear learners chanting loudly and repeatedly after the teacher. Grammar and vocabulary items are usually practised after class. The teacher will explain the grammar points and new words in detail in class, and this is then followed by home assignments. The taught language items will be exhaustively explored by completing the workbook and the mechanical exercises prepared by the teacher. Although exercises are tedious, they are considered as the only way to learn the foreign language and learners are expected to engage in exercises on the teacher's command (Campbell & Zhao, 1993, OuYang, 2000).

Although many western educationalists reject rote learning, the method is highly regarded by Chinese learners, teachers and textbook writers. Memorizing (becoming familiar with the text), understanding, reflecting and questioning (self-questioning) are the basic components of learning in the Confucian tradition (Lee, 1996:36), further developed by followers of Confucius. Zhu Xi, a neo-Confucian thinker of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), believed that the path to learning was through reciting, thinking and understanding, and Wang Yangming, a great scholar in the Ming Dynasty (1367-1643), described memory, understanding and incorporation as the three significant processes of learning. In modern society, according to Crook (1985), mechanical memorization has been supported and reinforced by study of the party politics, a compulsory subject at all levels of schooling. Politics lectures encouraged unquestioning repetition of communist dogma.

Memorization is mentioned explicitly in the syllabus as one of the abilities to be developed alongside language skills (English Syllabus for Senior Secondary, 1995). Mechanical memorisation is considered as the most efficient way of learning words and that is what Chinese learners do most of the time (Zhang, 1997, Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). Most university students regularly spend time every morning memorizing at least fifteen to twenty words from the syllabus, from the textbooks or other English books available (Li & Li, 1991:69).

Wong (1988), in her critical review of research into the learning of English by Chinese speakers, pointed out that the Chinese acquire literacy through a language which has no "concrete script-

speech relations”. In learning to read in Chinese, Chinese learners resort to “rote memorization of the meaning(s) associated with a word of a certain configuration”. This is practised by children as young as three, when they are in the kindergarten. Wong argues that memorization is a learning strategy transferred from learning the Chinese language to learning the foreign language. When learners start learning the foreign language at the age of 11 or 12 in the secondary school, it is easier and safer for them to apply the same strategy – a strategy which has been developed and tested satisfactorily in the past - to learn the new language.

In addition to historical and developmental reasons, memorization also seems to be practised as a matter of pragmatism. In a study conducted by Garrott (1993), a sample of 512 university learners in China rated it as one of the six most popular methods for effective studying, although they also considered that memorizing without understanding, memorizing dictionary definitions and memorizing words without using them idiomatically were some of the least effective methods of learning a language.

A further study by Marton et al. (1996) drew on interview data from seventeen Chinese teacher-educators who were questioned about their views on learning, understanding, memorising and teaching-learning relationships. The teachers’ concepts of learning were found to involve understanding and memorising - they asserted that understanding required memorising, and memorising could facilitate understanding. They believed that after repeated exposure to learning materials, new ideas would emerge that would help deepen understanding. Thus it would appear that, at least in the eyes of the teachers in this study, Chinese learners are not necessarily rote-learners. Memorisation by repetitive learning seems to have potential as a deep strategy to achieve understanding (Biggs, 1996; Marton et al., 1996; Haller et al., 2007).

All these studies reported that Chinese learners and teachers acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of memorization in the process of learning. Although Western scholars consider memorization to be a surface approach to learning, the studies suggest that Chinese learners see themselves as deep learners.

Examinations

The role of education in the Chinese context is to achieve social upward mobility through success in high-stake public examinations. The education system in China is often described as examination-oriented (Thogersen, 1990; Cleverley, 1991; Lewin et al., 1994; Biggs & Watkins, 1996). Current primary and secondary school curriculum does not seem to provide any breakthrough (Wong, 2007). The education system is over-shadowed by examinations and assessments – both external and internal, formal and informal, big and small (see Appendix 2 for the education and examination systems in China). The importance of assessment can also be judged by provisional policy. In the days of the Higher Institutions Entrance Examination, major cities of China were under strict traffic control (Apple Daily, 8 July 2002, A20). All vehicles were forbidden to blow their horns and all motor cycles had to switch off their engines. Police were mobilized to deliver exam papers and to ensure swift traffic flow to all examination venues. The intensity and pressure of examination is enforced by people from all walks of life. Each year, there are about 7 million senior secondary school students sitting for the national university entrance examination. Only 2.2 million of them will be accepted.

Evaluative assessment, which is crucial in the Chinese education system, has been made compulsory for English. Formal provincial and nation-wide examinations in English now serve as a means of personal advancement. All sorts of formal and official tests and examinations start at secondary levels. The examinations at 15 and 18 are crucial. They are large-scale standardised tests administered at provincial and national levels. The test results determine where the students continue study (at a key school/university (v) or at an ordinary one), or whether they go to work. Testing in secondary schools is extremely frequent. It is considered as an effective measure to revise the taught items, to check the progress of the students and to filter students who are lagging behind.

Examination in the Chinese context is meritocratic, competitive and elitist. It is a popular indicator of good teaching and learning, as plainly written in the syllabus. The national examinations in China are all syllabus-referenced. Thus, the teaching syllabus is also the examination syllabus. The pressure stemming from the nature of the examination leads to heavy reliance on teaching and learning methods that are proven to be effective. The traditional teacher-

centred approach, spoon-feeding and memorisation have their place. It is believed that more teaching, more exercises, more tests and more recitation will lead to more marks.

The enduring nature of the examination has conditioned the form and content of the education system and indicates the functional value of examinations for Chinese society (Miyazaki, 2001). It also motivates students to work harder. Unger (1980; quoted in Lewin et al., 1994) studied urban schools in Guangzhou during the Cultural revolution period when the education system almost collapsed, revealing that examinations were one of the prime motivators for learning and education. Unger remarks that if the link between academic qualifications and educational and occupational futures was broken, most students would lack motivation to pay attention in class.

Wang (2002) pointed out that the assessment of English is too knowledge-oriented and both teachers and students feel overburdened by examinations. Qi (2000) studied the washback effect on school teaching and learning. She interviewed seven test constructors, twelve teachers and twelve students and distributed two sets of questionnaire to three hundred teachers and one thousand students who were involved in the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), a norm-referenced standardised proficiency university entry test. She found that some intentions of the test constructors are met and some are not. For example, language skills and knowledge are successfully tested, but pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge is not. Some intentions triggered unwanted classroom practices. The teaching of writing led the teachers to focus on good handwriting and neatness. The teaching of reading aloud and pronunciation led to rote learning of spelling and pronunciation rules. Teachers prepared long lists for rote learning of spelling and pronunciation. She concluded that the influence of high-stake tests on teaching and learning is direct and immediate. However, the relationship is far more complex than is often assumed.

The complexity of assessment can be diagnosed from different perspectives. First, the national examination is always used by the society to evaluate schools and by schools, parents and students to evaluate teachers. The performance of the students in the examination will directly rebound on teachers' ability and status. Second, the intentions of the test constructors are implicit, ambiguous, and unclear in the syllabus. It is not clear how the result of the high stake test and the test format could possibly induce positive washback. Third, the marking criteria are

not transparent. Thus, anything that can help students to score marks and to impress the markers will be drilled and practised in the learning process. Teachers help students to practise exam skills, which is also a way to obtain high scores. Finally, the two groups of people have different kinds of job and serve different “bosses” who have different requirements and expectations. The test constructors work for the State and they are not personally responsible for the achievement of the students, not observed and monitored by the socio-cultural environment and expectations. On the other hand, the teacher’s mission, imposed by the education system, society, principal, parents, colleagues and students, is to help student get high scores in the exam.

The Contemporary English Classroom

The strong social orientation that puts emphasis on moral instruction, the immutable teacher-centred methods, the practice of rote learning and memorization, and the selection of excellence through examination are the characteristics of traditional Chinese education. They are also the prevailing features of the philosophy of education in modern China. It cannot be denied that Confucian concepts pervade the history of Chinese education and form the backbone of the philosophy of education in modern China.

The latest English syllabuses at primary, secondary and university levels have shown an emphasis on the use of English. The word lists were modified and the format of national examinations was changed to include a test of spoken English. On the one hand, the revised syllabuses called for the retention of the inherited ways of teaching and learning particularly effective in the Chinese context. On the other hand, the revised syllabuses required teachers to make tremendous changes in their approach to language (from knowledge-oriented to competence-oriented), teaching (from explanation-centred to elicitation centred), learning (from recitation-based to utilization-based) and methods (from authority-dominated to interaction-dominated). Teachers suffered from a sense of ideology conflict, a clash in cultural beliefs, however, and did not receive adequate retraining (Tang, 2001).

In face of pressure for change, eclecticism is widely promoted and accepted by teachers as the most appropriate approach (Wu, 1983; Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; G. Hu, 2005b). Whether all teachers have the same understanding and interpretation of this term and whether it is a compromise, an

avoidance strategy, or a defined new approach is unknown. The eclectic era could become the lost era unless teachers make use of opportunities to test the possibilities and to search for improvement and advancement. Despite the promotion of communicative language teaching as a “flexible” and “handy” approach, most teachers have now come back to the grammar-translation method (GT) after trying one method after another (Zheng et al., 1997; He, 1999). Jiang (2008) further affirmed that the classroom in China lacked interaction and modern teaching method even though most classrooms were equipped with multi-media facilities.

There is no such thing as good or bad language teaching, there is only teaching that is appropriate or inappropriate (Spolsky, 1989) or effective or ineffective (Harmer, 2001). The Great Chinese leader, Deng Xiao Peng, once said to his people: “No matter whether it is a black cat or a white cat, a cat that catches a mouse is a good cat”. If students believe that full mastery of knowledge will come when maximum input is received, the way Chinese teachers teach in class with explicit and elaborated instructions perfectly matches the expectations of the students. If a teaching method can facilitate learning experience, it is an appropriate, effective and good method. One means of judging teaching quality is the students’ performance in those crucial public examinations. When the methods are proven to be effective in achieving good performance in the examination and are accepted by the students, parents, teachers and the school administrators, it is just unconvincing to ask the teachers to take the risk of replacing the old with the new and to change the teaching style that actually meets the expectations of the stakeholders. However, the actual ability of the student cannot be validated by the examination as, for example, a good result in the national English examination does not necessarily imply that the student is proficient in English. It can only reflect how well the student knows the contents of the syllabus.

To depict the learning styles of Chinese learners, a number of studies showed similar results. Zhou, R. (1992) investigated the specific learning styles that teachers feel to be most beneficial on the premise that teachers will probably choose related teaching modes to promote such ways of learning. Zhou surveyed 50 in-service middle school teacher-trainees aged 25 to 40 years old on their preferred learning styles. In a questionnaire study, these teachers were found to believe that grammar was not an essential part of learning but that error-correction was a very important aspect of a teacher’s role.

Another study conducted by Tan (1992) surveyed 300 students from a normal (teacher training) university on their learning style preferences. The results showed that these teacher trainees had a strong preference for individual learning and kinesthetic learning. 94% had a negative attitude towards group learning. The results of the students' learning style preferences correspond to Zhou, R.'s (1992) findings on teachers' learning style preferences. Both teachers and students are inclined to the traditional teaching and learning methods. A teacher-centred and knowledge-oriented instructional mode was highly favoured. These findings suggest that the teacher-centred approach is still dominant in the Chinese middle school English classroom. These teacher-trainees preferred learning on their own outside class, reading novels, newspapers and studying English books. They were not keen on group work, classroom interaction and class activities. Thus, if these front-line teachers and teacher trainees feel that they can benefit from these learning modes, they will probably choose related teaching methods to promote such ways of learning.

At tertiary level, the traditional teaching and learning styles prevails. Yu (2007) surveyed 60 third year college students on their learning beliefs and styles and found a close relationship between knowledge-oriented instructional mode (i.e. form-focused belief and mother-tongue learning strategy) and the assessment which tested the language knowledge. In a recent study, Gao (2008) found that all his 14 subjects studying at tertiary vocational institutes adopted exam-oriented strategies in learning English. Gao claimed that the strategy used is the outcome of the pedagogical practices which emphasized on the survival in the highly competitive academic environment. This suggests a strong relationship between examination and learning styles or even.

Throughout Chinese classrooms, we find the shared methodology and culture inherited, evolved and consolidated to form the "Chinese characteristics" of education. These Chinese characteristics are inherited, enduring and reinforcing. It is simply unwise to disregard the Chinese phenomenon of learning English when instructing the Chinese learners.

Concluding remarks

Western educators and researchers present education philosophy in China with the characteristics of large class size, highly authoritarian, expository teaching methods, exam oriented, strict discipline and unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher correctly, but it is unfair to interpret the Chinese characteristics entirely negatively. The precedents, the nation, the way the Chinese learn their own language and the Chinese culture interweave and model teaching practice and learning behaviour. Chinese culture, in particular, pre-determines and preserves the framework of teaching and learning beliefs which suit the Chinese people. The Confucian conservatism which constitutes a strong heritage prevails in the Chinese education system through highly centralized curricula, which are characterized by textbook-centredness, teacher-centredness and examination-centredness (OuYang, 2000). The western perspective on language teaching and learning, in a way, neglects the washback effect of examinations. These, however, are judged to be outdated and unimaginative. The traditional way of learning through imitation and memorization is always criticized as unconstructive and passive.

Nevertheless, the Chinese teaching and learning context is very different from the context of the target language countries (Scovel, 1983; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Gui, 1985; Melton, 1990; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; You & Jia, 2008). The teaching and learning behaviours share a solid historical and cultural tradition and are of proven pedagogical value. They also support the education realities that involve the greatest number of EFL learners in diverse teaching and learning environments. Indeed, it is not easy at all for two distinct teaching and learning cultures to accommodate each other. The national pride of the Chinese towards their own cultures, society and history may make it even harder for them to accept new approaches and methods, particularly from the west, which will shake these traditions and cultures. It is not surprising that resistance or hurdles will be encountered especially when there exists the ideology conflict.

In recent years, task-based learning (TBL) has become the orthodox of ESL/EFL teaching. Willis (1996) claimed that task-based learning is better than the traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice and Production) model as it offers greater opportunities for language exposure, spontaneously and planned use of the language, and active participation from learners. However, most Chinese learners are not familiar with a pair work or group work, independent learning, and meaning-

focused activities, which characterize a TBL lesson. Poor classroom management, mixed student abilities, low learning motivation and examination pressure worries teachers (Ng and Tang 1999). With such enduring and unique characteristics, the Chinese style of education deserves recognition and respect while borrowing the western pedagogy. It is logical to argue that failure to discern these Chinese characteristics or the complexity of teaching practices and learning styles might ruin the teaching and learning process in the East meets West classroom.

As suggested by Tang (2004), a successful TBL lesson in the Chinese language classroom is a fusion rather than a transformation of classroom practices. Some basic principles were identified (ibid:15):

1. The TBL lessons are part of the regular teaching schedule and the teaching contents are part of the teaching syllabus.
2. Authentic materials and tasks are adopted to provide real-life contexts for meaningful communication.
3. IT resources are incorporated to assist teaching and learning and to increase the authenticity of tasks.
4. Less-demanding and receptive tasks come earlier than demanding and productive tasks or the first few tasks act as language models or input for learners to produce their own language later.
5. A variety of task types are used to allow learners' repeated exposure to the language in different forms and modes.
6. A variety of classroom organizations are integrated to allow independent and collaborative learning.
7. Form-focus activities through consciousness-raising or paying attention to the input/output of the tasks are included into meaning-focus tasks.

This paper reveals the history, ideology, structure, centralisation, development and political maxims of English teaching and learning in the Chinese education system. In particular, some generally recognised Chinese styles of teaching and learning which bear negative connotations are discussed. However, there are positive elements in this culturally specific phenomenon and

that their value needs to be recognized. When cultural exchanges are frequent in the era of globalization, an understanding of the historical and cultural background which influences learning will inform teaching practices that are appropriate for the development of an engaging and productive learning environment, as well as, for the achievement of desirable learning outcomes.

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Appendix 1: Summary of EFL development in China

Periods	Major events	Syllabus	Pedagogy	Textbooks
Before 1862	<p>The first foreign language school was established in 1289.</p> <p>The major foreign language in the 13th century was Persian. It was taught for political, social and economic reasons.</p> <p>From 1818 to 1861, English teaching was first in by the missionaries from America and Britain. But the number of schools and students were limited and thus English teaching was not significant.</p>	<p>information not available</p>	<p>information not available</p>	<p>information not available</p>
1862 – 1910	<p>In 1862, the first School of Combined Learning (京師同文館) was set up in Beijing by the Qing Government. English was learned as one of the school subjects. English was the most popular language under the “semi-colonised” political scenario in the late Qing Dynasty.</p>	<p><u>secondary school</u></p> <p>To attend 5 hours per week on spelling, pronunciation, grammar and reading.</p>	<p>It was believed that translation was the major teaching and learning activity.</p>	<p>English textbooks were written by Chinese linguists and published by local publishers.</p>

	<p>In 1895, universities began English teaching.</p> <p>In 1902, the Education Commissioner laid down the English syllabus for secondary schools. English was made the major foreign language at secondary schools.</p>	<p><u>university</u></p> <p>To do writing, reading aloud, grammar, sentence patterns and translation.</p>		
<p>1911 – 1948</p> <p>Kuomin-tang (KMT) period</p>	<p>English teaching expanded rapidly. English as a foreign language enjoyed the most favoured and prestigious role at universities under semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism.</p> <p>Lectures, reference books and teaching materials were all in English.</p> <p>In 1932 and 1934, the first cross-province uniform English achievement test at university level was conducted for research purposes (Li and Cheung 1988: 286-292).</p>	<p><u>secondary school</u></p> <p>To attend 6 – 9 hours per week in pronunciation, spelling, reading, translation, dictation, conversation, grammar, calligraphy, sentence-making and composition.</p>	<p>Direct method was adopted with the assistance of the many western teachers in the semi-colonial political environment.</p>	<p>Most widely-used textbooks were written by local linguists or foreign teachers working in China</p> <p>Books from western countries were also adopted in teaching or</p>

	<p>In 金陵女子大學 all students studied English in their 1st and 2nd years. They needed to get a mandatory pass on the reading comprehension and usage test before proceeding to the third year (Li and Cheung 1988:297).</p> <p>In 1948, national English syllabuses for junior secondary and senior secondary were approved. The concept of evaluative and uniform achievement tests flourished.</p>	<p><u>university</u> no official syllabus</p>		<p>as reading materials</p>
<p>1949 – 1965 People’s Republic of China (PRC) period</p>	<p>The closing down of the Schools of Combined Learning led to demand and development of foreign language university and comprehensive university.</p> <p>The teaching of Russian as a foreign language was enforced at secondary and university levels when the New China was founded.</p> <p>In 1956, College English was established for all non-English major university students to</p>	<p>To learn vocabulary, grammar and translation.</p>	<p>Kairov’s methods of “teachers as leaders and students as learning subjects” - a way to understand the revolutionary ideology, was widely practised.</p>	<p>The national textbooks, English, (Series 1-5) were published by People’s Education Press (PEP). In 1961, professors from Fudan University, Shanghai,</p>

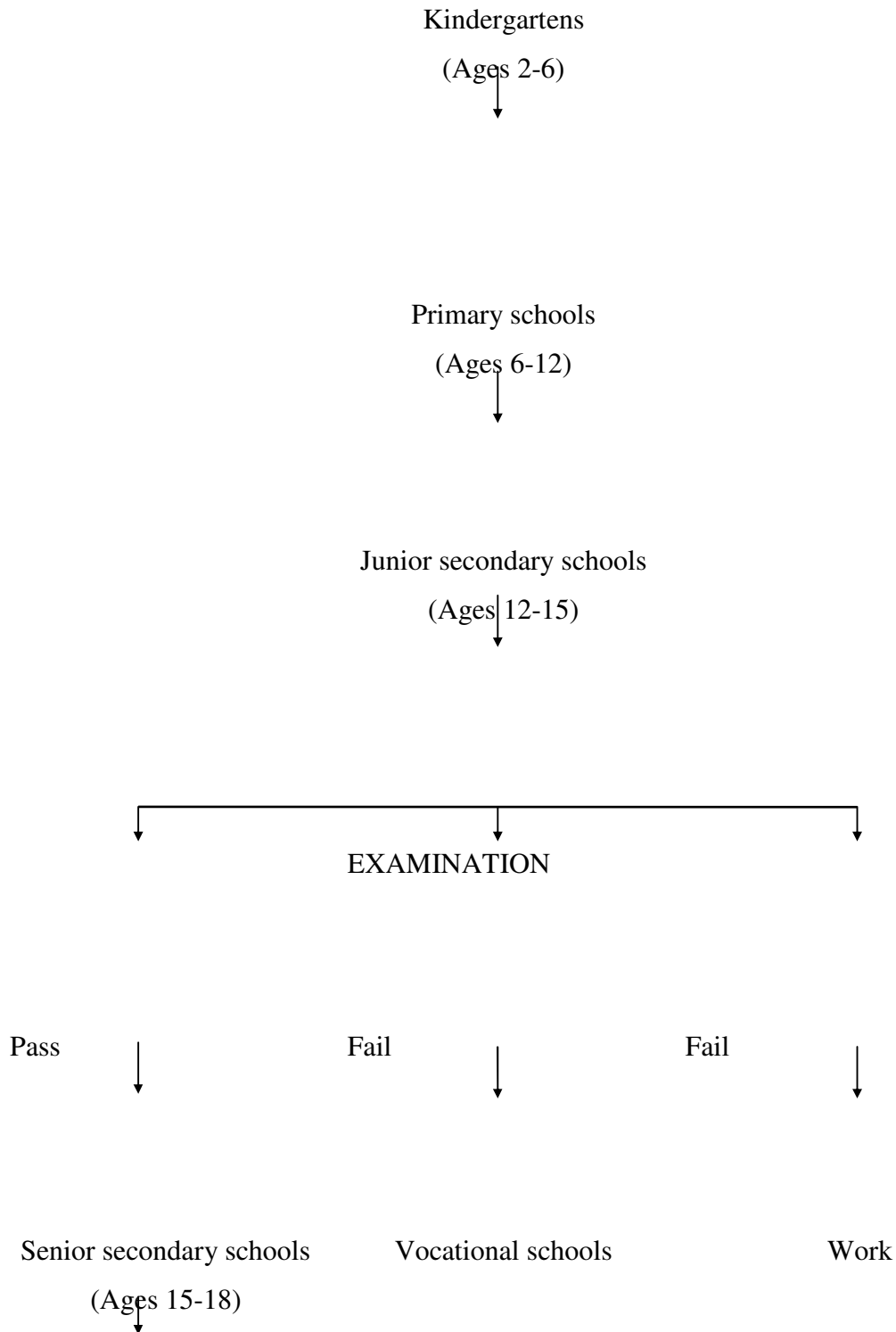
	<p>study English as their first foreign language.</p> <p>From 1957, English teaching resumed gradually at all levels.</p>		<p>Grammar-translation, Audio-lingualism</p>	<p>compiled a set of English textbooks for non-major university students.</p>
<p>1966 – 1976</p> <p>Cultural Revolution</p>	<p>English teaching halted.</p> <p>English reappeared in the curriculum in 1970 but with no official syllabus.</p>	<p>To teach vocabulary list, translation, grammar exercises.</p>	<p>Grammar-translation replaced Audio-lingualism because of the “unhealthy connotation” with the American language learning method.</p>	<p>Textbooks were produced at provincial and municipal levels with political texts</p>
<p>1977 – 1984</p> <p>Modernisation period under PRC</p>	<p>The Open door policy in 1977 and the Four Modernisation programmes (agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology) proclaimed in 1979 led to enthusiasm for learning foreign languages throughout the</p>	<p>To develop reading and self-learning abilities with basic skills in listening,</p>	<p>Grammar-translation, Audio-lingualism</p> <p>Grammar was taught explicitly and</p>	<p>Textbooks, English (Series 5-6), published in 1977 and revised in 1982 in accordance</p>

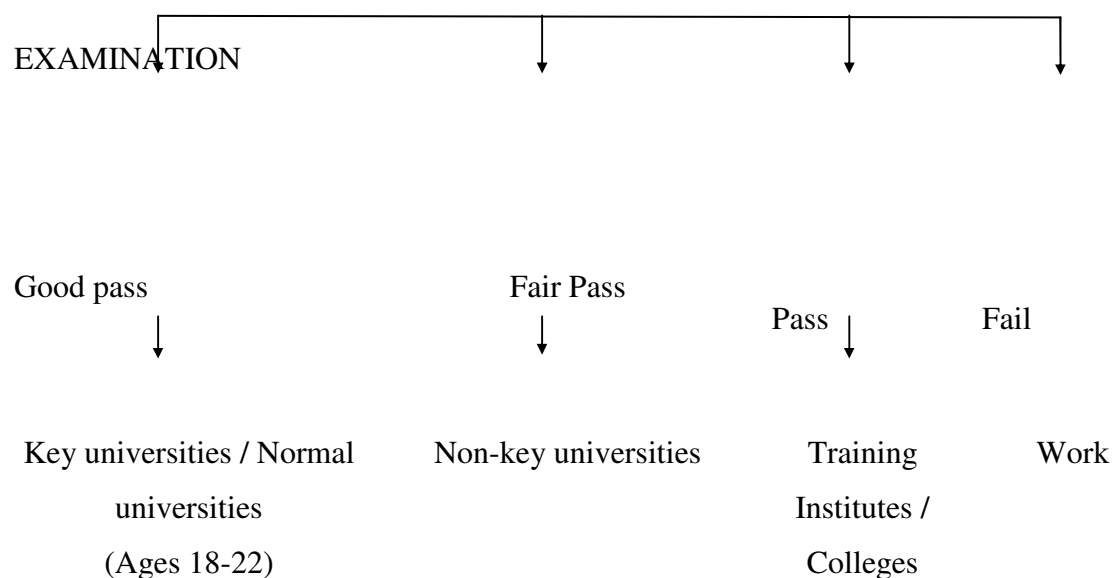
	<p>country.</p> <p>English is seen as a utilitarian tool to catch up with the West. Interpreters, translators, proficient scientists and technology specialists were in demand.</p> <p>Acute shortage of English teachers led to imprudent decision of retraining and converting the Russian language teachers to English teachers.</p> <p>In 1978, English as the first foreign language was made compulsory for all non-English major university students.</p> <p>The 80's saw the breakthrough of English education at university. Since 1983, the English results in the National Entrance Examination have been counted for university admission.</p>	<p>speaking and writing.</p>	<p>explanations in Chinese were given in the textbooks.</p>	<p>with the syllabuses, were used nation-wide.</p>
<p>After 1985</p>	<p>Large scale education reform was endorsed. Nine-year</p>	<p><u>secondary school</u></p>	<p>Eclectic</p>	<p>National textbooks,</p>

<p>Educational reform under PRC</p>	<p>compulsory education was promulgated in 1985.</p> <p>In 1985 and 1986, the National College English syllabus was endorsed and released.</p> <p>In 1987, the College English Test (CET) for non-English major was introduced. to measure English achievement.</p> <p>In 1992, the new English syllabus for junior secondary schools was introduced.</p> <p>In 1995, the new English syllabus for senior secondary schools was implemented.</p> <p>In 1999, a revised College English syllabus for students of Arts and Sciences was released with a revised word list.</p>	<p>To develop the ability to use the language as a tool for communication through the training of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.</p> <p><u>university</u></p> <p>“To develop a relatively high level of competence in reading, an intermediate level of competence in Listening and a basic competence</p>		<p>English (Series 7-8)</p> <p>A new recommended set of textbooks, Junior English for China and Senior English for China, was published by PEP.</p> <p>A new set of College English for university non-English major students was published in 1986 and revised in 1997.</p>
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		e in writing and speaking.” (College English Syllabus 1995: 1)		
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Appendix 2: Education and Examination Systems in China





- (i) Gui (1985:116) stated that “the upsurge of foreign language learning has always been a thermometer of China’s zeal for modernization”. The ups and downs were manipulated by the decision-makers depending on the political and economic climate.

After the Open Door Policy in 1977, English learning was greatly promoted by the Party Leaders for patriotic reasons and economic modernisation - to obtain the latest technology and information from the West and to develop trade. English has been learnt not only for patriotic reasons of national modernisation and advancement, but also for communication and knowledge acquisition. English is now seen as the key to a vast store of readily available knowledge which is essential to speed up the modernisation process, since 85% of the scientific and technological information in world-wide informational storage and retrieval networks is in English (see Graddol 1997).

- (ii) See Lau (1992), Hoobler and Hoobler (1993), Scollon and Scollon 1994, and Tu 1993 for reviews of Confucian thoughts. Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.) is also called ‘the First Teacher’ or ‘the Master’. His discussions with his disciples, teachings and standards of conduct were recorded by his learners in the book called *The Analects (Lun Yu)*. The *Analects* was one of the Chinese Classics (the Four Books: *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Analects* and *Meng Zi*, and the Five Classics, *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of History*, *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Books of Changes*) that used to be studied extensively and thoroughly by scholars and leaders at school and for examinations until the imperial examination system was abolished in the early 20th century. Chinese leaders and scholars were all brought up on these Chinese Classics which shared Confucian thought. The Confucian system is described as “the philosophical, moral, ethical, bureaucratic and social ins and outs of a historical tradition of over 3,000 years ...” (Scollon and Scollon 1994: 8). It is the social and ethical responsibility preached by Confucius.

- (iii) Examination in China has a long history. The concept of assessment and examination started in the Shang Dynasty (1700 – 1100 BC). Selective examinations and tests were introduced as a means to select talented people to serve the government as officials, and were also considered as steps towards the goal of personal exemplification and sagehood (Tu 1993). The examination system guaranteed a certain degree of social mobility and a gateway to success in traditional Chinese society (Thogersen 1990). It was norm-referenced. Academic success or failure was associated with personal achievement and the pride of parents and the family (Salili 1996). Nowadays, the examination system is a pyramid and results in progressive selection in the academic development process. There is a direct connection between school performance, academic advancement and career opportunities and the relationship between academic success and the social norm of examination is solidly affirmed.
- (iv) The textbook writing process in China was highly controlled. In the past, the writing was done by a designated group of professors. Secondary textbooks were subscribed centrally, and publication and distribution were carried out centrally. All English textbooks in China were published by the national People's Education Press (PEP), regarded as popular, trustworthy and authoritative. In the remote areas, there were always not enough textbooks for the students. Usually, only one set of recommended textbooks is used as the sole teaching materials throughout the country. The *College English* textbooks, which were published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, contain series on Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, Focus Listening, Fast Reading, and Grammar and Exercises. The series have received the Best Teaching Materials Awards from the National Higher Institutions and Excellent Teaching Materials Award from the State Education Committee (Higher Institutions) and dominated the market as the sole appropriate textbooks used in the country. Although some other textbooks have emerged in the last two years, they are not as widely used and popular as this series.
- (v) The naming of a school as a key school or ordinary school started in the early 60's, was abolished during the Cultural Revolution and was reintroduced in 1977. When the concept of the key school was first established, the aim was to train specialised personnel of higher quality for the country. Children with good academic and political abilities were selected to the key schools. In the late 70's, key schools were for the educational elite. They aimed to train a small group of highly qualified scientists and cultivate them through a good educational track. In 1980, the National Key School Work Conference recommended a reduced number of key schools and altered the aim to experimenting with new teaching methods. Their current role is to produce higher quality teaching and advanced experiences for other schools to model. They are the focal point for development. All key schools receive considerable support in terms of resources and decision-making. Because of the standing of key schools, they are highly prized among students and parents and the entry competition is extremely keen.



Title

From EFL to ELF: Spotting the Blind Spots

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Abstract

The increasing spread of English as an international language (EIL), a seemingly provocative and intriguing issue, has raised many controversial questions over the practical realities of teaching in EFL contexts. It is believed that insisting on the English of the Inner Circle countries, as the axiomatic norm of teaching is not only an untenable and rather undemocratic policy, but it is an ideologically and politically laden approach as well. In effect, as many scholars claim, it is this monolithic native-speaker oriented policy which has fanned the flame of marginalization of the English speakers in many EFL milieus. Such discussions have encouraged a move from English as a foreign

language (EFL) to English as a lingua franca (ELF). The present paper, therefore, argues that in our attempt to set more realistic and democratic goals for English learners in Outer and Expanding Circle countries, we might lose sight of many probable challenges. ELF is, then, criticized with regard to five facets of native speaker, culture, critical pedagogy, assessment and public attitude. These critical points are put forth in order to help ELF reach a sounder and more defensible position among theoreticians as well as practitioners.

Keywords: English as an International Language, critical pedagogy, English as a Lingua Franca

1. Introduction

Applied linguistics has viewed a noticeable extension of scope in the last decade. It has far passed the limited and limiting domains of linguistics as the only legitimate source of solution for pedagogical challenges and has incorporated a whole gamut of sources. It has also sought to do away with the unilateral conceptualization of teaching problems and unidirectional application of linguistics' findings into language classroom. In fact, as Widdowson (2000a & b) argues applied linguistics has taken up a mediating role and has concerned itself with a multilateral process, which has to relate and reconcile different representations of reality including that of linguistics without excluding others.

This broadening of scope is in a sense an attempt to put applied linguistics in its real and appropriate position in which it is not a mere consumer discipline but a fully productive one whose purpose according to Brumfit (1995) is "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real world problems in which language is a central issue" (p. 27). It is actually intended to legitimize applied linguistics to continue its existence as autonomously as possible. This autonomy, however, has in some cases led the field to take some quite radical steps and thus to start challenging some "fundamental linguistic as well as more conservative applied linguistic orthodoxies" (Cook, 2005, p. 282). One of these radical departures which can be conceptualized as a number of interwoven sub-departures is from English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) to English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF). The present article thus aims to, after

reviewing the basic tenets of ELF, enumerate some of the problematic points of ELF especially if it is to be applied as the subject of English language teaching.

2. Native speaker and colonization

One of the radical shifts, which can have influential consequences for language teaching, is the departure from the traditional concept of "native speaker". The literature of TEFL/TESL clearly shows the fact that "native speaker's competence, proficiency or the knowledge of the language is a necessary point of reference for the second language proficiency concept used in English teaching theory" (Stern, 1983, p. 341). For example the concept of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972; 1992) which is a fundamental column of SLA research tacitly demonstrates how language learner's competence is portrayed as involved in the process of approximating to that of native speaker in a cyclical and piecemeal manner. It is also presumed that any inability on the part of the language learner to reach the final point (i.e. the competence of the native speaker) is considered as incompetence or less pejoratively as pidginized language (see Schumann, 1978). Numerous SLA studies (Doughty & Varela, 1998; McKay, 1999; Mackey & Philip, 1998; Williams & Evans, 1998) have been carried out to see how classroom instruction can move learners' interlanguages across the continuum to get as near to the native speaker's competence as possible and thus minimize the likelihood of all sorts of errors in learners' performance.

Such a view in which the native speaker is the only point of reference has penetrated into and deeply affected many basic constructs of L2 pedagogy (e.g. proficiency, intelligibility, authenticity etc). A competent language learner, from this perspective, is the one who can perform in all four skills like a native speaker and can also easily and fully comprehend the linguistic products of the native speaker. Then it can easily be inferred how this native speakerism can shape our viewpoint regarding a good language learner, teacher, textbook and test and even influence our interpretation of a high score on a language test.

Nonetheless, this paradigm, which can be said to be a clear example of the unidirectional application of the so called irrevocable principles of linguistics to L2 teaching, was seriously

criticized by a number of applied linguists (e.g. Widdowson, 2000a, 2000b; Cook, 2005)) in light of the burgeoning number of nonnative speakers around the world. Graddol (1999) maintained that the number of people using English as their second language would grow from 235 million to 462 million during the next 50 years. Beneke (1991) also asserts that about 80 percent of the verbal exchanges in which English is used as a second or foreign language do not involve native speakers of English.

Possessing such a global status today, English seems to be learnt mostly for communicating with people who speak it as their additional language (i.e. nonnative speakers). For example, the likelihood for an English learner in Iran to travel to Dubai and have a casual conversations in English with Arab salespersons is absolutely much higher than travel to the US or the UK. Thus, the stereotypical Anglophone native speaker no longer seems to be the more probable interlocutor for the English learner. It appears that the increasing number of people from various parts of the world who have some familiarity with English has gradually changed it into a language of absolutely wider communication which is now spoken for great variety of purposes and is therefore considered the global lingua franca.

A note of caution seems necessary before proceeding to the next section. By following the discussion so far, the reader is very likely to have fallen into the trap of misreading the term 'native speaker' by interpreting it only in association with the language user. However, it should be noted that the term should also be interpreted in association with all the agents involved in all aspects and at all levels of English language teaching. Nonetheless the decline or metaphorically speaking the dethronement of the native speaker which is directly tantamount to giving voice to nonnative speakers can also be seen, from a more comprehensive perspective, as the downfall of colonial English and the dethronement of all the native agents involved in its teaching from teachers to policy makers. At the grand level, this dethronement of the native speaker and enthronement of the nonnative speakers is indeed an attempt to exonerate English from its colonialistic charges and thus purge it from its colonial past. In his discussion of Postmethod as a postcolonial construct Kumaravadivelu (2003) draws a distinction between nativization and decolonization with the former being a relatively simple process of indigenizing the phonological, syntactic and pragmatic aspects of the linguistic system of the English language

and the latter being a fairly complex process of taking control of the principles and practices of planning, learning and teaching English.

Treating method as a colonial construct, Kumaravadivelu (2003) enumerates four interrelated hegemonic dimensions of method, which should be departed from in the process of decolonization. These include scholastic, linguistic, cultural and economic dimensions. They simply refer to the marginalization of local knowledges, languages, cultures and economic agencies respectively. The relevance of these four dimensions to our discussion is that all appear to be present in the concept of English as a foreign language and are to be resisted and discarded in English as a lingua franca. The departure from the native speaker is thus (from a more comprehensive perspective like that of Kumaravadivelu, 2003) not only from their linguistic hegemony but also from their scholastic, cultural/ideological, and even economic hegemony as well. In effect the writings of many scholars (e.g. Mackey, 2002, 2003; Canagarajah, 1999; Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b; Philipson, 1992; Seidlhofer, 2001; Modiano, 2001) appear to lead us to accept that the concept of EFL is built on many imperialistic columns and ELF is therefore an attempt to deconstruct these columns and construct some imperialism-free ones. Comparatively we can therefore see EFL as a colonial construct (like method) and ELF as a postcolonial one (like Postmethod) and the movement from the former to the latter as a decolonizing movement.

In sum, our discussion so far included the journey from the so-called colonizing EFL to the so-called decolonized ELF. We discussed this journey as involving the departure not only from the English of the inner circle countries but also from the culture, academic knowledge and economic agencies of theirs. Although in this paper the focus will mostly be on the linguistic and cultural aspects of the journey, the other two (or many other) aspects are equally important. These aspects are, no doubt, so interrelated and interwoven that the accomplishment of one is impossible without regard to others.

3. ELF as the subject of language teaching

3.1. Linguistic dimensions of ELF

The global spread of English as mentioned earlier has resulted in its being spoken by people from many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This has led English to be adopted and in many cases adapted by these so-called nonnative speakers. This trend has then resulted in the development of many L1 Englishes with their particular features. Davies, Hamp-Lyons and Kemp (2003) for example refer to omission of verb proposition (e.g. draw sb's attention sth) or the use of superfluous 'that' (e.g. He pointed out that the surprising fact that more than forty percent of Hong Kong is still rural) as typical features of Malaysian English which has even penetrated into their tests of English. The use of many phrasal verbs with meanings different from those found in American or British English has also been attested as a specific feature of Singaporean English (*ibid.*). Different categorical variations as typical features of different L1 Englishes has also been attested in the literature.

These points of difference have led to an increase in the number of dictionaries and grammars of different Englishes like the Macquarie Dictionary which consist of words from different Southeast Asian Englishes. There are also numerous publications which deal with different aspects of world Englishes (e.g. Adamson, 2004; Bolton, 2002; Ho & Ward, 2000; Kachru, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2002; Pakir, 1992; Pennington, 1998). However as can be seen many of these varieties differ from the English of the inner circle to a lesser or greater extent. These differences may thus hinder intelligibility especially in cross-national interactions. Some attempts were therefore made to make a compromise and find out some basic features of English as a global Lingua Franca. We will very briefly refer to two groundbreaking of these attempts; one by Jenkins (2000) and the other by Seidlhofer (2004).

In an invaluable groundbreaking study, Jenkins (2000) tried to find out a basic set of phonological requirements for intelligibility in interactions in English as an international language. Based on the definition of intelligibility used by Smith and Nelson (1985) and also influenced by the ideas of Bansal (1990) and Ufomata (1990), Jenkins proposed her lingua franca core. Some of the features of her core include the omission of the first sounds of the words this and three as well as the omission of dark /l/ as unnecessary to intelligibility in international contexts and permitting their being replaced by some less marked similar sounds. The core though includes the maintenance of vowel length contrasts but does not permit the simplification

of initial consonant clusters. It also does not permit the de-aspiration of /p/, /t/ and /k/ in initial position. Jenkins (2000) believes that the “LFC gives a great deal of individual freedom to the speakers by providing them with the scope both to express their identities and to accommodate to their receivers” (p. 158).

The other major attempt and in a sense the most advanced ELF research project to date is Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE). Although the project is a very comprehensive one and is still being studied from many different perspectives by a group of experts, Seidlhofer (2004) focused on the lexicogrammatical aspects of ELF and reported some basic features of ELF lexicogrammar that have been found so far. As stated by Jenkins (2006a) Seidlhofer's “objective is to find out which items are used systematically and frequently, but differently from native speaker use and without causing communication problems, by expert speakers of English from a wide range of L1s” (p. 169). It can thus be said, in crude terms, that VOICE is an attempt to establish a lexicogrammatical core which will complement Jenkins' LFC.

Acknowledging that no reliable findings based on quantitative investigation can yet be reported, Seidlhofer (2004, p. 220) ,based on the findings of some theses and seminar projects, enumerates the following errors as unproblematic for communicative success and thus not in need of being allotted a great deal of time and effort in English lessons. They include

- Dropping the third person present tense –s
- Confusing the relative pronouns who and which
- Omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL
- Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., isn't it? or no? instead of shouldn't they?)
- Inserting redundant prepositions, as in We have to study about...)
- Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as do, have, make, put, take
- Replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses, as in I want that
- Overdoing explicitness (e.g. black color rather than just black).

The only important point worthy to be made here is that as these two major researches show attempts at the linguistic description of ELF are still in their very infancy and have not yet stood the test of time. Therefore, they seem to have a long way yet to travel to reach, if possible, their desired point of stability and common acceptability.

3.2. Ideological dimensions of ELF

One of the old debates in ELT is about the role of culture in language syllabuses and materials. Many traditional as well as many new perspectives have tried to dissect target culture into various segments and prioritize some over others. In fact, it was and at times is believed that the culture of the native speaker of the language is an inseparable part of that language. A number of scholars thus still agree with Hall (1959) that "communication is culture and culture is communication" (p.169). However, the dominance of such a viewpoint, many believe, has led to the abuse of language as an implicit medium of ideological and cultural inculcation. For instance, Modiano (2001) criticizes both American and British English in this respect:

British English promotes systems of exclusion and marginalization of class stratification and the preserving of traditional ways of living and thinking while American English represents a New World hegemony insensitive to how US mass-produced culture and aggressive multi-national corporate programs impact on both developed and developing nations. (p. 169)

Mckay (2003) also criticizes the insistence on the target culture and contends that "English belongs to its users and as such it is the users' cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy" (p.13). It appears thus that ELF should be free of any insistence on the culture of inner circle countries especially that of the US and the UK and should opt for more inclusive and local versions of culture.

Another ideological base of ELF is surely its loss of attention paid to native teachers and as is clear this is a reasonable byproduct of the native speaker's decline. It can logically be accepted that a language as such, which has reached a noticeable point of linguistic and

cultural/ideological divergence from the English of the inner circle, is no longer best taught by an Anglophone native speaker. This decrease of attention to native speaker teachers (and the resultant increase of attention to nonnative speaker teachers) can indeed be viewed, from a critical perspective, as an endeavor to counter the long lasting effects of many mainstream approaches to TESOL that has long paved the way for the marginalization of nonnative speakers and teachers. The issue of native speaker versus nonnative speaker teachers is also related to the economic aspect of our journey (out of the four I referred to above). It is argued that the fallacious preference for native speaker teachers has brought with it a great deal of financial power to inner circle countries, which have taken control of English teaching institutes and departments. Having discussed various points of departure and their intended destinations in the journey from EFL to ELF, it is now to some blind spots we refer.

4. Problematizing ELF

4.1. ELF and the native speaker

It was seen in the previous section that the most fundamental and defining tenet of ELF is its shift of attention from the prototypical concept of native speaker. Although tantalizing on the face of it, the idea is not so easy to manage at the practical level. The point is that the native speaker who is the point of reference in SLA research is not the one who necessarily speaks the language as his first tongue neither is he the one who is of a British or American origin. He is indeed an abstract speaker of the language who necessarily has the highest degree of proficiency in the language and is therefore at the highest level of ability in all four dimensions of the communicative competence. Put in crude terms, he is a speaker of language who has in his repertoire a wide range of communicative tools, which enable him to perform efficiently in a wide range of communicative events. Thus, he is able to modify his language to make it intelligible even to the least proficient users of the language. He is also able to understand the speech of these least proficient users of language as much as possible. This modification (or technically speaking accommodation) of language may even include trespassing the borders of grammaticality but even such an ungrammatical linguistic product is by no means a sign of inability or incompetence; on the contrary it is truly the sign of ability and competence.

The relevant point is that though ELF claims to be independent from the native speaker's model, which is the absolute point of reference in SLA research, it has not and cannot do away with a native speaker whose true characteristics were referred to above. The core of the problem, as is inferred from the claims of ELF scholars is basically with the definition of accuracy (in SLA) as perceived by an educated native speaker. It is in fact argued that any attempt to label the local Englishes as deficient is irrelevant on the grounds that it ignores their sociocultural context (Jenkins, 2006a). The point is that even if we do away with the concept of accuracy as perceived by the educated Anglophone native speaker and fully recognize the legitimacy and autonomy of local Englishes, we are still destined to stick to a point of reference for designating linguistic products at any level (e.g. morphology phonology, syntax and etc.) as accurate or inaccurate. This point of reference in ELF does not seem to be an alternative to native speaker; it is in our view an "alternative native speaker". And this reference to a kind of native speaker is apparently an inevitable fact in any medium of communication. Indeed we have to define a standard version of ELF (and standardness brings with it speakers of the standard) otherwise we should recognize (or rather tolerate) everything as possible and acceptable and thus allow the emergence of a myriad of languages originating from English. This inevitable necessity for defining standard ELF in order to preserve the code as a global medium of communication (which is easily read from the works of Jenkins and Seidlhofer) will unavoidably leave out a large number of variations (if not called errors hereby) which are produced by a large number of speakers as unacceptable or unintelligible. In a sense, ELF seems to be paradoxical with respect to its indictment of traditional native speaker models on the one hand and its opting for defining an alternative native speaker on the other. This alternative native speaker, although not completely defined yet, may therefore be the subject of the same charges as was the Anglophone native speaker.

The more problematic point is that this newly defined native speaker is basically an artificial entity, that is, (as we saw in the previous section) researchers are trying their best to define (or create) such a speaker relying heavily on the data of English language being spoken as the medium of communication among people with different L1 backgrounds. This artificiality and implicit traces of prescriptiveness, if not paid due attention to, may even lead ELF to be accused of being distributed and not spread and this is exactly what EFL is accused of (see Widdowson,

2003). It should however be acknowledged that ELF is absolutely much more liberal than EFL in accepting different variations as unproblematic but this acceptability is (and should be) still limited to the borders of intelligibility and successful accomplishment of communication.

In sum, we can argue that ELF researchers have not and cannot do away with the concept of native speaker as someone who speaks the language as proficiently as possible. So the only evident point they have done away with is the origin of these native speakers (i.e. inner circle). By so doing they have then tried to make a compromise among linguistic features of different Englishes of outer and expanding circle and thus respect their sociocultural identity. This seeking for compromise is clear from the works of many especially the two major ones we reviewed above (i.e. Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2004). Altogether this model is (and must be) loyal to some features which are considered as necessary and some others as unacceptable and from an SLA perspective those unacceptable features of a learner language are called errors and should be recognized and treated by the teacher to reach the point of acceptability. Consequently ELF researchers, though more tolerant than EFL ones, are still implicitly prescribing rules and by doing this are asking many speakers of English from different L1 backgrounds to conform to their rules be they phonological, lexicogrammatical or etc.

4.2. ELF and culture

As mentioned in the previous part, an issue, which has been more or less debated in the discussions of English as an international language, is the treatment of culture. It is in fact, argued that the American or British culture is no longer relevant to be part of a prospective ELF syllabus. This claim however should be approached with caution. Firstly, as we have seen many times, a number of learners of any language attend the classes for the interest they have in the culture or even the history of the country in which that language is spoken and discarding any discussion of the culture and history of that country may result in their noticeable loss of motivation. In fact, we see that here it is neither the teacher nor the curriculum designer who is imposing the culture but it is the student himself that is somehow yearning for that. In such situations, which are not infrequent, it is a bit unfair to believe in a theory of imposition, imperialism or conspiracy.

The second and in a sense a more important point is that the inclusion of target culture is not necessarily a positive advertisement for that culture; it can even be a starting point for criticism. Indeed the inclusion of parts of a culture can in fact familiarize the students with different aspects of that culture and enable them to carefully scrutinize them. It may also result in an epiphany for the students and make them appreciate their own culture more and even (although in some extreme cases) lead them to develop what Oller and Perkins (1978) call "Machiavellian motivation" (i.e. the desire to learn the L2 in order to manipulate and overcome the people of the target language). The third point to mention about the role of culture is that many believe that the cultural knowledge is in effect a necessary prerequisite to understanding the pragmatic meaning of utterances and thus certainly needed for the successful communication to take place. Widdowson (2003, p. 64) for instance states that "communication is then clearly closely related to community and culture. If you do not share a communal view, a common culture, and the linguistic categorization that goes with it, then communication will prove difficult". GudyKunst (2001) also points out that "the relationships between words and their referents are arbitrary and vary from culture to culture" (p.3). However if we accept such prevalent ideas like these the question that rises is what culture we should opt for and whether we can mix a wide range of cultures and present them with the label of international cultures in our teaching of English as a lingua franca or not.

It seems that, as we are concerned with culture as a set of customs and rituals, which can act as a source of content for presenting different skills, the problem is not a serious one. Actually, it is much more reasonable to acquaint the students with the customs of different peoples and these can certainly be very interesting and motivating. We can also include the local culture of the students and this as Akbari (2008) puts it "has the added value of enabling learners to think about the different aspects of the culture in which they live and find ways to bring about changes in the society where change is needed"(p.279). However even in this quite unproblematic case of the inclusion of the customs of different peoples, we should definitely be wary not to prioritize the culture of some people (e.g. the American) to that of others (e.g. the Chinese). Moreover, we should be careful in our treatment lest we select the most alluring and seemingly interesting points of a given culture and hide all the rather shocking and undesirable ones from the eyes of the students. By doing this we may, in effect, make them believe that a specific culture is

absolutely the richest and the most admirable of all and is therefore better than other cultures. This, by implication, means that the people of this specific cultural background are certainly better people in many regards than other peoples of the world.

The trouble of discarding any specific culture (in this case that of inner circle countries especially the US or the UK) as point of reference in ELF however rises when we see culture as underlying a set of linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors whose interpretation is dependent on the shared background (cultural) knowledge of the interlocutors. Any lack of such shared knowledge will, based on such a view of culture, lead to the breakdown of the communication or its misinterpretation on the part of one of the interlocutors or both. This can simply be exemplified in a conversation in which an American offers help to a Chinese, which is rejected by a simple answer "no thank you". This is then interpreted by the American as a clear and simple rejection of help while the Chinese never meant what he said but said that only based on his local culture, which considers this "NO" as a polite "yes". As is clear from this prototypical and cliché example, misinterpretations as such are highly probable in ELF conversations, in which we try not to stick to a specific culture as the accepted norm to which all should conform.

4.3. ELF and critical pedagogy

If we analyze ELF carefully, we can readily find many traces of critical pedagogy therein.

Due to its social nature and its implicit commitment to the betterment of the situation of the so-called peripheral speakers of English, ELF seems to be very much influenced by the principles of critical applied linguistics. In fact, ELF appears, from a critical perspective, to be an endeavor or a movement to empower the marginalized. Generally, the empowerment of the marginalized vernaculars has been approached from either an "access" or a "voice" perspective or even both. For example, Canagarajah (2005) believes in the validity of both voice and access and thus asserts that "learning dominant codes can go hand in hand with negotiating spaces for the vernacular discourses in the mainstream" (p.943).

Analyzing ELF from these two perspectives, we see that it is neither complete voice nor complete access. It is not a true example of giving voice because ELF is different from all local Englishes; it is neither Indian English nor Singlish nor any other Englishes. In fact, it does not

represent any specific vernacular and therefore is the voice of no local marginalized community. Secondly, it is in essence English that is the language of the powerful not the vernacular of the powerless. In fact, its being English, no matter how modified it is, brings with it, despite all our résistance, the idea that it is originally from England. In another words the "E" of ELF (which is also present in L1 Englishes) makes us doubt its being really egalitarian in nature.

On the other hand, ELF does not appear to be a true example of giving access either since it is not the original language of the dominant. As we saw in the previous section, ELF is tolerant of a wide range of differences as long as they do not hinder global intelligibility. Following this policy, we will come up with a code, which is full of different phonological, lexicogrammatical and other types of variation. This, at its best, will make many believe that ELF is a variety of English and due to its lack of native speakers something like a pidgin variety. The bothering point is that this attitude, which considers ELF a variety of Standard English, will certainly pave the way for its being discriminated against. By analogy, we can look at the case as a rough renarration of the story of Black English. This middle of the road approach (i.e. being something between the English of the inner circle and different L1s and L1 Englishes) may thus start with the intention of equality and end up with more discrimination.

4.4. ELF and Assessment

Testing and assessment are in fact the least discussed dimensions of ELF. The main reason for this is that ELF is still in its stage of development and codification and unless its construct is comprehensively and clearly realized, learners' knowledge of it cannot be subject to proper measurement. However, we base our evaluation on what has so far been done and try to point out some dark and probably problematic parts.

The literature (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2004; Jenkins, 2000) shows that ELF is basically, but not totally, a spoken mode. Although some scholars have pointed to some differences between ENL and EFL written products (e.g. Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993) these differences are mostly generic and not of other types. The question that arises is whether we should test ELF only in its spoken form and disregard the written form or we should test both forms. If we opt for testing ELF only as a spoken variety, we are in fact defining its construct as such. This will consequently lead us to

admit that ELF is a version of language for very specific purposes. Moreover, by this we are calling the validity of ELF as a medium of international communication into question because it is the written mode in which a large proportion of today's international communication takes place.

The second option, that is, testing both modalities makes the case even more complex. Let's clarify the case by an example. Seidlhofer (2004) claims that confusing which and who in relative clauses is unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success. By this, she implicitly means that in spoken ELF they are permitted to be used interchangeably. In her discussion of written form, however, Seidlhofer (2004) admits that "although lexically and generically distinctive, these modes of written ELF have, so far at least, conformed to the norms of standard grammar" (p. 233). From this it can be concluded that which and who are treated, from a grammatical perspective, differently in ELF spoken versus written discourse. That is, the sentence "the man which you saw was my teacher" is correct if it is spoken but incorrect if it is written. It is, I think, self evident that how this inconsistency will cause unsolvable problems for both test administrators and test takers. Is it really plausible for a grammatical point to be only observed in written mode and not in the spoken mode? And don't such probable inconsistencies add to the difficulty of a language for learners? These are some questions whose answer should be sought in the future ELF research so that it can gain more acceptability.

Another issue worthy to mention about ELF testing is an ideological one. It is, in fact, believed by many that tests of English which are based on the norms of inner circle countries represent the old colonial English and are thus potent colonial tools. They also misrepresent the knowledge and development context of many speakers of English who have learnt it as an additional language in outer and expanding circle countries; these tests are therefore in many respects biased against them. This is then argued that tests of ELF will take up more social responsibility and offer more valid representations of the domains in which English is used internationally. They will also have positive washback so that they will lead the syllabus to go for more realistic and communicative needs rather than unrealistic native-like proficiency. Actually, the major problem as Elder and Davis (2006) point out is that once these ELF tests reach the

point of stability and public acceptability, which they are seriously trying to achieve, they might unknowingly fall into the same trap in which they claim traditional tests have fallen

However once such ELF norms reach the point of being structurally stable enough for codification purposes and hence operationalizable in the form of language tests, they presumably would have the same power to demoralize, oppress, and disenfranchise nonstandard or nonproficient users of ELF as have current tests of SE. What is currently a proposal for legitimization of nonstandardness and affirmation of NNS identity could risk becoming a new monolithic standard with all the attendant consequences for those lacking the command of the new code. (p. 296)

It is evident that ELF should certainly reach a point of consensus with regard to its construct so that it can enter into the discussions of language testing. Otherwise, any discussion of ELF tests is based on mere probabilities. Also, due to the serious influences language tests might have on people's lives, we should be very cautious in devising and administering ELF tests and in interpreting their results, lest we unknowingly do harm to occupational and academic opportunities of the test takers.

4.5. ELF and public attitude

One of the very important points in the spread of any language is the public attitudes toward it and the opportunities its learning will bring for the learners. The increasing demand for English (as a foreign language) is, no doubt, due to the large number of academic and occupational opportunities its knowing entail. On the other hand, besides the opportunities it brings for its speakers, Standard English (i.e. the English of the educated native speaker which does not represent the language of any specific geographical region) has gained such a prestige and power "that it exerts a tremendous pressure [even] on all local varieties, to the extent that many long established dialects of England have lost much of their vigor and there is considerable pressure on them to converge toward the standard" (Wardhaugh, 1986; p. 32). This tendency stems basically from the attitude of the speakers of local dialects which mostly see their variety as inferior to the standard variety and not from a linguistic deficiencies in those varieties.

The public attitude about ELF is also a very important point in its being welcomed and picked up by the prospective English learners. It is certainly very important for ELF to be regarded as a complete and prestigious enough code so that it can serve the role of a global medium of communication. Otherwise, all the discussions about ELF (whether about its phonology or lexicogrammar or any other aspect) will only fill the pages of books and journals and will never be translated into practice. Indeed if the attitude of the public is negative about this variety, it can hardly be the subject of teaching let alone the medium of international communication. And if this variety is forcefully imposed on learners despite all probable negative attitudes, it can only work against them not in their favor. Jenkins (2005) in her discussion of LFC and teachers' attitude very succinctly refers to this fact

It seems likely that ELF pronunciation will only be taken up if teachers themselves ultimately see an ELF identity as providing their students with accents which will enhance rather than damage their future social and economic prospects internationally. Recognition of ELF pronunciation as acceptable variation rather than learner English resulting from L1 transfer will thus depend—irrespective of linguists' opinions—on the extent to which teachers regard it as working in their and their students' favour rather than working against them. (p. 542)

It is consequently the job of the future research to delve into this attitudinal and sociolinguistic aspect of ELF to find out the attitudes of the students and teachers and the probable reasons behind them. Such investigation could then help future researchers to make more judicious decisions regarding their proposals on different aspects of ELF.

5. Conclusion

Applied linguistics has changed a great deal in the past two decades. It has tried to be more inclusive with respect to language learners and more realistic with regard to the goals they pursue. It has also tried to look at the pedagogical challenges from as many perspectives as possible and this has resulted in a number of major departures in the field. One of these departures is related to English as the subject of teaching. It has been argued that insisting on the

English of the inner circle as the only legitimate English to be taught is untenable because it neglects many learners' backgrounds as well as the goals they are pursuing in learning English.

With respect to this idea, many scholars have opted for replacing EFL with ELF, which they believe is more responsive to the needs of many learners of English today. However, although today English is learnt for purposes different from those of the past and although the Anglophone native speaker is no longer the more probable addressee for the English learner, any attempt to manipulate the English of the classroom should be made with extreme caution. In fact, any unidirectional application of linguistics' findings (in this case ELF) to language classes without regard to a number of other relevant aspects is certainly an evident example of linguistics applied not applied linguistic.

In this article, some weak and problematic points of ELF were reviewed so that they can be improved in future research. The aim of the article, thus, is by no means to reject ELF or query its total validity but to help improve it if it is to enter into the realm of practice. Otherwise, any discussion of ELF will only occupy some pages in books or journals. Metaphorically speaking, I have tried, as Nietzsche says, to warn the one who is fighting against the monster, lest he becomes a monster himself.

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Title

Reader Response and Ethnicity: A Difference That Makes a Difference

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Biodata

Yu-ju Hung is a Ph.D. candidate in Department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education in Indiana University - Bloomington. She is working as an instructor in an IU online graduate course. Her research interests are ESL/EFL teaching, ESL/EFL teacher education, multicultural education, and online teaching.

Abstract

Holding the idea that learners construct knowledge through self-discovery, constructivist learning theory assumes that knowledge cannot be transferred (Bowers, 2005). Opposed to this assumption, continental critics like Greene (1971) and Bowers (2005), and ethnocentrism accentuate the essentiality of transferring learners' past experience or tradition from their own culture or ethnicity to constitute meanings. Thus, this qualitative study investigates how readers' ethnicity influences their responses to texts portraying their own ethnicity and texts describing another ethnicity. Ten Taiwanese students' reading responses of two picture books are examined and discussed. Educational implications for teachers, course-book writers, and policy makers are also suggested to improve English readings, multicultural readings, and education in general.

Keywords: reader response, multicultural education, multicultural reading, ethnicity, culturally familiar texts

Introduction

The development of literature response theory stems from the Romantic age centering on the author's meaning (Tompkins, 1980), moves through Formalism's focus on language structure (Eagleton, 1983), and shifts to the New Critics' emphasis on the content of the text in the 1930s and 1940s (Blake & Blake, 2002). These prestructuralist and structuralist perspectives cast readers as passive recipients (Rosenblatt, 1994) and share the notion of the stability of the relationship between the "signifier" and the "signified" (Soter, 1999, p. 11). Naturally, an ideal reader decodes text appropriately.

Opposed to the concept of objective text, Eagleton (1983) argues that value-judgments of reading should be subjective. Readers do not come to a text as a "cultural virgin" or "disinterested spirit" (p. 125). All responses intertwine with social and historical contexts of individuals. Rosenblatt (1983) also conceives literature as a medium of exploration and reading as a transaction between reader and text. As readers engage in aesthetic reading, they live through an emotional experience and respond with pure subjectivism (Rosenblatt, 1994). Rather than finding and interpreting meaning resided in text, readers play a dynamic, active role and construct their personal meaning by bringing their prior experience together with current experience (Probst, 1981).

Expanding from the transaction merely between text and readers (Lewis, 2000), a more contemporary view of Reader Response theory adds on the component of larger socio-cultural contexts (Brooks, 2006; Galda & Beach, 2001). Readers' cultural roles, attitudes, values, and larger cultural and historical context influence their responses (Beach, 1993). A growing number of Reader Response theorists focus on whether readers respond to stories and/or other texts based on how they are situated regarding ethnicity or culture (Marshall, 2000). Related studies look at the integration of text, reader, and socio-cultural context.

Along the same line, English language learners' (ELL) cultural background, specifically ethnicity, may have different impacts on their reading responses to English texts portraying diverse cultures or ethnicities. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how readers' cultural

background influences their complex reading responses to text portraying their own ethnicity and text illustrating an ethnicity other than their own.

The following will discuss the theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, findings, and pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Framework

In the modern era, many educational institutions around the world apply constructivist learning theory. Constructivist thinkers bolster the teaching philosophy that learners construct knowledge through self-discovery and interpretation, holding the assumption that knowledge cannot be transferred (Bowers, 2005). Piaget's development theory advocates a developmental learning process involving change, self-generation, and construction (as cited in Bowers, 2005). Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory suggests that learners' thinking and meaning-making activities emerge out of learners' social interactions with others around them.

Continental critic, Green (1971) argues for the essentiality of transferring learners' past experience to constitute new meanings. When a reader approaches a new text, like a newcomer reading a map, he may wonder in perplexity about the new environment. Only with a teacher's willingness to help him single out an element relevant to the problem, will the reader be able to transmute it into a theme with his awareness and attentiveness. Within this "knowing consciousness" (Greene, 1971, p. 143), the reader makes connections between the relevant theme and his past experience, like the newcomer using his past knowledge of signs to read the map. He will be ready to solve the problem and shift his attention back to the life-world to constitute new knowledge.

Bowers (2005) also accentuates the position of tradition and indicates that constructivist thinkers ignore the fact that learners' underlying thinking patterns emanate from their distinct culture or ethnic groups. This intergenerational aspect, often taken-for-granted way of thinking, takes an influential position on people's learning and interpreting knowledge. Projecting Bower's argument and continental critics in reading responses, readers' ethnicity may affect their preferences and interpretations of reading texts. Echoed by ethnocentrists, readers position their ethnicities as center and tend to respond with three characteristics— positioning one's own group as the central position, distinguishing from other groups, and judging others as inferior (Carignan, Sanders, & Pourdavood, 2005; Hinenoya & Gatbonton, 2000).

Continental critics, Bowers' argument, and ethnocentrism necessitate readers' ethnicity as a prominent factor (Altieri, 1996; Brooks, 2006; Leung, 2003; Martinez & Roser, 2003). However, complexity theory opposes this as a sole factor. Complexity theory proposes that readers' responses contrast with predictability of complicated systems, the characteristics of which include adaptability, unpredictability, volatility, and creativity (Sumara, 2000). Readers are far more complex than their ethnic identity.

Built upon this conceptual framework, this study holds the assumption that readers' ethnicities play a prominent role on their reading of culturally diverse texts. Ethnocentrism and complexity theory are used to do a more in-depth analysis of readers' reading responses.

The following research questions will be addressed.

1. How are readers' ethnicities related to their reading responses to culturally familiar texts?
2. How are readers' ethnicities related to their reading responses to culturally unfamiliar texts?
3. How does ethnocentrism explain readers' reading responses?
4. How does complexity theory explain readers' reading responses?

Literature Review

Each individual reader brings his or her value systems and beliefs that acknowledge their membership in a certain community. Enciso (1994) refers to this membership as a "cultural map" which signifies one's own community and indicates their alliance to it. When engaged in reading, readers use their own cultural map as cultural knowledge which frames their interpretation and interaction with reading texts. Therefore, each reader creates different meanings based on their own cultural backgrounds (Sarland, 1991). Bishop (1997) defines multicultural literature as "books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society and the world" (p. 3). By looking at readers' responses to multicultural literature, which provides a window into the author's perspective to seek unique elements of his own culture and those of others (Boyd, 2002; Brooks, 2006), we can understand how readers' cultural background shapes different responses. Thus, in the following section, I will look at readers' responses to culturally familiar texts and culturally unfamiliar texts.

Responses to culturally familiar texts

Identification with texts

Empirical studies related to ethnic identity and reading responses reveal that readers harbor positive feelings about their ethnicity and prefer to read about characters who have similar personal experiences and become involved with characters and events that they can identify with (Leung, 2003). Altieri (1996) conducted a study of 200 fifth and seventh graders to explore if students' ethnicity would influence their aesthetic involvement (Rosenblatt, 1994). The result showed a significant relationship between the culture portrayed in the stories and the participants' ethnicity.

“Why everything I read is about White people and boys....[that reading] is so-ooo boring” (p. 238), an African American girl, Chantal, complained in her reading class (Blake, 1998). In the beginning response journals, Chantal and her fifth-grade classmates felt no connection to the trade books they were reading. The students simply could not connect it to their socio-cultural context. Being aware of this issue, their teacher encouraged them create their own “cultural texts” (p. 240) and respond to each other. The researcher suggested that this critical reader response activity could help students connect the reading texts with the students' own cultural identities.

Copenhaver (1999) observed students' responses to literature in a multiage classroom (K-2). Most of the time, White children responded to the questions raised by the teacher, whereas Black children remained silent. However, when the teacher switched to read texts about African American characters, the responses of marginalized students doubled. Black students in the class discussed racial issues explicitly while White students appeared color-blind and stayed in a safe position, refusing to talk about racial problems. While this indicated that the school honored marginalized students' culture, at the same time it gave students some space to voice their opinions too.

In Shively's (1992) study, 20 Indian males in a reservation area and 20 Anglo males were interviewed after watching a Western film whose main characters included an Anglo cowboy and an Indian chief. The result was quite surprising that both groups identified with the Anglo cowboy and none of the Indians identified with the Indian chief because he was a “bad guy.” What appealed to Anglos and Indians was quite different. The authentic portrayals of the Western history were meaningful to Anglos because these were stories in their life, part of the old days, and representation of their heritage. Indians liked the cowboy's free and independent life and the beauty of the landscape because this resonated with how they pictured Indians in the past. This implied that although ethnic background did not influence their identification with a good guy in

the initial response, at the deeper level Indians still identified with the Indian chief in the movie. The author concluded— “education increased their awareness of anti-Indian bias, producing a ‘revised eye’ that frames these films in ethnic terms” (p. 732).

Recognition of cultural traits

Brook’s (2006) study further showed that readers identified themselves with culturally familiar texts because readers used their cultural experiences and resources to interpret cultural features depicted in the literature, which was “a culturally validating and empowering goal” (p. 389). Three emerging textual features were recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and ethnic group practices. Various African American textual features emerged in each theme. Under each feature, response categories were defined. For example, recurring themes included forging family and friend relationship, confronting and overcoming racism, surviving life, discovering history as a source of pride, and valuing education. The researcher suggested that the textual features could be used to analyze multicultural literature. In class settings, teachers can deliberately guide students to look for recurring themes and encourage students to connect these themes to their socio-cultural realities.

Leung (2003) also pointed out the way Asian-Americans connected to Chinese cultural elements in the text and how their cultural knowledge influenced their responses. One of the participants said that she liked to see Chinese words in the texts. Another participant expressed that she was bothered by the Chinese language used in the texts. It was not because she did not like the Chinese words, but because some words were mispronounced. She felt insulted because there was a misappropriation of her home language.

In Vasquez’s (2005) observation and interview with 18 Latino and non-Latino students, all Latino students identified themselves with the Chicano texts whose description of religion, tradition, food were similar to their life. They could also connect the characters to their family members. Their responses fell into the cultural features listed in Brook’s (2006) study. They also pointed out that the story helped them to “fill in the gaps of their family biographies” (Vasquez, 2005, p. 907). They were able to contextualize their family history. Recognitions of the other two cultural features, hardships of life and racial problems, made the Latino students feel that they were “not alone” (p. 908). They realized that their fellow Latinos also experienced the same difficulties. They belonged to the same community. The barriers in their life were not individual

problems but larger social problems. Feeling a sense of community was comforting to the non-mainstream students. Reading culturally familiar texts leads to personal legitimization and ethnic validation.

Responses to culturally unfamiliar texts

Acceptance

Instead of knowing readers' own culture by unveiling their family stories or history in culturally familiar texts, readers know themselves from knowing others in culturally unfamiliar texts. Vasquez (2005) pointed out that the experience of reading Chicano literature was like "world-travel" (p. 913) to non-Latino readers, who were motivated to know more sameness and differences between them and others. Chicano literature provided "factual information and subjective views of Chicano experience with which to re-evaluate their pre-existing perceptions or stereotypes of the Chicano people" (p. 917). Boyd (2002) looked at four ninth-graders' responses to multicultural literature. One of the readers expressed that the reading helped her to correct her stereotypical views and know more about Haiti. This reading experience helped her understand another culture more deeply, reflect her own culture, and appreciate her life.

In Singer and Smith's (2003) study, multicultural young adults' and children's literature was used for teacher-education students to discuss and reflect, so they could further cultivate a more profound understanding of themselves and others. One of the White readers responded positively to the racial issues raised in the book. She, as an outsider, could be informed about the differences by an insider who experienced the events in the book. Reading this book provided her with an entry to another world. The other readers also indicated that reading stories about someone conscious of his color "expand their sense of who they are, knowing themselves more fully by recognizing perspectives that differ from what they already know" (p. 20).

Understanding others enables readers to recognize equality of individuals and develop a positive attitude toward people from other cultures. Latinos responded "We're all the same, and everybody's got a story" (Vasquez, 2005, p. 915) after reading Chicano literature. This statement verified that stories of all ethnic groups were valid. Underlying humanity across cultures was fundamentally the same. Being able to appreciate cultural uniqueness enhanced readers' respect to diverse groups, which implicitly developed readers' notions of equality of people. Martin's (1975) study also demonstrated that understanding foreign culture changed children's attitude of

denying the universality of humans. Children tended to consider others inferior or there was no commonness between them and other groups.

Resistance

Before benefiting from multicultural literature, readers need to pass through cross-cultural boundaries. Readers' cultural backgrounds might create resistance and block access to other cultures. In Blake's (1998) observation of students' discussion of reading texts, African American students expressed that they did not bother to talk, because the literature about White people did not "talk" to them (p. 238). When White students listened to a story about a Black Santa Clause, they appeared to be very panicked and wanted Santa to be White. In Boyd's (2002) study of a group of ninth-graders reading a book about Haiti, one of the students' responses could hardly move beyond comprehension on a literal level. Another student clearly positioned people from other ethnic groups as "others" and it was not necessary to learn about them. The author assumed that the student's privileged European American middle-class background as well as her good-student status inhibited her to question the text status quo, racism, or other controversial issues.

Dressel (2005) analyzed 123 eighth-graders' dialogue journals, surveys, and discussions during a multicultural unit and found that the reading did not increase the students' understanding of other cultures. Despite that more students felt they liked to read multicultural books after reading one in this unit (83% in postunit as opposed to 41% in preunit), the results showed that they did not increase their knowledge of others (p. 756). Less than 25% could recognize that the cultural assumptions of people from nondominant groups were different from their own. When being asked how they perceived characters in the books, more than 50% of the readers with European-American background did not perceive that people of nondominant groups were oppressed and not as free as them (p. 757). Readers tended to hold tightly to values and perspectives reflecting their own cultural groups instead of trying to explore others'. They considered stories of others as irrelevant, when encountering ideas that conflicted with their own culture—the students either rejected them or gave illogical responses.

Researchers try to investigate what factors cause resistance. Studies related to multicultural literature reading indicate that lack of understanding of linguistic elements, cultural practice, and context prevents readers from knowing another world. In Altieri's (1995) study, the

fifth-graders expressed that they did not like the Spanish words in the stories although these words did not hinder their understanding. When the students were asked to put themselves in the stories, the Black Vernacular and elements of African-American culture were barriers for White readers (Altieri, 1996).

Also, readers feel uncomfortable talking about content describing racial issues or challenging readers' privilege and status quo and therefore tend to avoid it. In Copenhaver's (1999) study, after reading literature related to African American protagonists, African American students explicitly discussed racial issues and connected themselves to slave days. In contrast, White students were reluctant to talk about this issue and remained "color-blind" (p. 9). In Beach's (1997) study of a group of high school and university students, they reacted resentfully when the texts asserted White people's racist and sexist behavior which challenged their White privilege. Similarly, Rice (2005) proposed that reading responses are influenced by readers' experiences and the socio-cultural frame, such as class, race, and gender. The students discussed appearances, language, and food customs based on their own cultural norm.

The above studies show that readers' cultural background does matter in their reading responses. Looking at students' responses to multicultural literature can help teachers understand how students interpret and construct meanings based on their individual experiences and cultural backgrounds. This information can serve as implication for teachers to guide students in developing cultural awareness. This enables them to connect their cultural resources to culturally familiar texts, and also reduce their resistance to culturally unfamiliar texts. Moreover, current studies related to multicultural literature reading education have mostly described students in the U.S. Scant studies have been conducted to look at students in Asia, a socio-cultural context very different from the U.S. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to look at a group of Taiwanese students' responses to culturally familiar and culturally unfamiliar texts, investigating their preference, connection, as well as their resistance in the process of reading.

Methodology

Research design

Built upon the arguments described in detail, in the theoretical framework, this study aims to compare readers' spontaneous reading responses to two types of reading texts. A qualitative study (Creswell, 2005) has been applied. As mentioned by Merriam (1998), qualitative

researchers are interested in meaning. They seek to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences. As is often the case in qualitative research, new questions might arise in the research process. Also, as Steiner (1996) claimed, “qualitative interview is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and functional or practical meanings of the subjects’ world. Interviews allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words” (p. 70). Reader response is deeply personal and individual, therefore, an unstructured, open-ended interview was conducted in this study to look at how readers interpret each text.

Participants

Ten Taiwanese students, who shared Chinese culture, participated in this study. They all had been learning English as a foreign language for more than ten years. They were all studying in a university in the U.S. at the time of data collection. The following is their basic information. The names used in this study are pseudonyms.

name	major	time when they came to the U.S	name	Major	time when they came to the U.S
Peggy	M.A. in Law	Aug. 2006	Harry	IEP	Feb. 2007
Tina	M.A. in Law	Aug. 2006	Paul	IEP	Jan. 2007
Betty	M.A. in Informatics	Aug. 2006	Wanda	M.A. in Speech and Hearing	Aug. 2006
Karen	M.A. in Comparative Literature	Aug. 2006	Freda	short-term study in Public and Environment Affairs	Dec. 2005
Fanny	Ph.D. in Language Education	Aug. 2003	Stacey	M.A. in Language Education	Jan. 2007

Reading texts

Two picture books which shared the theme of immigrants in the U.S., and were therefore related to the participants’ life overseas, were purposefully selected for this study. The

participants could relate their life to the texts and also their responses would be related to similar themes in the books. The two texts used in this study illustrate Chinese characters and Mexican characters respectively. *Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang* by Susan L. Roth (2001) depicts the life and reflection of a Chinese immigrant, Mr. Kang, in the U.S. The author uses interaction between Mr. Kang, his grandson, and Hua-mei, a Chinese bird to project that the main character still considers Mainland China as his home after living in the U.S. for 43 years. In *Going Home* by Eve Bunting (1996), a Mexican couple immigrate to the U.S. to give their children better education and life. On Christmas, they took their children back to Mexico. The children could not understand why their parents called this trip “going home.” They were already home. After they arrived in Mexico and saw their parents really happy, they realized this was the real home to their parents.

Data collection

First of all, the participants were given these two texts to read in their homes at their own pace. While the participants were reading the two books, they were asked to draw pictures or jot down whatever came to their minds. They could write their reflection related to any features in the books, such as illustration, characters, or written words. They selected the language that they felt comfortable with to express themselves. All of them chose to use Mandarin Chinese. Then, an individual face-to-face interview was conducted with each participant. I first asked which book they liked better and then asked them to narrate their general impression of reading these two books. Based on their written responses, they were asked to elaborate their ideas. They also chose to speak Mandarin Chinese in the interviews. The whole process was recorded and transcribed in English.

Data analyses

Content-based analysis was applied to analyze the data reported below. The data were coded according to the three features of ethnocentrism and Brook’s (2006) typology of cultural traits, as described in the theoretical framework and literature review. The code “others” was used to indicate any distinctive points that emerged.

Results

The results will be reported according to what the participants responded and the differences in their response to these two texts.

The following table categorizes what the ten participants responded to the two texts based on the three features of ethnocentrism. They responded relatively more to Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang although they had some responses to Going Home. Most of the responses to Going Home were from Wanda, Paul, and Wendy. In their interview, they indicated that they preferred reading Going Home because they had difficulties understanding the language in Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang. The language barrier was the likely reason why they responded more to Going Home. Moreover, six out of ten participants pointed out that they preferred reading Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang. Fanny had no preference, but she mentioned that she did not particularly favor Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang, because the description about Chinese culture involved certain bias against it.

	Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang	Going Home
I. position one's group as the central position		
a.connect with their family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tina's cousin married an American and felt difficult to adapt to American society. - Betty's grandfather emigrated from Mainland China and had an accent. - The illustration reminded Harry how his family celebrated birthday. -Freda's father emigrated from Mainland China. -Wanda's brother studied in Australia and applied for citizenship there. When he applied for a job, he was discriminated because he was not an Australian. -Stacey thought of her dog. -Stacey thought of her grandparents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some of Peggy's relatives also immigrated to the U.S. -Harry thought of the interaction between him and his brother. -Wanda had the same experience to leave home and say goodbye to her friends. -Paul thought of his own family and the situation that they sat in a car.

		-Paul mentioned that he was close to his grandmother.
b. surviving life	<p>-Both Peggy and Betty connected Mr. Kang's life in a foreign country to her own life as an international student here.</p> <p>-Harry missed home.</p> <p>-Freda knew one immigrant who couldn't speak any English and had a very difficult life in Boston.</p> <p>-Wanda knew that some people tried very hard to immigrate to Australia, but had a difficult life there.</p> <p>-Stacey mentioned that she used to read a book about four kids from Lao People's Democratic Republic who suffered a lot in the U.S. because of their language barriers.</p> <p>-Stacey described the difficulties of learning a foreign language.</p>	<p>-Harry thought of news report in Taiwan. The rate of unemployment rose. Some people couldn't survive.</p> <p>-Wanda mentioned some difficulties she encountered as an international student in the U.S.</p> <p>-Paul used to leave his home because of his job.</p>
c. linguistic patterns	<p>-Peggy expressed that she could interpret Chinese poem more profoundly than English.</p> <p>-Betty also felt glad to read original Chinese words.</p> <p>-Karen skipped English poem and read the Chinese poem. She stated that the translation was good, but still not good enough. English characters can never represent Chinese characters. English characters differ greatly from Chinese hieroglyphic characters.</p>	<p>-Fanny felt that Spanish words hindered her reading.</p> <p>-Betty did not like the Spanish words because she would never understand them the same way as Mexicans would do in reading this book.</p>

	<p>-Tina pointed out that she felt it interesting that the author put some Chinese characters in the illustration.</p> <p>-Harry mentioned Chinese words drew his attention. He felt excited about seeing some Chinese words in an English text.</p> <p>-Wanda felt surprised to see some Chinese words.</p> <p>-Stacey indicated that the Chinese menu was interesting.</p>	
<p>d.ethnic practice</p>	<p>-Betty noticed that the author used a large portion of red color which symbolized luck.</p> <p>-Tina mentioned that Hua-mei did not look like a Chinese bird although both of us never saw Hua-mei before. We just knew it did not.</p> <p>-Peggy also pointed out several Chinese elements.</p> <p>-Harry thought of Chinese New Year and red envelopes.</p> <p>- Harry mentioned the way Chinese people sought his root.</p> <p>-Freda pointed out some characteristics about Chinese paintings.</p> <p>-Wanda mentioned that the grandmother walked behind Mr. Kang, like the traditional Chinese women did.</p> <p>-Stacey thought of the place in her home where her family worshiped their ancestors.</p> <p>-Stacey indicated that the pattern in the illustration was like Chinese traditional clothes.</p>	<p>-Freda mentioned that parents sacrificed a lot for their children in the Chinese culture.</p>

	-Paul pointed out that the illustration reminded him of Chinese New Year.	
II. distinguish we and other	<p>-Peggy preferred Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang to Going Home simply because the former portrays Chinese and the latter Westerners.</p> <p>- Karen indicated that only Chinese tradition could distinguish Chinese people from others.</p> <p>-Fanny pointed out that the way the American author portrayed Mr. Kang reflects a bias. People from other cultures can never describe this culture correctly.</p> <p>-Freda pointed out that Chinese culture was very different from Western culture.</p> <p>-Freda and Stacey recognized that the Chinese words were in traditional version, which distinguished Taiwan from Mainland China.</p> <p>-Stacey indicated that she preferred Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang than the other one simply because she was a Chinese.</p> <p>-Paul mentioned the difference between Asian people and American people.</p> <p>-Paul expressed that he would never immigrate to the U.S. because he didn't want to move to a place which was so different from his own in terms of cultural background.</p>	<p>-Stacey mentioned that she would never immigrate to the U.S. because she was Chinese and she would never become an American.</p> <p>-Paul compared the way Chinese parents educated their children and found that it was different from Western parents.</p>
III. consider one's group as superior	<p>-When Peggy said that she had difficulties making American friends, she thought Asian people have better world-view than Americans.</p> <p>-Peggy emphasized filial piety as an important</p>	<p>-Karen liked Chinese people better than others.</p> <p>-Harry considered the education in Taiwan to be better than a less</p>

	<p>Chinese tradition that American people do not have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Karen thought that Western people have started to value Eastern culture now. - Freda considered the illustration about Chinese culture to be more interesting and of higher quality. -Freda indicated that the sense of belonging and closeness to family in Chinese culture were much higher than Western culture. -Stacey considered Taiwan to be better than the U.S. as Taiwanese wouldn't immigrate unless they were forced to do so. 	<p>developed country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Freda disagreed that people thought everything about the U.S. was better. -Freda was proud of Chinese language. She considered Chinese to be better than English.
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What the participants responded to the texts also reveals the differences in how they reflected upon. First of all, when the participants responded to the text illustrating their own ethnicity, they responded profoundly and extensively. Both of these books describe the immigrants' surviving life in the U.S. The participants connected to their current experience of the difficulties of studying abroad in the U.S or their family's or friends' stories as the immigrants here. Responding to *Going Home*, Wanda was the only one linking it to her own experience. Wanda agreed with the parents in *Going Home* that it was difficult to survive in the U.S. Before she came here, she imagined everything would be perfect and there won't be any problems. In reality, she did not know of many problems until she came here. Compared to this, both Peggy and Betty connected Mr. Kang's life in a foreign country to her own life as an international student here. After living in the U.S. for 43 years, Mr. Kang still couldn't get used to the life here. Their description showed that they were emotionally attached to this part. Like Mr. Kang, Peggy described her language problems and difficulty to adapt to American life. She said:

When I was in Beijing, I didn't feel like going home that much. But I've just been here for less than a year. I am surprised I really want to go home....
Everything is fine here. May be because I can't adapt to their life. Sometimes I

feel lonely... My English is not good enough to handle many things, like ordering food in a restaurant or going to a movie. I feel it's not that interesting anymore. I feel I can't understand at all. Sometimes when I want to talk to Americans or make friends with them, I don't know what to talk. When they tell a joke, I don't know why it's funny... I don't know. I miss home... Like Mr. Kang, he also mentions the problem of language.

Betty also showed frustration because of her language level.

Like what I just said, Taiwan is not bad. Why do we need to go abroad? It's so painful. It would never be a problem to speak Chinese... Sometimes I think why I come here to torture myself. My English doesn't improve. I feel I become stupid after I come here. Maybe because of some frustration... Sometimes I can't express myself. I don't even want to talk. I want to give up... If I can't walk away, I would just sit there and stay silent. Sometimes I wake up at midnight because I dream my American classmate says my English is terrible.

In addition to their personal experiences, the participants mentioned a lot of stories about immigrants like Mr. Kang. Wanda's brother studied in Australia for many years and obtained his citizenship there. When he applied for a job, he was discriminated because he was not an Australian. When Wanda visited her brother in Australia last year, she saw some Taiwanese people trying very hard to become citizens there. After they got their new identity, they did not have good jobs or a happy life at all. When she ate in a department store food court, she saw an old Chinese woman washing dishes there. She thought:

...a lot of people spend so much money becoming an Australian citizen here. They get their identity. Other people feel they are very good. But in fact, their job, their life is not that satisfying at all. Sometimes I feel "Is this worthwhile?"

Tina's cousin married an American and lived in the U.S. She felt it was difficult to adapt to American society, though she had already lived here for over ten years. It also reminded Betty

of his grandfather, who emigrated from Mainland China and lived in Taiwan for decades, but still had a Chinese accent. She said:

My grandfather has deep feeling about Mainland China. When he traveled, he always went there... It's like the poem in the book. When people hear you, they know you are not Taiwanese. But if you go back, people there won't think you are from there either.

Second, when the participants read culturally familiar texts, they are able to recognize specific features about their own culture. Contrarily, when they respond to culturally unfamiliar texts, they can typically use superficial comments. For example, when talking about the illustrations in two books, Karen liked *Going Home* because it was more colorful. Harry liked the impressionistic style of painting. They did not point out any specific features. Though Fanny and Betty noticed some Spanish words in the story, Fanny felt Spanish words hindered her reading. Betty did not like the Spanish words because she would never understand them the same as Mexicans did. The participants commented positively on Chinese words in *Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang*. Betty, Tina, Harry, Wanda, and Stacey felt excited that the author put some Chinese words in the illustration. The author put the Chinese poem written by Mr. Kang in the illustration, and the same poem in English in the text. Peggy expressed that she could interpret the Chinese poem more profoundly than English. Betty also felt glad to read original Chinese words. Karen skipped the English poem and read the Chinese poem. She thought the translation was good, but still not good enough because English characters can never represent Chinese characters. English characters differed greatly from Chinese hieroglyphic characters.

In addition, they also pointed out some Chinese cultural elements in the illustrations. Betty noticed that the author used a large portion of red color which symbolized luck. The red color reminded Paul and Harry of Chinese New Year and red envelopes which Chinese people considered as lucky money. From one of the pictures, Stacey thought of the place in her home where her family worshiped their ancestors. Tina mentioned that Hua-mei did not look like a Chinese bird although both the researcher and Peggy never saw Hua-mei before. They just knew it did not. Peggy also pointed out several Chinese elements:

The illustration is full of Chinese style. The main character owns a Chinese restaurant, so the author uses the Chinese menu as the background. If a foreigner

sees this, he won't understand. Because we understand it, we feel it's funny. Chinese use red color to symbolize good luck. The author even uses Chinese calligraphy.

In another picture, the grandmother (Mrs. Kang) walks behind Mr. Kang. Wanda thought this symbolized the inferior position of traditional Chinese women—

Wanda: His wife always walks after him. I feel strange. Even just taking a walk, she walks after him. Their grandson even says "shhhh" to her. I feel strange.

Researcher: So, it's impolite to do so. You feel she walks behind them because she feels her status is lower than him?

Wanda: Yes, a little bit....What's wrong with the grandson?

Third, although both books discuss the identity issue, reading culturally familiar texts enables the participants to distinguish their own identity and compare them with others. In the responses to *Going Home*, only Stacey talked about this issue. One of her classmates asked her, "Do you want to stay here?" She answered:

No, I don't... (The reason is) very simple. I am not American. Even though I get a green card, I am still not American. I don't look like an American at all.

Stacey also showed that she preferred *Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang* simply because "I am Chinese." The other participants emphasized their identity by distinguishing how their appearance was different from others'. Freda and Stacey recognized that the Chinese words in *Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang* were in a traditional Chinese version, different from the simplified version used in Mainland China. Paul also described the differences between Asian people and American people—

In the U.S., I see someone with black hair and yellow skin and I know this is Asian. No one would say he is an American.

Peggy preferred *Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang* to *Going Home* simply because the former

portrayed Chinese and the latter Westerners.

I prefer Happy Birthday, Mr. Kang. May be because it's about Chinese. I feel like I can understand better what the author wants to express. We are more familiar with his drawing and content... For the other book, I don't like the illustration... Maybe Western people or American people would like this style... They tend to use thicker lines to draw human figures. They have hook noses because they are foreigners.

Karen indicated that only Chinese tradition could distinguish Chinese people from others. Take a best-selling Chinese movie as an example, like Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. When Chinese people make movies, we need to put Chinese tradition. Only Chinese tradition can make us unique. We have this, but they (Americans) don't.....Tradition is our pride.

Although Fanny did not specify differences between two cultures, she pointed out the way in which the American author portrayed Mr. Kang as a degree of stereotype. How many people would be like Mr. Kang?.. bias. People from other cultures could never describe this culture correctly.

I don't' like it because the way it portrays Chinese has some. American people won't put birds in cages. This makes me very uncomfortable. It looks like Mr. Kang is an inhumane person. I feel this is a negative image.

Discussion, Limitations and Pedagogical Implications

At the outset, it is important to realize that the present study is designed as a qualitative research as the findings yielded from a small sample are largely exploratory. Additional interviews with more students and/or introducing other texts that raise different issues would be interesting to compare to/with this group. Although the present study is based upon a relatively small sample, the findings yield us a room for the following pedagogically important discussions. First, tradition does matter. Modern constructivist theories assume that knowledge cannot be transferred intergenerationally and ignore all the pathways of learning and learners' knowledge

on the basis of different cultures, so learners have no difficulties constructing new meanings. Contrarily, the results drawn here are congruent with the assumption that readers' ethnicity, part of their traditional culture, plays a significant role in their reading responses. Most participants show their preferences and respond extensively and deeply to the text portraying their own ethnicity. They are related to the culturally familiar text with their family, their personal experience, their values, and their deep-rooted Chinese tradition. This suggests that learners' development of knowledge stems from their tradition and culture. Instead of generating knowledge from scratch, learners should be helped to use their past experience as foundations and transfer it to constitute meanings.

Accordingly, this study suggests that teachers need to begin with "ethnically relevant teaching" but try to use it as a bridge to other cultures. Culturally relevant literature provides each reader with a window into the author's perspective to seek unique elements of his or her own culture and those of others and to further recognize similarities and differences with others (Boyd, 2002). When readers find themselves in a book, they often respond with great emotional engagement (Singer & Smith, 2003). Especially for minority students, they are excited about being able to "come to voice" and speak for themselves (Boyd, 2002). Here this study echoes with Singer and Smith's (2003) study, in which black students identified strongly with a novel that discussed directly the issue of race. They expressed pleasure with the author's affirmation of skin color, like the participants in this study (Tina, Betty, Peggy, Wanda, and Freda) sympathized with Mr. Kang's conflict of self-identification because their relatives or friends also experienced the same situation as immigrants in the U.S. Betty and Peggy connected to their own living difficulties as international students here. Culturally familiar texts can stimulate students' interest, engage students, and elicit their responses. Through discussion of cultural features in the text, students can learn language and understand their culture at the same time.

In responding to culturally familiar texts, the responses mostly align with the features of ethnocentrism and Brook's (2006) cultural traits. This implies that readers use their own culture as a lens to interpret the texts. Although instructors can use these recurrent themes to stimulate learners' discussion, this might hinder readers' appreciation of culturally unfamiliar texts or readers might look at the issues addressed too subjectively. In multicultural education, instructors can use ethnically relevant materials as a bridge to help readers cross the multi-cultural borders. For instance, an instructor can start with directing students to examine their culture. Then they are

guided to look at each theme or cultural trait of the target culture. The instructor can provide background information, if needed.

By comparing and contrasting their own culture with the target culture as well as expanding their knowledge about the target culture, readers can deepen their understanding about themselves and go beyond the ethnic boundaries to freely appreciate multicultural literature. In Singer and Smith's (2003) study, White readers stated that the multicultural texts affirmed their understanding of different cultures. It seems a lot can be gained by reading a book authored by an "insider" as entry to another world is provided. Understanding others can, additionally, help students to be more conscious about their own culture and appreciate their own heritage (Dressel, 2005).

This study holds implications for course-book writers as well. When course-book writers put culture-related texts in the book, some notes/commentary about the culture can be provided to help readers understand and dig into socio-cultural traits. Misconceptions and stereotypes about the target culture can be pinpointed and clarified to correct cross-cultural misunderstandings. This highlights the tenet(s) of culturally responsive teaching, which requires developing pre-service and in-service teachers' knowledge base of factual information about cultural intricacies of specific ethnic group(s) and pedagogical skills to do cultural analyses of reading texts (Gay, 2002). In EFL contexts where students are ethnically homogenous, culturally responsive teachers use students' cultural characteristics as conduits for teaching about students' own culture and other cultures in English as well as multicultural education. In ESL contexts, with ethnically diverse students, teachers can further use the issues of cultural diversity as resources to improve minority as well as mainstream students' understanding of different cultures. Particularly, minority students' academic achievement can therefore be enhanced because their cultures are emphasized and validated.

Arguing against modern constructivism implies that students create new meanings from scratch (Bowers, 2005). The findings in this study suggest that a connection between what a learner knows and needs to know should be made clear not only in English classes but also in all learning and teaching contexts in general. When policy makers decide to employ a new teaching approach, students' culture, tradition, and past experience should always be taken into account and used as a basis for new knowledge. It should not be ignored, replaced, or erased. Teacher's training and instructional materials should carefully examine how to link students' prior

experiences to new meanings. The new teaching approach will more likely succeed when this connection is properly made.

As indicated in complexity theory, readers' ethnicity serves as an influential factor, but not the only factor. Reader response further complicates this idea. Although the participants responded more to the text related to their ethnicity, they were still able to respond aesthetically to culturally unfamiliar texts. Moreover, each of them responded differently due to their individual experiences and background. For instance, Betty had closer relationship with her grandfather. Mr. Kang reminded her of her grandfather who had similar immigrant experience. Peggy compared her relationship with her grandfather to the way Mr. Kang got along with his grandson. Maybe because the other participants did not have close contact with their grandfathers, they did not respond to this part. In addition, Betty and Peggy identified more with difficulties of living in a foreign country because of their own language barriers and their pressure to meet the requirement in graduate school. Probably because Karen lived in the U.S. for four years and Fanny spent her fourth year studying here, they did not mention much about surviving life. Paul and Harry were attending an Intensive English Program, and had less pressure. They did not mention language barriers or difficulties to adapt to American life even though their language levels were lower. Therefore, each individual student should be given space to respond and voice their views. This will be a teaching moment where students' confusion or bias can be clarified. Also, students' distinctive responses, based on their unique past experiences, can be encouraged in order to embrace the diversity in our classrooms.

Conclusion

Ethnocentrism has always been interpreted with a negative connotation that people are too self-centered. The results in this study demonstrate that our ethnicity does have a great influence on how we read and respond to texts. In some sense everybody is self-centered. The important point is how our education helps learners start from the center and extend outward. As in a Chinese saying, one's ethnicity is like plants' roots; all trees stem from their roots. When the roots are strong, the trees can grow and live for thousands of years. Similarly, when learners try to construct new knowledge, they build upon their prior knowledge. They cannot be expected to create new meaning out of nothing. In this sense, ethnocentrism may not necessarily be seen as a negative term. Ethnicity is part of our tradition, a part of us, which makes us unique and different

from others. Stemming from it, we can extend to a different world, learning different knowledge. In other words, readers' culture is a difference that makes a significant difference. And this difference needs to be adequately addressed in the process of teaching and learning, especially in multicultural education.

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Title

Intercultural Rhetorical Pattern
Differences in English Argumentative Writing

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Biodata

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Abstract

Although there have been many contrastive studies of English writing in college context, little attention has been paid to the empirical research on argumentative English writing composed by contemporary adolescent English writers. The present empirical study examined the rhetorical pattern differences in English argumentative essays written by high school juniors in China and the United States from the perspective of intercultural rhetoric. Data was collected from 60 essays written by Chinese EFL students and 50 essays written by American native-English students by using same writing topic. The findings revealed that the rhetorical patterns were flexible, as both Chinese and American students placed their thesis statements in four different places. The

deductive pattern was most frequently employed for both groups, followed by the inductive pattern, and the non-deductive and non-inductive pattern. Even though both groups preferred deductive patterns, American students preferred showing the thesis statement as the first sentence, and Chinese students preferred placing the thesis statement anywhere in the first paragraph. The findings indicated that English writing instruction and textbooks were the most significant factor of influencing rhetorical patterns in both contemporary Chinese and American students' English essays. Further intercultural rhetoric research on ESL teaching is suggested.

Keywords: intercultural rhetoric, argumentative writing, pattern, Chinese EFL learners

Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) has a great many differences from native English writing, more than it has similarities (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Silva, 1993). Student-writers from Anglo-European language seemed to prefer logical argument, whereas student-writers from Asian languages seemed to take a more indirect approach (Kaplan, 1967; Strevens, 1987). Chinese students had difficulty keeping their English writing coherent because of the difference between the direct linear pattern of English discourse and the spiraling pattern of typical Chinese discourse (Kaplan, 1987).

Starting from the 1980s, contrastive studies of students' persuasive writing in school contexts expanded to analyze intercultural aspects of school writing (Connor, 1987; Connor, 1996; Connor & Lauer, 1985; Connor & Lauer, 1988; Kennedy, 1998; Mauranen, 1993). Connor (1996) asserted that as a direct consequence, each language has unique rhetorical conventions. There may be no absolute constraints on the arrangement of rhetorical patterns, but there are preferred expectations about the way information should be organized (Atkinson, 1999; Swales, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

Although there have been many contrastive studies of English writing in college context, little attention has been paid to the empirical research on the argumentative English writing composed by contemporary adolescent English writers. The present study addresses the following research question: What are differences in rhetorical patterns in English argumentative essays written by native speakers of Chinese and English?

Contrastive Rhetoric

Kaplan (1967) defined rhetoric as “the method of organization of syntactic units into larger patterns” (p. 15). Writing makes use of language more efficient and observed rhetoric patterns more easily in written language than in speech (Kennedy, 1998). Generally, writing is “a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns” (Silva, 1990, p. 14) and is a process where one learns how to become “skilled in identifying, internalizing, and executing patterns” (Kennedy, 1998, p.116).

Over the last two decades, contrastive rhetoricians have developed the theory of contrastive rhetoric into an intercultural study of language writing and gradually influenced composition education (Coe, 1988; Connor, 1996; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Kennedy, 1998). The theory of contrastive rhetoric offers a perspective “for those in nonnative-English-speaking contexts abroad, forced as they are to look EFL writing in the eye to try to understand why it at least sometimes looks different” (Atkinson, 2000). One of contrastive rhetoric’s goals is to describe ways in which writing operate in intercultural contexts and has its origins in notions of language structure, learning, and use (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) suggested that contrastive rhetoric should focus attention on the following types of knowledge of writing: 1) “Knowledge of the writing conventions of the target language in the sense of both frequency and distribution of types and text appearance”; 2) “Knowledge of rhetorical patterns of arrangement and the relative frequency of various patterns” (p. 199).

Intercultural Rhetoric

In ancient Greece and Rome, the term “rhetoric” was used, and conceptualized as the art of persuasive discourse by Aristotle (384-322 BC) (Barnes, 1984; Kennedy, 1998; Mauranen, 1993; Murphy, 1982). Rhetoric concentrated on the situational relativity of communicative effectiveness under three major components: the speaker, the audience, and the content of the argument (Barnes, 1984). Romans systematized and taught rhetoric in the Roman Empire which influenced the teaching of literacy in Latin to schools in colonies from Britain to Asia Minor until the twentieth century (Murphy, 1982). The central task of education, argued Socrates (469-399 BCE), was to “confront the passivity of the pupil, challenging the mind to take charge of its own thought”

(Nussbaum, 1997, p. 28). According to the Stoics, “critical argument leads to intellectual strength and freedom- by itself a remarkable transformation of the self, if the self has previously been lazy and sluggish-and also to a modification to the pupil’s motive and desires” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 29). Today, critical thinking plays a major role in helping American students to express their independent attitudes and opinions in their composition studies.

However, Chinese culture is highly collectivized, and pedagogical practices tend to reflect the importance of the group (Carson, 1992). Confucius (551-479 BCE), the great philosopher, rhetorician and educator in China, who died ten years before Socrates (469-399 BCE), said “If I am not to be a man among men, then what am I to be?” (Fairbank, 1979, p. 71). Members of collectivist cultures believe that the collective or group is the smallest unit of survival, unlike people in individualist cultures who believe that the individual is the smallest unit of survival (Carson, 1992). Confucius believed the goal of education was to “train an elite who would become superior men, able both to secure the people’s respect and guide the ruler’s conduct” (Fairbank & Goldman, 1998, p. 63). The collectivist culture led Chinese students to avoid criticism of peers’ work and to avoid disagreeing with peer comments in their writing (Carson & Nelson, 1996).

Traditional Chinese Rhetorical Patterns

According to Silva (1990), writing “is a more or less a conventional response to a particular task type that falls into a recognizable genre” (p. 17). In China, the traditional four-part rhetorical pattern Qi-Cheng-Zhuan-He was discussed and examined in the field of contrastive rhetoric studies (Cahill, 2003; Hinds, 1990; Kirkpatrick, 1997; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Scollon & Scollon, 1997; You, 2005), because it continues to influence contemporary mainland Chinese high school and primary school students’ writing (Wang, 1991). The Dictionary of Chinese Rhetoric (DCR) defines the qi-cheng-zhuan-he as follows: “the epitome of a common structural pattern of a variety of texts, ancient and modern. ‘Qi’ is the opening or beginning; ‘cheng’ continues or joins the opening to the next stage; ‘Zhuan’ is the transition or turning point...; ‘He’ is the summary or conclusion” (cited translation from Kirkpatrick, 1997, p. 223).

Wu (1989) derived the qi-cheng-zhuan-he pattern from the Tang dynasty (618-907) mostly because a certain type of Tang poetry employed those four patterns. The following example of the qi-cheng-zhuan-he pattern is based on a popular Tang dynasty (618-907) poem

written by Li Bai (701-761) (A literal line-by line translation cited from Kirkpatrick, 1997, p. 229).

At the front of my bed moonlight shines, (qi)

I think there is frost on the ground. (cheng)

Raising my head, I look at the moon, (zhuan)

Lowering my head, I think of home. (he)

The qi-cheng-zhuan-he was first formalized as a text structure in the Song dynasty (960-1278) (Chen, 1984). By the end of the Yuan dynasty (1368), the style had progressed and developed the concept of a 4-part text structure with qi (beginning), cheng (continuation), zhuan (transition) and he (conclusion) (Chen, 1984). The qi-cheng-zhuan-he pattern historically originated in Chinese poetry and then was adapted to narrative and expository writing as an organizational format for novice essayists or exam takers (Cahill, 2003).

Since the 1950s, many contemporary Chinese books on writing failed to discuss the qi-cheng-zhuan-he patterns because Chinese linguists had accepted the modern rhetorical patterns of four-part structure of kaiduan-fazhan-gaochao-jieju (beginning–development–climax-conclusion) which came from the former Soviet Union literary theory (Wu, 1989). However, Wu (1989) argued that the current four-part narrative structure of kaiduan-fazhan-gaochao-jieju was merely the traditional structure of qi-cheng-zhuan-he under a new name. Therefore, the conventional qi-cheng-zhuan-he pattern still influenced contemporary high school and primary school students' writing and made use of certain formalities (Kirkpatrick, 1997; Wang, 1991)

How to begin an argumentative essay, how to analyze the main idea and how to conclude the essay, all require a formal method. Traditionally, to write an essay required qi-cheng-zhuan-he, but actually most of the good argumentative essays of whatever period have used qi-cheng-zhuan-he. . . . The incorrect approach is to rigidify the formality to the point where everybody in China writes according to a single structure. So today's high school and primary school students can still benefit from the traditional way of training people how to write an essay (translation cited from Kirkpatrick, 1997, p. 156).

Contemporary Chinese Rhetorical Patterns

From the late 1910s to the 1920s, “Western rhetorical tradition was conflated with modern Chinese rhetoric and enriched the latter with Western scientific rhetoric; at the same time, more importantly, it helped to revitalize the rich Chinese rhetorical tradition in the modern Chinese writing Classroom” (You, 2005, p. 151). Cahill (2003) stated that zhuan was omitted “in favor of an open-ended approach” and “zhuan was limited to elaborating an idea along the same general terms as qi and cheng” (p. 175). Cahill (2003) also stated that “the modern way is to divide an essay into three parts: beginning, development, and conclusion” (p. 178), which closely resembled the deductive three-part of an argumentative essay: specific-to-general organization (Hirose, 2003).

Scollon and Scollon (1997) compared the same news story written in English and Chinese published in newspapers of Hong Kong and Mainland China. They found that both languages reflected the traditional qi-cheng-zhuan-he pattern, the inductive pattern and the deductive pattern. Traditional practices continue to influence contemporary ESL composition textbooks and classroom practices (Mohan & Lo, 1985; Silva, 1990). Mohan and Lo (1985) surveyed previous English composition instruction in Hong Kong and British Columbia, Canada. They found that previous experience in both Cantonese and English composition affected second-language writers’ English writing. Rhetorical patterns in Chinese writing provide useful contrasts with the discourse practices of American English (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). You (2005) argued that traditional Chinese rhetoric resembled western rhetorical styles and “when considering modern Chinese rhetoric and Mainland Chinese students’ written English, historical conflation of Chinese and Western rhetorical traditions in connection to modern Chinese writing instruction should always be importantly factored in” (p. 166). Specifically, the contemporary Chinese rhetoric patters is hybridity of China’s writing convention, Western rhetorical styles and Soviet Marxist writing styles (Liu, 2005).

Methodology

Participants

The junior high school level was chosen, because the students at this stage have learned the language to the degree that they could express themselves well in a conventional manner in their first language (L1) and in their second language (L2) (Slobin, 1990). Twenty-two Chinese males and 38 Chinese females participated in the study from a foreign language high school in

Shanghai, China. At the time of the study in 2004, the school had 43 classes and six grades from junior high through high school, with 2, 046 students and 112 teachers, four of whom were native speakers of languages other than Chinese. The second group of students who participated in this study consisted of 50 native English speakers including 19 males and 31 females from a Midwest metropolitan public high school in the United States. The enrollment was 3, 278 students, with 180 instructors. The student body consisted of 58.82% white, 34.78% African American, 5.09% Hispanic and 1.31% from Asian backgrounds.

The human subject application was approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB). Both the superintendent of the U.S. school and the school official in China signed permission letters to comply with the other country's regulations. Parents and students were asked to read and sign the consent forms if they were interested in participating in the study and if they approved.

Criteria for Writing Task Selection

The researcher established two criteria for selecting the writing task in order to solicit an argumentative writing, an attempt to justify a claim, where the thesis statement must be upheld or challenged, as suggested by Toulmin (1958). The first criterion was that the writing topic would enable both Chinese and American students to express their thesis statements with support. In the prompt part, the students were not allowed to state their opinion as both "agree and disagree;" they had to state agreement or disagreement and use specific reasons and examples. In this way, the coders could clearly find the thesis statement in their writing. Second, one topic had to be used, because contrastive rhetoric analysis required the samples to address a similar context for a similar purpose (Swales, 1990). In order to make clear comparisons about their writing, no group was advantaged by using the computer.

Students had 40 minutes to compose their essays. The essay was limited to one page (single-spaced) in length (approximately 300 words), according to suggestions of English teachers. Based on two aforementioned criteria for topic selection and prompt, the writing task was:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? -- High school students should ALWAYS obey their parents. Please state either 'agree' or 'disagree' and use specific reasons and examples. The opinion of both 'agree and disagree' was not acceptable.

Data Collection

A questionnaire designed to collect information on gender and age as well as writing tasks was sent to the schools in China and the United States. Each subject was required to fill out the questionnaire and complete the writing task on the same topic. One English teacher in China and one English teacher in the United States were willing to assist in the distribution and collection of questionnaires and essays from the students. Each essay was assigned a numerical code as an identifier on all essays. For example, an essay designated as “C 1” referred to a Chinese student’s writing that was assigned the numerical code 1 and “A 23” referred to an American student’s writing that was assigned the numerical code 23. A total of 110 questionnaires and essays were collected by mail and in person.

Data Analysis

The two coders involved in the data coding were experienced in analyzing essays. The researcher of the present study was Coder A, who was bilingual in English and Chinese. Coder B was bilingual in English and Chinese and taught English in colleges in China and in the United States. Coder A and coder B coded 110 essays to classify each essay as to the presence of a thesis statement and its location, reaching an agreement ($r = 85\%$). Since the study analyzed the rhetorical patterns in the original essays, errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage and run-on sentences were ignored.

Results

The findings of overall frequencies of rhetorical patterns are given in Table 1. There were four placements of the thesis statement: 1) a thesis statement appeared in the first sentence as thesis-in-first sentence pattern (TB1); 2) a thesis statement appeared in the beginning paragraph after a short topic annotation as thesis-at-beginning paragraph pattern (TB2); 3) the thesis statement occurred neither at the beginning nor at the end, it followed a thesis-in-middle (TM) pattern; and 4) a thesis statement appeared at the end of essay as thesis-at-end pattern (TE).

In the present study, a deductive essay means “initial thesis plus support” and an inductive essay means “support plus concluding thesis” (Cahill, 2003, p.179). Both the thesis-in-first sentence pattern (TB1) and the thesis-at-beginning paragraph pattern (TB2) showed a deductive pattern, and the thesis-at-end (TE) pattern reflected an inductive pattern. The thesis-in-

middle pattern (TM) combined both the inductive and the deductive patterns. The findings indicated that The deductive pattern, including the thesis-in-first sentence pattern (TB1) and the thesis-at-beginning paragraph pattern (TB2) were most frequently employed, followed by the inductive pattern (TE) and the non-deductive and non-inductive pattern (TM).

Table 1. Overall frequencies of rhetorical patterns

Rhetorical Patterns	Chinese	American
	Students n = 60	Students n = 50
Thesis-in-first sentence (TB1)	35.0% (21)	58.0% (29)
Thesis-at-beginning paragraph (TB2)	58.3% (35)	36.0% (18)
Thesis-in-middle (TM)	3.3% (2)	2.0% (1)
Thesis-at-end (TE)	3.3% (2)	4.0% (2)

Deductive Pattern (TB1 and TB2)

As Table 1 shows, 21 Chinese students (35%) and 29 American students (58%) presented their thesis statements in the first sentences (TB1), and 35 Chinese students (58.3%) and 18 American students (36%) put their thesis statements in the beginning paragraphs (TB2). The percentage of deductive pattern use is similar in both groups: 93.3% are Chinese students and 94% are American students.

Some examples of presenting the thesis statements in the first sentence (TB1) were:

- As one of the high school student, of course, I don't agree to obey parents all the time. (C 42)
- I most definitely disagree with the statement. (A 31)
- High school students should NOT always obey their parents. (A 25) (C 59)

Examples of the thesis statement in the beginning paragraph (TB2) by Chinese and U.S. students presented the thesis statement anywhere in the first paragraph in the following statements:

- High school students should always obey their parents". When coming to this topic, the majority may agree with it and argue that high school

students are still children who need to be guided all the way by the adults.

But I am against this point of view. My arguments are listed below. (C 8)

- During high school years most teenagers are extremely rebellious. Most become interested in the opposite sex, start to drive, and make new high school friends. These four years can be very difficult and kids don't need their parents nagging at them. There is so much pressure on kids today that most have enough to worry about without listening to their parents. I believe it's alright that high school students disobey their parents. (A 36)

In sum, the analysis reveals that most Chinese students and American students prefer the two deductive patterns when writing English as a native language (L1) and as a foreign language (EFL).

Inductive Pattern (TE)

Compared to 2 (4%) of the 50 American students, two (3.3%) of the 60 students in the Chinese group stated their thesis statements at the end. The analysis from data source of frequency distribution indicates that the use of the inductive pattern by American students and Chinese students is similar when writing English as their native language (L1) and as a foreign language (EFL). However, the number of American students and Chinese students who use the inductive pattern to present the same essay topic is very small.

One Chinese writer (C 5) stated his/her two reasons, 1) "Parent's opinions are not always advisable", "most parents of high school students in China cannot manage to solve the math problems of their children"; and 2) "Students should develop their own characteristics. Always obeying their parents can only lead to the stubborn way of doing things." Then Chinese writer (C 5) presents the thesis statement in the last paragraph:

- While it is true that parents are much more experienced and their opinions are usually advisable, high school students do not always have to obey. Advice is just advice, always obeying may not only result in some silly mistakes, but deprive the opportunities for students to think and do independently as well. Recognizing all these factors should, undoubtedly, drive us to the conclusion that high school students should not always [obey] their parents. (C 5)

Further, one American writer (A 2) also starts with reasons in the beginning paragraphs that “being a teenager is really much like being on adult” and “a teenager often has different opinions from their parents”. Then he/she states the thesis statement in the last sentence as follows:

- Without a certain amount of independence to exercise judgments, teenagers cannot become adults with independent reasoning and judgment skills. High school students shouldn't always obey their parents, because while a parent's guidance prompts safety and maintains stability, their rules do not always allow for independent growth of the mind, in opinion and judgment of situations. (A 2)

Non-deductive and non-inductive pattern (TM)

The analysis shows a similar frequency distribution for the non-deductive and non-inductive pattern. Two (3.33%) of the 60 students in the Chinese group, used the thesis-in-middle (TM) pattern, compared to 2 (4%) of the 50 students in the American group. A Chinese writer (C 4) and an American writer (A 52) use stories to support the thesis statement which is presented in the middle of the essay. The Chinese writer's (C 4) story begins the essay, showing an argument between “Tom” and his father:

- I want to tell you all a true story.
Tom was brushing his lovely red running shoes which might win him a prize in the school sports meeting the next day, while his father was smoking and reading newspaper in the sofa. Leisurely, tom's father stopped to look into the ceiling. Thinking hard of any words to say and that might encourage his little son. “Tom, do you will remember the story I told you before, whose name is “the rabbit and the turtle?” slowly asked father. “yes, I do”. Tom said impatiently because he was told more than a hundred time[s]. “Remember the turtle's spirit, hard work and perseverance! Father continued, “you should...” “No!” this time, Tom interrupted angrily, to his father's surprise.” I don't thin that's worthy of mentioning. Do you want me to expect Tony, Jack and Franck – all of them to sleep during tomorrow's match? “ Tom's father didn't know what to say.

After reading this story, we may wonder whether high school student's should obey their parents all the time. On the whole, I am against that.

Firstly, we should pay attention to the word "ALWAYS". Is that good? As is know to all, the age between 15-18 is an important age. Before that, children of teenagers always think that their parents say is correct, and after that, young guys may have their own ideas. But how can we analyze those high students correctly? It's better to describe them like this, try to listen to all the advice and decision made by parents on the condition they are right and use our own brains to judge and think of those opinions that may be biased.

... (C 4)

The American writer (A 52) illustrates different generation and learning from mistakes "to shape character and morlas", later his thesis statement appears "parents can tell us what to do and often their advice, but it is in teenage nature to rebel and let us figure out right and wrong". The American writer (A 52) shares a personal experience of "sneaking out my house" to support his thesis statement which has been put in the middle of the essay.

- High school is a time for personal growth, finding yourself, and learning about the world around you. Our parents lived a different generation that we do today, therefore their perception of what is right and wrong differ from ours.

Although our parents offer us good advice, such as don't do drugs or get good grades, it is critical for ourselves to learn from our mistakes to help shape our character and morals.

Parents can tell us what to do and often their advice, but it is in teenage nature to rebel and let us figure out right and wrong.

When I was a freshman in high school, one night I snuck out of my house, of course, I was caught by my mom and she screamed and yelled. When, I was off grounding, I snuck out of my house again (this time to rebel against my mom) when I was in the car a drunk driver hit us. Instead of

learning from my mom that sneaking out was wrong, I learned from my experience never to do it again. (A 52)

In order to bring an understanding of different rhetorical patterns, the researcher examined two textbooks for Chinese and American students by adopting a comparative perspective. The American students' English composition textbook titled *English: Communication Skills in the New Millennium* introduces different genres of writing (Senn & Skinner, 2002). This book defined that "thesis statement states the main idea and makes the purpose of the composition clear" and "the thesis statement is usually a single sentence. It may appear anywhere in the first paragraph, although it often has the strongest impact when it is the first or the last sentence" (Senn & Skinner, 2002, p. 226).

Similarly, Chinese students used the textbook titled *New century senior English* written by a native Chinese author, who adopted Western linear deductive and inductive patterns in their argumentative writing (Dai, 2002). According to the textbook, a topic sentence is usually placed at the beginning of a paragraph to "give the readers an overview of that they are about to read" (Dai, 2002, p. 112). The textbook comparative analysis indicates that English writing instruction and textbooks influenced the rhetorical patterns in both Chinese and American students' English essays.

Conclusion

This empirical intercultural rhetoric study investigated the similarities and differences of rhetorical patterns in Chinese and American students' English argumentative writing. The findings revealed that the rhetorical patterns were flexible, as both Chinese and American students placed their thesis statements in four different places. The deductive pattern was most frequently employed for both groups, followed by the inductive pattern, and the non-deductive and non-inductive pattern. Even though both groups preferred deductive patterns, American students preferred showing the thesis statement as the first sentence, and Chinese students preferred placing the thesis statement anywhere in the first paragraph. The findings indicated that English writing instruction and textbooks were the most significant factor of influencing rhetorical patterns in both contemporary Chinese and American students' English essays.

It should be noted here that this study might be limited by a relatively small number of participants from only two high schools. Future studies refer to involving greater number of

Chinese and American students are needed. In order to learn more about students' rhetorical patterns in their writing, more research should be done to test and provide insight into the writing process and show more details on why native speakers of English and Chinese choose certain rhetorical patterns. Interviews with English instructors and students will illuminate more clearly about the motivations and approaches used in writing instruction and essay writing for the intercultural rhetoric.

To understand the variability of rhetorical patterns, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers might see that ESL learners may write thesis statements in different places. If ESL teachers only prefer certain rhetorical patterns such as the deductive one, students' writing may be not as good as what they expected. ESL teachers, therefore, need to start to concentrate on how students' writing could be analyzed in the perspective of English learners' intercultural backgrounds as a way to understand the varying patterns as their organizational strategies. It is hoped that this study can raise ESL teachers' awareness about intercultural rhetoric in English teaching classrooms. This study is merely a starting point for future intercultural rhetoric research on students' writing at more Chinese and American public schools.

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Title

The Role of Attitudes and Identity from Nonnative Speakers of English towards English Accents

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Biodata

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Keywords: NNS English accents, attitudes, identity, perceptions, variety of English accents, Jenkin's lingua franca English, Standard English.

Abstract

The present study looks at role of attitudes and identity from nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English from Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Korea and Iran towards their English accents and of other NNSs concerning their English accents and how the results fit into Jenkins' (2005) ideas of lingua franca English which focused on their attitudes to identification with NNS and native speaker (NS) English accents, their perceptions of others' attitudes and identification, and their beliefs about teaching these accents. From the ten participants, six of them are English teachers or tutors while four are non English teachers. The results of this study suggest that two participants did not like their own accents, while eight of them did not have any problems with theirs. Five participants favored the British English accents while others prefer the American and Scottish English accents; one even chose to like her own NNS English accent. Regarding other group's accents; four participants accepted the different accents as they are familiar with the situation due to the fact that they are nonnative speakers as well. However six participants did considered the variety of accents were a bit difficult to understand. For participants who were English teachers and three non teachers, they considered that accent and pronunciation should be close to "the original and correct English" or "Standard English." Nevertheless for two other participants who were non teachers believed that accents should not be a problem in teaching the language.

1. Introduction

Crystal (1997, p.2) explains that a language has its global status when it develops a special role recognized by every country. In this sense, Medgyes (1994, p. 1) stated that the number one language that is commonly used by people is English. Smith (1976) mentioned it as an international language that links one nation to another nation in terms of communication. It is known as the lingua franca of the world or else recognized as the global language that continues to grow over time.

The extend use of English as the global lingua franca is gradually used for communication among nonnative speakers (NNSs). It has resulted in a variety of changes in its grammatical, lexical, and phonological levels (McKay. 2002, p. 1). In countries where English has a status of a second or foreign language, the variation of this language exist between different regions, and across the social strata, within the same country. In this lingua franca context, NNSs of English need to establish their social identity through the medium of their L2 (Beinhoff, 2008).

A number of researches have been conducted on the identity and attitudes of native speakers (NSs) of English accents and theirs toward other NSs accents such as attitudes towards NNSs accents of English by NSs of English (Bresnahan et al. 2002; Rubin & Smith 1990), the expression of social identity through people's NSs accents and their attitudes towards other NSs accents (Coupland & Bishop 2007; Hiraga 2005), NNSs teachers who use their accented English to express their L1 identity or membership in an international (ELF) community (Jenkins, 2005), and NNSs' attitudes towards accents of English was found to be much more an issue of status rather than of identity (Beinhoff, 2008). Thus this research will focus on the attitudes of NNSs of English towards their own (ingroup) NNSs accent and other (outgroup) NNSs accents of English.

2. Purpose of the Study

This essay will discuss the results of interviews from five nonnative teachers of English and five nonnative speakers of English concerning their English accents and how the results fit into Jenkins' (2005) ideas on lingua franca English. She studied the differences in attitudes of NNSs of English toward and identification with NNSs and NSs English accents and a willingness to teach English lingua franca (ELF) accents in practice.

This study focuses on the participants' perceptions of theirs and other NNSs English accents. Broughton, et. al. (1980, p. 56) stated that Received Pronunciation (RP), or Standard Southern English, is accepted as a convenient general norm for international purposes, however there are many areas in which a local version of English is acceptable and of greater usefulness to students. Additionally, Stevens (1983, p. 88) defines Standard English as a particular dialect of English, the dialect that being a non – localized one, without any important variation and it is

generally used as the proper educational aim in teaching English; which may be spoken with an unlimited choice of accent.

Thus, we have further examined their answers to the verity that English is treated as a foreign or second language in their respective countries, China, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Iran. In China and South Korea, English is treated as a foreign language in their educational language policy and is formally taught starting from middle school, at the age of 11 or 12. Indonesia as well treats English as a foreign language and students are formally taught this language in the fourth grade of elementary school, at the age of 10.

English in Malaysia is taught as a second language in all primary and secondary schools. It is basically taught through the education system. English is also taught as a second language in Iranian schools; however it starts from the second grade at secondary school.

3. Participants

The participants consisted of one male and nine females, where six of them (C, D, E, F, G and H) were from Indonesia, one is from South Korea (A), one is from China (B), one is from Malaysia (I) and one is from Iran (J).

The participants at least have completed their university degrees. Eight of them are studying masters (A, C, D, E, G, H, I and J), while B and F are pursuing their doctorates. Seven of the participants are studying in the UK, two are studying in Malaysia and one is working in the USA.

The participants from Indonesia, C, D, E, F, G and H, acquired two languages as their first languages (bilingual), their mother tongue and the official language of the country, Bahasa Indonesia. Four of them are from the province of Aceh (in Sumatra Island) and acquired Acehnese language as their mother tongue, one is from Kupang (in Sulawesi Island) and acquired Flores language as her mother tongue and the last one is from Solo (in Java Island) and acquired Javanese language as her mother tongue.

Participant I, who is from Malaysia, acquired three languages during her youth, Hokkien as her mother tongue and Bahasa Malaysia (the official language of the country). Meanwhile, participant B who is from China only speaks Mandarin as his first language, participant A only speaks Korean or Hangeul (the name of Korean language) as hers, and participant J from Iran, speaks Persian as hers.

A, C, E, I and J are familiar with the subject of English in a lingua franca framework as they are studying the courses of languages and linguistics. Their occupations are also as English teachers or tutors. But the others, B, D, F, G, and H were not common with the concepts as they are studying in the fields of finance, accounting, architecture and psychology; therefore we had to give further explanations to the questions, especially for questions 10 and 11. From this situation, varieties of answers were gained during the interviews.

4. Methodology

In conducting the interviews, we recorded the answers from the participants by using a tape recorder. The reason for this method is for efficiency. The approach was done informally to make the respondents feel free from pressure of expressing their ideas.

We had applied Jenkins' questionnaire (2005) where 12 questions are categorized according to the themes below (p. 537):

Accent attitudes

- Attitude to own English accent
- Desire for native-like accent
- Perceived attitudes of others to participant's accent/L1 accent group
- Participant's attitudes toward other NNS English accents
- Beliefs about accent hierarchies and status

Perceived effects of experiences (educational and social) on accent attitudes

- On self
- On their learners

Teaching ELF accents

- Desire to teach their local regional L2 accent as the norm
- Perception of colleague's desire to teach local regional L2 accent as the norm
- Perception of effect of learning about ELF accents on teachers' attitudes towards and desire to teach these accents

The interview questions modeled by Jenkins (2005) are as followed:

1. Tell me a bit about the languages you speak: where, when, who with?
2. What English accent would you say you have? Which features made you decide?
3. Do you like it?
4. Is it okay with you if people recognize that you speak English with [your Nonnative Speaker] English accent?
5. How would you feel if someone thought your English accent was [another Nonnative Speaking] English accent?
6. How would you feel if someone thought your accent was a native-speaker accent?
7. If you could choose any accent including your own, what accent of English would you most like to have?
8. What do you think of other Nonnative Speaker English accents from your own L1 group/from other L1 groups?
9. Have you ever had any bad experiences in English that you felt were because you're not a native speaker?
10. What do you think about the idea of the goal of pronunciation teaching being the local L2 accent? Do/would you teach it? Do/would your colleagues?
11. Why do you think a lot of Nonnative Speaker teachers of English are against this idea?
12. What do you think about the questions I've been asking you?

From the interview, the questions above were answered about 30 minutes by each participant. The first question asked about the language background of the participants, this subject intends to create good atmosphere and relaxation for the participants to open up the discussion by talking about a familiar matter of their mother tongues (Jenkins, 2005, p. 536). This

will also ease them to further comment on the next questions that meant to seek comparisons between English and their first language, particularly their accents, and then progressively moves to the participants' attitude and identification with NNS and NS of English accents, their perceptions of others' attitudes, identification, their experiences in speaking English, and their viewpoint of teaching the English accent.

5. Findings

5.1 Accent Attitudes

Kachru and Smith (2008, p. 82) stated that rhythm of speech, stress and intonation and also the sound of the pronunciation refers to accent. Hughes (2005, p. 2) concluded accent as variations in pronunciation. Accent, just like variety also have the controversies about which one is superior, desirable and so on.

Kenworthy (1987, p. 4) moreover described that English spoken with a foreign accent has some of the sound characteristics of the learner's native language and these are often obvious enough to make a person's origins identifiable by untrained as well as trained people. He added that one or two features are enough to suggest a particular language 'showing through' their spoken English.

The interviews revealed that each participant have their own mother tongue. Attributable to these mother tongue accents, they believed that whenever they speak English, it has subsequently influence their accents. Some also believed that they have slightly American or British accents.

Below are some of the comments made by the participants concerning their English accents:

Doubtful responds:

Suppose there are only two accents, I think I have American accent. For example the way I said water, letter, and later. But if there are a lot of variations in the accents, I think I have Korean English accent. (A)

I have British English accent, because I have been living here for almost two years, but I still have my Chinese accent, of course. (B)

Actually I don't know, but many people said that I have American accent. The way I say little, but, can't, and I realized it when I came here, in the UK, my accent is different with British accent, it's more American. (C)

I don't decide any accent to speak English. Well, it is a mixed accents, Acehnese and Indonesian accent. (D)

I don't know, I think is it American? I don't know... the way I said some words, I think its American, but my peers said that I also have Malay accent, but for me it is American. (E)

Indonesian accent, or mixed I think, American and British, I can't differentiate it. I just speak like people speak. I pronounce the words just like people said it in this place. (F)

Positive responds:

I speak in Indonesian accent if there is Indonesian accent in English, because my mother tongue is Indonesia, so it influences me. (G)

Indonesian accent... actually it is Javanese accent, even though I have been living in the USA for over 11 years. (H)

Standard English, proper pronunciation and sentences used. (I)

I speak American, just I like it more British, I'm comfortable more when speak in American accent. (J)

From the comments above, it can be assumed that most of the participants were uncertain about their English accents. Basically, all believed that their first language accent influences their English accent. Particularly for participant H, where she explained that her Javanese accent was still very strong even though she had been living in the USA for over a decade.

Observing the comments made by the participants on their attitudes towards their English accents, two participants, B and H, stated that they disliked theirs. Participant B said that his needed improvement in order to make other international students in his university understand him when he speaks English. While participant H wished that she could change her accent to be more American. Nevertheless for the other participants, they did not have problem with their accents at all. Among the responds made by the participants are:

Yea, I like my accent, no problem with it. (A)

Sure, I like it because that's the way I speak. (D)

Like it, no problem, no choice. (F)

No problem, as long as people understand me. (G)

The next question asked for their opinion when people recognize their English accent as a NNS accent. The answers from the participants in general were the same. They did not mind if other people recognized their accent as NNS English accent. By and large they had the same reason for this; they are not native speakers. They have their own background, and they are proud of it. Participant C said that she was tolerable with it, because she is an Indonesian, proud to be Indonesian and she can not be apart from the culture and the language. Accordingly, the influence of Indonesian accent in her English did not matter to her. Participant G also added that it was not a problem for her as long as other people understood what she was saying. She deemed that to

speaking English did not mean that she should have American or British or Standard English accent. Participant J further explained about self confidence, she commented that she did not want to pretend that she is a native when she is obviously not.

Participant H said that she did not care about her English accent, but she also added that her manager in her work place sometimes complained about her accent.

Regarding to how the participants would feel when other people judge their accent as a NS accent, most of them were happy and proud of it.

Wow, its cool. An achievement for me. (A)

I will be surprised. Happy. But I don't think so. (B)

That's excellent, good. (D)

I'm so happy; it means that I'm a successful learner in learning foreign language. (E)

I'm so proud. It means that I'm able to talk like native speaker. (F)

I'm very happy, I wish I could. (H)

Feel good as long as I can communicate clearly and smoothly with minimal grammatical errors. (I)

However, participant C, G and J had different responses toward this situation:

Hmm, wonder, which part of my accent made them conclude that, how come they said that to me, don't believe it. But one of my British said that my English accent just like a native. (C)

Nobody said that before. But if it happens I will correct him or her. I don't like it, I want people know that I am an Indonesian. (G)

Just give me a motivation to improve my accent! (J)

Participant C was still uncertain about her feeling towards it; it was hesitant for her to accept such comment regarding her accent. Participant G, on the other hand strongly refused if other people thought her accent was like a native speaker. She was very proud of her Indonesian English accent; she claimed that it was a part of her identity as an Indonesian. Her attitude is what Giles (1979) in Oakes (2001, p. 259) refers to as "emphasizing a different identity." He clarified that the particular phonological and prosodic markers which constitute an accent serve as a means of emphasizing a different identity. While participant J considered the compliment as an enthusiasm to improve her accent better as she believed that she did need more practice on it.

When the participants were to choose any accent including their own, on the accent of English that they would most likely to have, variety of responses were given. Participant A, would like to have one of the English speaking countries accent, it could either be British, American, Canadian or Australian. But she believed that she tended to have the American accent, considering that in her country, South Korea, there is a regulation from the government to teach American English accent to the students. This situation refers back to Abbot (1984, p. 98) who stated that the establishment of a role for English in any country is part of that country's educational policy. The Korean government had established some policy regarding how English teachers in Korea should teach a certain English accent to their students. This policy has made them be more exposed to American English than British English. Participant A believed that American accent would then give her more benefits in terms of her teaching activity in her country, respectively.

Participant B preferred to have British English, because in his opinion, "this accent is a decent one, more formal and sound more like a gentleman compared to the American accent." Whereas participant C and J said that as they more accustomed to American English accent, for that reason it was better for them to have this accent. Thus participant C too found this accent

easier to understand compared to the British accent. Nevertheless, she was also interested in British upper level accent because it is sound “correct” and classy for her. Participant E and I also chose to have British accent or RP (Received Pronunciation). Participant E even commented that British Standard English is the best. She further added “it is also because I am studying in the UK now.” Participant F also had the same opinion with participant E, even though she felt that American English accent was easier but British English was more favorable.

The participants’ statements above are related to the premise from Hughes (2005, p. 16) who acknowledged that nowadays the most prestigious British dialect is Standard English and for the accent is RP. He additionally alleged that overseas learners are mainly familiar with it therefore they prefer to learn British English rather than American or Australian English.

In contrast, participant D response was quite different from the others. She preferred to have her own accent; she quoted that “my motto is to belong but not to be the same.” Conversely, we discovered that this statement is contradicted to her response to Question 6 where she said that “it’s excellent and good if people thought my accent was a native speaker accent.” We assumed from her comments that even though she was proud of her own accent, she also did feel valued if others considered her accent as a NS.

Meanwhile, participant G preferred to have Scottish English accent, because she thought that Scottish accent is a kind of mixed with French. Her reason was merely “I love the sound of the accent very much.” Lastly, participant H, who is living in the USA now, said that she decided for the American English accent, because she found it easier to acquire as it had been introduced to her since Elementary School.

To the question of their thoughts of other NNS of English accents from their own L1 group or from other L1 groups, the participants’ comments were basically similar. All of them accepted the other people’s accents. Participant J even claimed that her friends from other non English speaking countries had better and clearer English accents:

Most of them are really good, my friends who have more friends from other country are speak English better than those who have friends from same country. (J)

However, they also claimed that there were also some difficulties in understanding their English instantaneously but participant A and G believed that it was other people's rights to speak with their own accents. They also asserted that the main purpose of language is to communicate, therefore "as long as it was understandable, it should be okay." Participant G added that some people tend to think different accents as a problem although he personally believed that it shouldn't be. She said that "it is okay to have a different accent as that is the richness of a language." She further added that the spirit of language is to communicate; not to identify the accents. She also alleged that she is capable of identifying peoples' nationality from their accents.

Participant B further commented that it was not a problem for him because he was also a nonnative speaker.

Participant C, D, E, F and I said that it was "a bit strange and sometimes difficult to understand" other group's accents. But then participant C also blamed her listening skill for not understanding them. Yet participant H found that other group's accents as "funny," as they were very different from hers, even though she understood them regularly. These different accents of English every now and then did lead them to misunderstanding among themselves as NNS of English.

5.2 Perceived Effects of Experiences (Educational and Social) on Accent Attitudes

All of the participants claimed that they have had bad experiences in speaking English, particularly when they just arrived in the English speaking countries. For those who have, they categorized their moments as embarrassing or humiliating situations to them.

Participant A, B, and G told that when they first arrived in the UK, they had some difficulties in communicating with the NS, especially dealing with the native's accents. While

participant J also had problems understanding the local English accent, or known as Malaysian English (Goh, 2003), spoken by the people in the country that she is currently studying in, Malaysia, as it is a little different than the local English accent spoken in hers, Iran. English are both treated a second language in their countries, respectively. These situations now and then created dissatisfaction and sometimes frustration among them. On the other hand, they believed that almost every foreigner would face the same problem when they travel to different language speaking countries.

Participant C said that her experience could be classified as a cultural misunderstanding which had caused her quite an upset moment at that time. The situation took place in her class. As an Indonesian, it is a never for a student to call their teachers or lecturers only by their names. It is common to call a teacher with the title of 'Sir' or 'Mister' before the teacher's name. It is a sign of honor and respect. When she first started to study in her program in the UK, she had called her lecturer with 'Sir.' Thus the lecturer had answered her cynically, instead. He asked her to stop calling him 'Sir' and told her to stop flattering him with such action. His comment was an insult on her behalf.

Participant F and H had once gone through bad experiences with telephone calls. Since it was not easy for them to understand the conversation at first, therefore the others on the other line had misunderstood on what they wanted to explain. From this incident, nowadays they tried to avoid talking about something essentially by phone. They preferred to email or meet in person.

Participant D commented that she had difficulties in choosing the appropriate words while making conversation with others. It sometimes led to misperception. This situation was also faced by participant E where she had several bad experiences from the lack of knowledge in vocabulary while conducting her teaching; despite that she herself was an English teacher. Their vocabulary problem is what Medgyes (1994, p. 34) described as the second most common problem for NNS of English teachers. Most of them felt that it is hard to use the appropriate vocabulary in a given situation.

While participant I proclaimed that she sometimes had problems understanding rarely used words that is used by a NS during their interactions.

5.3 Teaching ELF Accents

In answering question 10, whether they would like to teach their students a pronunciation model based on their local L2 accent, participants A, E and F were strongly against it. Participant A said that she wanted her students to master English pronunciation close to the original and the correct one just like the NS of English speaking countries. There were times when her students had said the correct words but pronounced them in their mother tongue dialects; therefore she would always correct them. She usually trained her students' pronunciation by motivating them to watch American or British movies.

Participant C, D and G also have the same idea as participant A. They tried to avoid teaching English to their students with the local accent, even though they also have some limitations in teaching exact pronunciation as native speakers. Participant C said that she tried her best to avoid the local accent albeit sometimes she could not accomplish it due to the fact that she is not a NS of English. To prevent incorrect pronunciations, she would always ask her students to look up the dictionary for the proper way of pronouncing the words. While participant D and G advised her students to not only learn pronunciation in the class, but also from other sources, such as English movies, songs, and news. So they would know some varieties on the correct pronunciation and accents in English.

Participant E stated that she would follow the Standard English, American or British, or of other English speaking countries. Participant F added that she wanted her students to specifically have the British accent, because she considered it as the original English or Standard English. Concerning this problem, participant I respond was:

Mastering Standard English pronunciation is significant. Thus, it is rather important to learn, practice, and master the skill before teaching others. Accent is not the main concern here as long as one can speak with Standard English, in other words, speaking with correct pronunciation, correct grammar and other features of a Standard English. (I)

Pertaining to English teachers, participant J proposed:

Yea it is exactly better if the teacher is native, because I can not be sure about the accent of nonnative teacher, never. (J)

She added that all of her NNS friends would have their own accent in speaking English; therefore she believed that the teaching of English pronunciation should be handled by a NS to avoid uncertainty among students. She thought that local English teachers think they can be as good as native teachers but basically their capability in achieving the correct English accents is against their benefits. Regarding NNS teachers of English, Participant I also added:

Sometimes most of the nonnative speaker teachers themselves speak using their local accent without paying attention on the correct English usage. (I)

Participant I also added that to learn and teach English did not necessarily need to be by and from a NS, but as long as the NNS teacher of English can teach the pronunciation of Standard English, then this would be more beneficial for the students.

However, Participant B and H both agreed that the aim of language is to communicate. As long as it is understandable and clear, therefore to teach English in the local L2 accent did not matter to them. The most important matter to them is that the students were able to form the language in the correct grammar and have clear pronunciation regardless of accents. They judged that American or British accents are second priority in learning English.

From the comments above, most participants assumed that the target of learning and teaching English should be with native-like pronunciation, even though it was realized by them that this would be achieved by relatively few.

All respondents found the interview as “useful” and “interesting” as this subject is the situation that they commonly face in speaking English with the NS or among other NNS but had never really thought of the circumstances. The participants initially stated that English pronunciation and the various accents influenced by different L1 is a predicament in their countries as they commonly causes misunderstandings among the speakers.

6. Conclusion

From the interviews conducted with 10 participants from Indonesia, China, South Korea, Malaysia and Iran, each with a different L1, we concluded that most of the participants do have some similarities in their attitudes toward English accents.

Firstly, they do not have any significant problems with their own accent, except for two participants where one preferred hers to be more American while the other said hers needed improvement. Secondly, regarding with other group's accents; most participants accepted the different accents as they are common with them due to the fact that they too are NNS. Four participants agreed that language is a tool of communication, as long as people understood with what they wanted to say, they were well with it. For these participants, accent was not the priority. Thus this is exceptional for the other six participants as they considered the variety of accents are a bit difficult to understand.

To some points, contradicted answers were also given by the participants. For example, at one point one participant said that she did not like if other people thought that her English accent was a NS accent as she was proud to be an Indonesian, but when she was to choose a favorable accent, she had preferred the Scottish accent instead of her own Indonesian English accent.

For the five participants who were English teachers and three non teachers, they considered that accent and pronunciation should be close to "the original and correct English" or "Standard English." Kenworthy (1987, p. 3) argued that now most people think it is an inappropriate goal for most learners to achieve the such pronunciation as most learners do not need such ability in learning English. Only for particular learners who do need it for their occupation.

Nevertheless for two participants who were non teachers believed that language is only a media for communication, accents should not be a setback among the speakers. They said that different accents are the richness of a language.

The participants who proposed that English should be taught with the Standard English pronunciation, they reasoned that this can avoid misinterpretation from students as what the teachers teach will usually effect on the manner of articulation for their words. According to them, nonnative speakers of English study it to allow them to communicate internationally, thus the unavailability of a standardized pronunciation internationally for the language create obstacles to meeting that goal. As told by the participants, "embarrassing" or "upsetting" moments can occur not only between the NNS and the NS, but also among the NNS themselves.

To sum up, all participants have the determination to use their accented English to express their L1 identity in an international English lingua franca community. The main problem they face is the ability to understand other nonnative speakers of English who speak with their own

accents as local dialect differs from that of another region or from the grammar of 'received English'.

7. Discussion

There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English (Crystal, 1997, p. 139). English has become the number one language in many fields of activity, for example in business and banking, industry and commerce, transportations, tourism, sports, international diplomacy advertising, pop music, movies, etc. But above all, English has become the common language of scientific discourse in a world where the relative 'development' of a nation can best be measured in term of its access to science through English (Kaplan, 1994, p. 1).

Therefore, English as a lingua franca, or as an international language, is spoken by people all over the world. People living in different parts of the world speak English in their own ways that display linguistic features which reveal their roots. Within each country, English speakers represent different dialect. Medgyes (1994, p. 4) deemed that those who have experienced difficulty in understanding are only too well aware of the richness of dialects.

The attitudes of NNS of English may recommend insights into NNS of English teachers' perspectives on English lingua franca pronunciation. Other factors, such as solidarity, social and cultural dimensions require further exploration to enlighten the acceptability of the NNS accents within the context of English as a global language. Teaching English does not only engage in facilitating the student to use the form of English that is mainly proper for their purposes, but also to be capable of distinguishing meaning of other forms of English among other NNSs. For these limitations, further investigations are suggested to be conducted in future related studies.

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Title

Segmental analysis of speech intelligibility problems among Sudanese listeners of English

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the problems of speech intelligibility of Sudanese university learners of English. The whole work was done on the basis of segmental analysis of vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters of English so as to explore the types of perception errors made in the areas under concern. Ten Sudanese learners of English (both male and female) were selected for the experiments. The subjects were asked to listen to four lists of words that include

vowels, single and cluster consonants which work in an integrative way, and a list of SPIN sentences (SPIN = Speech Perception in Noise test, developed by Kalikov, Stevens and Elliot, 1977). The single-item stimuli were constructed on the basis of the Modified Rhyme Test (MRT) but with a few potential improvements. It is less time consuming as the number of the stimuli is reduced. Moreover, the MRT provides reliable results even with small groups of 10 to 20. The obtained information can be analyzed by confusion matrices that will in turn show how different phonemes are misidentified. Thus, the MRT helps localize the learning difficulties.

Errors were committed by Sudanese listeners at vowel, consonant, and cluster levels, in addition to SPIN sentences. But more errors were made in the perception of vowels, coda consonants, clusters of English, and SPIN sentences. English vowels proved to be the most difficult area of perception to the listeners, more so than the single and cluster consonants because the students are not familiar with a large number of vowels. Listeners use their L1 perceptual strategies, and fall back on L1 inventory when L2 knowledge is lacking.

Key Words: perception error, perceptual strategies, confusion, segmental analysis, misidentification, L1 effect, L2 counterpart, substitution, enhance, hindrance, wrong implementation, communication breakdown, phonemic awareness, acoustic cues, phonemic inventory, basic sound knowledge, speech intelligibility.

Introduction

This paper aims to present experimental evidence for the causes of speech intelligibility problems which face Sudanese university listeners of English. The study was done on the basis of segmental analysis of vowels, single consonants, and consonant clusters of English. It explores the types of perception errors made in the areas under concern, accounting for issues like how vowels, consonants, and clusters of English manifest themselves as perception problems, and what the major causes of such problems are. The paper also attempts to account for how the experimental subjects in this study deal with the influence of consonants on vowels as an example of the ways in which speech sounds interact in different phonetic environments. That is, listeners need to know that in some environments, the vowel /ɪ/ e.g., in beat, beep should not be realized precisely the same as /ɪ/ in peat, or keep which often reduces the intelligibility of a

foreign learner of English (Allen and Miller 1999: 2031-2039). Moreover, given that pronunciation plays a prominent linguistic role in accounting for speech intelligibility between L1 and L2 speech participants, the study examined how the differences of the phonetic, and phonological properties across languages add to the problems of the speech perception. For example, when L2 norms are lacking learners usually fall back on habits of their mother-tongue. Finally, this issue is discussed into four sections where each section integrates with the others in a way as to provide coherence between the components of such sections.

Literature Review

Speech perception problems:

To our knowledge, a very few reports have been provided about the perception problems of English speech among Sudanese listeners. The perception of the English vowels proved to be difficult for the Sudanese university listeners. In this concern, the listeners cannot discriminate between /ε/, and /EI/ in words like let, shade, make, rate, etc. Moreover, the English tense and lax vowels / I,ɪ /, and /Y,ʊ / are frequently confused in words such as beat/bit, sit/seat. Listeners also fail to deal with vowels such as pot, put, pert cut etc. This is probably because their L1(Arabic) lacks central vowels (Brett 2004:103-133).

Munro (1993: 39-61) states that such types of errors occur due to the wrong realization of the English vowel categories which occur when listeners use their L1 perceptual strategies for the perception of English vowels. The English consonantal sounds also form problems for our listeners. For instance, there are interchangeable substitutions of [σ,T] in words like sick/thick, and sink/think, and of [Δ, ζ] in words like then/zen, zone, that, etc. Similar errors are made in the perception of the English approximants /ρ, λ, ω/. The sound /ω/ is often heard as /ρ, λ/ as in rent /lent/went. It is probably due to similarity in the manners of articulation between these two approximants. This type of substitution error reveals a kind of linguistic development where there is a phonological rule merging /ρ/ with /ω/. This rule normally appears in the child's linguistic development as temporary rule which is replaced later by appropriate one. It reinforces the potential that two different phonological representations are often possible for the same sound (Hyman 1975: 22-23). Literature of EFL learners shows that differences in phonetic and phonological implementation in a learner's mother-tongue can often result in misperception of

the speech sounds of L2. For example, they can make it difficult for such listeners/speakers to correctly identify the phonemes produced by the native speakers of L2. An acoustic matter such as the VOT often presents an element of difference which leads to misperception. Italian-English bilinguals identify the voiced English stops /β, δ, γ/ as voiceless /π, τ, κ/. This problem is attributed to the assumption that Italian voiced stops are pre-voiced which requires that glottal pulsing starts before the articulation of the consonant, whereas it is totally the opposite in English (Rasmussen, 2007: 4-32). Arabic native speakers learning English experience a similar problem but only in the implementation of English /π, β/ which is also due to pre-voicing property in Arabic inventory (Flege 1980). However, this is not the most serious speech perception element, many other factors lead to perception problems of English consonants such as /Σ, δZ, φ, ω, γ/ especially among Arabic speaking learners of English.

Similarly, Sudanese listeners of English have difficulty in the recognition of the English cluster items. In fact clusters like that of English, are totally absent from the Arabic consonant inventory. Probably this makes the learning of English clusters difficult for our listeners. For instance, clusters like /ντ/ is heard as /μτ/, /πλ/ as /βλ/, or /δλ/, /τσ/, /τζ/, /πρ/ as /πρ/, /δρ/ as /γρ/, /Τρ/ as /Τρ/, etc. Cluster items like /ντ/ are heard as /μτ/, /πλ/ as /βλ/, or /δλ/, /τσ/, /τζ/, /πρ/ as /πρ/, /δρ/ as /γρ/, /Τρ/ as /Τρ/, etc. These types of confusion can be referred to several factors. Similarities between the members of sonorant consonant clusters often motivate phonological change which triggers perceptual confusion. Seo (2003: 50-60) argues that segments' positional restriction motivates phonological alternations on similar consonant clusters which result in poor speech perception. An account of speech perception of some cross-linguistic patterning provides correct predictions that homorganic C/liquid sequences are more likely to undergo phonological change than heterorganic C/liquid sequences in a given language. Findings of cross language investigations of 31 world languages from different language families show that nasal/liquid, obstruent/liquid clusters (or sonorant/sonorant and obstruent/sonorant sequences) of homorganic sequences like [λπ, ρκ, πλ, κρ] and /πρ/, /βρ/ and /ντ/, /λτ/, etc. are more vulnerable to phonological change than that of heterorganic sequences.

However, compared with heterorganic consonants, homorganic consonants have an additional shared acoustic property, e.g. vowel formant transitions for the same place of articulation, assuming that they are adjacent to a vowel. Thus, the two sounds in a homorganic C/liquid sequence can be considered as being phonetically more similar to each other than those in a

heterorganic C/liquid sequence. Moreover, phonological change can also occur due to the absence of contexts with appropriate phonetic cues: e.g. velar-to-alveolar shift is interpreted as a repair strategy. According to Kawasaki (1982) if two sounds in a sequence are acoustically and auditorily similar, the degree of distinctiveness of the two sounds would be diminished and thus they would be subject to modification. However, such types of perception problems are widely spread among the Sudanese listeners of English which necessitate investigation.

Linguistic Background: The phonemic inventories of English and Arabic languages

Vowels: Important information in this context is that the first language of our subjects is Arabic, a language which has a small inventory of vowel sounds. It maintains a classical triangular Proto-Semitic (PS) vocalism which is represented as / ɪ, u, α / . In Classical Arabic (CA) and in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), such vowels are geminated to give long vowels. However, many dialects in MSA have developed other vowels (Kaye 1997:188- 204, Munro 1993: 41-43). Moreover, Arabic short vowels are normally not represented in letters at all, but indicated by special marking (diacritics) that have an essential morph-phonemic function in the root structure of the Arabic words. 1

For example, Arabic verbal roots such as *drs*, *ktb*, and *hml* are interspersed with diacritics; *darasa* /he studied/, *kataba* / he wrote/, *hamala* / he carried/, respectively-- a process that reveals a non-concatenative morphological system of a deep “underlying” phonological analysis (Kenstowics 1994: 394-405, Abdusalam, Nwesri, Tahaghoghi and Scholer 2006: 258-266, Frisch 1996). Thus, Arabic vowels show correspondence to only similar English vowels. Munro (1993: 39-66) stated that Arabic classical PS vowels / ɪ, u, α/ stand for lax/short vowels /ɪ, Y, α /, whilst their geminated forms plus the newly developed vowels /ε, o/ are realized as tense/long vowels /ɪ̄, ū, ᾱ, ε̄, ɔ̄/. The Sudanese Arabic vowel inventory has adopted the MSA inventory, but it contrasts /ε/ and /ε̄/. The long vowels are shortened in word-final position, i.e., the long vowel /ᾱ/ is reduced here to [α] (Raimy 1997: 118-129, Munro 1993: 39-66). In comparison to the Arabic vowel inventory, the Received Pronunciation (RP) English vowel system is complex. It consists of twenty vowel phonemes, i.e. twelve monophthongs and eight diphthongs. The RP vowel system becomes more complicated with durational variation, especially due to a tense vs. lax opposition in the monophthongs. Among the most common phonemic features of R.P there is a widespread loss of / u↔/ and merger of / ɪ̄/ in words like

sure, although other words may retain /Y↔/, e.g. poor. There is no longer a distinction between /↔/ for speakers with / ̄/ e.g. in words like paw, port, and talk, etc. Thus, some words such as sure are pronounced as /Σ ̄/ shoe, but poor as / πυ↔/. In the majority of accents now the phoneme /v̄/ is commonly used in words like suit, and enthusiasm, etc. (Trudgill and Hananah 2001: 101-112). Finally, R.P. is considered a practical accent for EFL learners to achieve successful communication (Collins and Mees 1981).

Consonants: The first language of the subjects is Arabic, a language with at least 28 consonantal sounds. These are the obstruents /β, τ, δ, κ, φ, σ, ζ, ν, μ, Σ, Δ, T, δZ/, approximants /ω, j/, trill /ρ/, and the back consonants glottal /ʔ, η/, velar /⊗, ξ, κ/, uvular/θ/ and pharyngeal /□, ʕ/, plus the emphatic stops and fricatives /τ≥,δ≥,Δ≥,ζ≥,σ≥/ (Huthaily 2003: 36-60, Allan 1997: 188-189, Laufer 1988: 1197-198, Amayreh and Dyson 1998). Important information is that /γ/ is not part of the Arabic consonant inventory, but in Sudanese Arabic (SA) the uvular /θ/ is always replaced by /γ/. Moreover, the /γ/ sound is often used by Bedouins in the place of /θ/ which reveals that the latter is the original phoneme (Karouri,1996:27-30). English, the target language, has 24 consonants (π, β, τ, δ, κ, γ, φ, σ, ζ, ν, μ, Σ, δ, λ, ω, ϖ,δZ, Z, N) and an approximant /r/. In principle, some kind of similarities exist between English and Arabic consonants where some sounds are shared (Suhana 2001), e.g. /σ, ν, τ, δ, κ, ζ, β/, etc. However, many of the English and Arabic consonants show categorical phonemic differences in the place and manner of articulation, context, and acoustic features of the phonemes which may hinder the perception of L2 consonant sounds. In this way, it often becomes difficult to make a clear division between similar consonant sounds that can result in positive transfer, and those which are phonologically marked differently and can cause negative transfer. These factors are expected to make the perception of English consonants more difficult for our listeners.

Clusters: Initial two (CCVC) and three-segment (CCCVC) clusters are common in English but do not have corresponding equivalents in Arabic. Arabic language has a syllable system that usually follows the CVCV pattern which does not permit two consecutive consonants nor four consecutive vowels (Abdusalam et al. 2006: 258-266). For instance, /πρ, πλ, γρ, Τρ, Τω, σπ/, and three-segment initial consonant clusters such as /σπρ, σκρ, στρ, σπλ/, are entirely absent in

Arabic. Furthermore, in contrast to Arabic which has no words ending in two or three-segment clusters, English has 78 three-segment clusters and fourteen four-segment clusters occurring at the end of words. Consonant clusters of English predominate in word final position which is attributed to the addition of the [σ, ζ, τ, δ] morphs that indicate tense, and number. Furthermore, the three element clusters are considered most complex type of consonantal onsets permitted in English due to their linguistic structure which has been found to contribute to unintelligibility (McLeod, Doon and Reed 2001: 99-110, Gierut and Champion 2001: 886-904). These factors, combined, make Arabic-speakers learning English face a challenge with the perception of consonant clusters.

Method

Intelligibility tests used: Intelligible speech is defined as speech that is understood by native speakers (Munro et al. 2006: 112-114). This means that speech intelligibility is principally a hearer-based construct that depends on interaction in an appropriate context involving the comprehension of the message between the listener and the speaker. It is also possible to refer to speech intelligibility as any successful communication that involves both native and non-native speakers of English, because the final goal of such speech is understandability. Since listeners of this study are expected to have an incorrect conception of English speech sounds, focus will be on examining vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters, in part, because they form the basic sound knowledge of the English language, the mastery of which is required for perfect learning of speech. And second, because the assessment of whether speech is intelligible or not is attributed to segmental factors, more than 50% of speech intelligibility is accounted for on the basis of speech sounds (Pascoe 2005: 5-6, Luchini 2005: 191-202).

The Rhyme Modified Test (RMT) was used in the experiments. The MRT is considered to be the most accurate and reliable measure of intelligibility (Logan, Greene, and Pisoni 1989: 566-581). Speech intelligibility measures involve word identification tasks in a closed-set of four-items, where the listeners are asked to select the response they think the speaker intended. The score is the number of correctly responded to items. Test items normally target phonemes, multi-phonemes, or words. Phonemes refer to vowels and single consonants, whilst multi-phonemes refer to cluster consonants. The formal assessments of phonemes and

multi-phonemes interpret the responses as either intelligible or unintelligible; put in figures, a score of (close to) 100% is interpreted as completely intelligible performance (Lafon 1966: 53-67). Word intelligibility, on the other hand, was determined on the basis of final words embedded in short redundant SPIN sentences. SPIN is an abbreviation of 'Speech Perception in Noise' Test (Kalikow, Stevens and Elliott 1977: 1337-1351, Wang and Van Heuven 2003: 214-224, Wang 2007: 71). It is a perception test that measures listeners' perception abilities. Measurement is based on a recognition task of twenty-five words embedded in meaningful and highly predictable sentences, as in She wore her broken arm in a sling (target word underlined). Listeners write down the final word that they think they heard in each sentence. This part of the SPIN test proved to be efficient at assessing speech recognition abilities (Rhebergen and Versfeld 2005: 2181-2192). Although the listeners' performance is primarily quantified in terms of number of whole words correctly recognized, partially correct answers are also important since they give information about the perception of phonemes in onset, nucleus and coda position.

L2 listeners: The subjects of the study were ten Sudanese university English students in the Department of English at Gadarif University in the Sudan. The subjects involved in these experiments specialized in English language teaching (TEFL). They had studied for six semesters when they participated in the listening test. During the period of study, which extends for four years, students attended three courses in the field of pronunciation; these are (i) an introduction to phonetics, (ii) phonology, and (iii) practical phonetics, delivered in three consequent semesters. They also attended two classes on English listening skills, which usually take place in semesters one and three. English is treated as a foreign language (not a second language), the learning of which starts in the fifth year of primary school and continues at secondary schools for three years. English lessons obtained during these stages vary between 5 and 6 hours per week; English is treated as a school subject that provides basic principles of the language in a traditional way of language teaching.

Overall structure of the test battery: The experimental stimuli include four tests. These are (i) a vowel test which is composed of minimal quartets including short and long vowels as well as diphthongs, (ii) single consonants in either onset or coda position and (iii) consonant clusters in onset or coda position. These target sounds were embedded in meaningful C*VC* words (where

C* stands for one to three consonants). (iv) The fourth test comprised 25 sentences taken from the high-predictability set included in the SPIN (Speech Perception in Noise) test (Kalikow, Stevens and Elliott 1974). These are short everyday sentences in which the sentence-final target word is made highly predictable from the earlier words in the sentence, as in She wore her broken arm in a sling (target word underlined). Word stimuli in the first three tests were embedded in a fixed carrier sentence [say...again], which insured a fixed intonation with a rise-fall accent on the target word. The vowel and the single consonant tests contained items on each individual vowel or consonant phoneme in the R.P inventory.² Moreover, the consonant test targeted all the consonants in onset position and in coda position. For the cluster test, the number of test items had to be limited as the total inventory of onset and coda clusters is very large; including all the clusters would have been too demanding on the subjects. Nine onset and eight coda clusters were selected that represent problems to Sudanese-Arabic learners of English (Allen 1997: 188-189, Patil 2006: 88-131).

All items in the tests were chosen such that they occurred in dense lexical neighborhoods, i.e. there should be many words in English that differ from the test item only in the target sounds. For instance, the vowel /I/ was tested in the word pit, since the /p_t/ consonant frame can also be filled in by many other vowels, as in peat, pet, pat, pot, part, port, put, putt and pout. These so-called lexical neighbors, differing from the target word in only the identity of the test sound, make up the pool of possible distracters (alternatives) in the construction of the MRT test. When selecting the three distracters needed for each test items we preferably selected lexical neighbors that differ from the target in only one distinctive feature. For the target pit, we selected alternatives with vowels that differed from /I/ in just one vowel feature, i.e. pet (differing in height), put (differing in backness) and pot. The latter alternative differs from the target in both height and backness; we preferred this to the one-feature difference in peat (or Pete) as we decided to exclude proper names and low-frequency alternatives as much as possible which may show a larger decrement in recognition than high-frequency words. The full set of test items is included in the Appendix.

Tests materials: The stimulus sentences were typed on sheets of paper (one sheet for each test) and then read by a male native speaker of R.P. English. Recordings took place in a sound-treated

room. The speaker's voice was digitally recorded (44.1 KHz, 16 bits) through a high-quality swan-neck Sennheiser HSP4 microphone. The speaker was instructed to inhale before uttering the next sentence so that clear recording is achieved. The target words were excerpted from their spoken context using a high-resolution digital waveform editor Praat (Boersma and Weenink 1996). Target words were cut at zero-crossings to avoid clicks at onset and offset. Target words and SPIN sentences were then recorded onto Audio CD in seven tracks. The first track contained two practice trials for the vowel test, and was followed by track 2 which contained the 19 test vowel items. Tracks 3 and 4 contained the practice and test trials for the single consonant tests, and tracks 5 and 6 contained the cluster items. Track 7 comprised the 25 SPIN sentences with no practice items. In the single consonant and cluster tests trials targeting onsets preceded the items targeting codas. Other than that, the order of the trials within each part of the test battery was random. Trials were separated by a 5-second silent interval. After every tenth trial a short beep was recorded, to help the listeners keep track on their answer sheets.

Test procedure: The stimuli were presented over loudspeakers in a small classroom that seated ten listeners. Subjects were given standardized written instructions and received a set of answer sheets that listed four alternatives for each test item. They were instructed for each trial to decide which of the four possibilities listed on their answer sheet they had just heard on the CD. They had to tick exactly one box for each trial and were told to gamble in case of doubt. Alternatives were listed in conventional English orthography. In the final test (SPIN), subjects were instructed to write down only the last word of each sentence that was presented to them. There were short breaks between tests and between presenting the practice items and test trials. Subjects could ask for clarification during these breaks in case the written instructions were not clear to them.

We will now present the results of the test battery in four sections, one for each test. Each section will first outline the structural differences between the sounds in the source language (Sudanese Arabic- SA) and in the target language (R.P. English). Such comparisons may help understand why certain English sounds are difficult for Sudanese learners and others are not.

Results and discussion

In this part, I present the results and the discussion of four sections separately which include vowels, consonants, clusters and SPIN sentences of English.

English Vowels Results: Figure 1 shows the rates of vowel perception errors made by the Sudanese listeners. It provides means, and standard deviations of the whole performance of the subjects concerned:

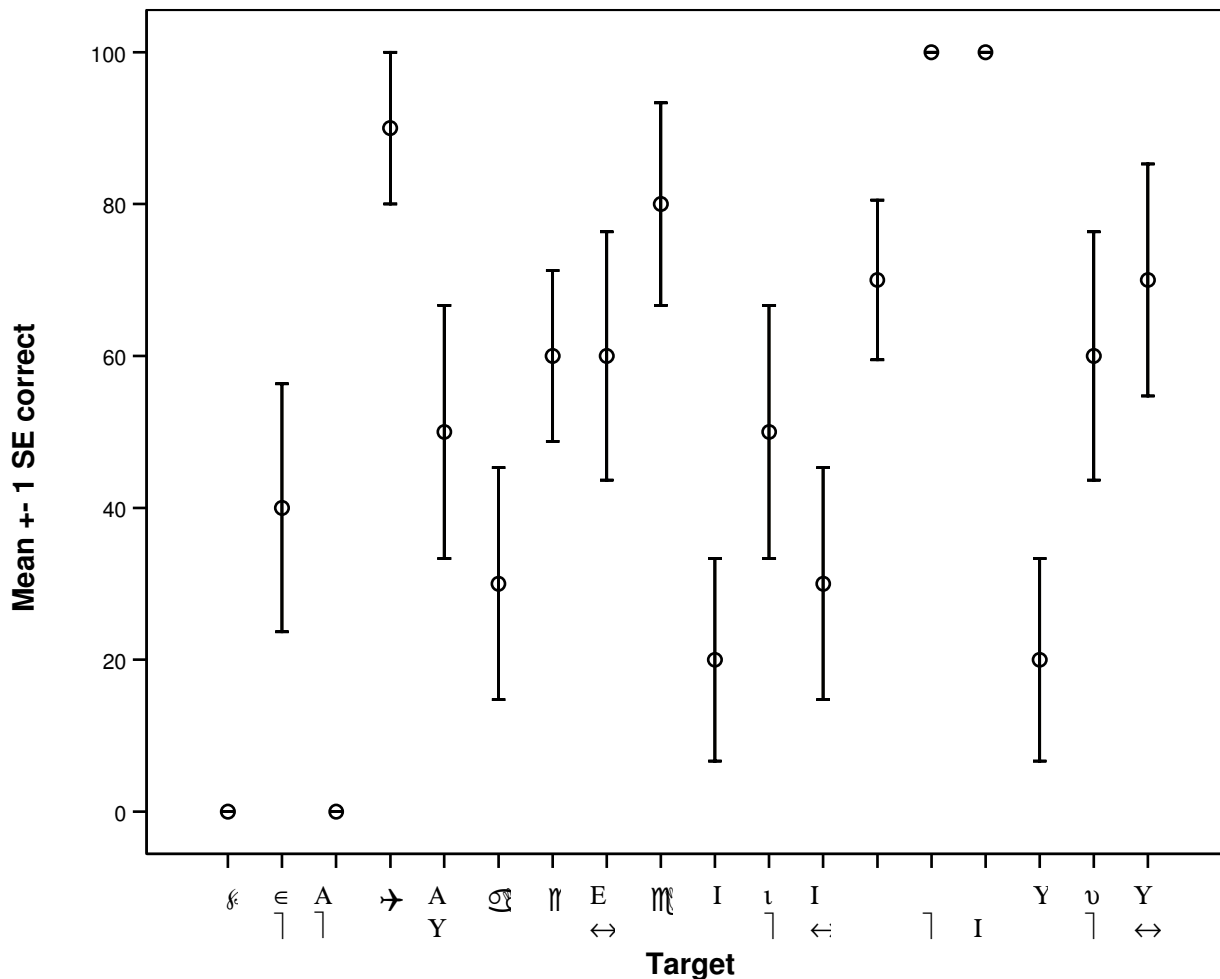


Figure (1): Percentage of English vowels correctly identified by ten Sudanese listeners. Error bars represent +/-1 Standard Error of the mean.

As it appears from the figure, listeners show a complete failure in the recognition of the short vowel /ɜ/ and the long vowel /A/. These are followed by high rate of misperception of the lax/short English vowels /I/ and /Y/, /ɛ/ and /ɪ/. Similarly, tense /long vowels /ɛ/, v/, and

diphthongs like /e↔/, /v↔/, /εI/, /αI/, /I↔/ and /αv/ also proved to be problematic. However, listeners show no errors in perceiving the two diphthongs / ∇/ and / ɿ/, while there are few errors committed in the perception of the short vowel /Θ/.

Furthermore, table 1 enables us to view the picture more clearly. It shows the confusion matrix of the correct responses, and the areas confused by the Sudanese listeners in the perception of English vowels. The diagonal line running across the table contains the correct scores whilst the spots scattered around it represent the problem areas.

Table (1): Confusion matrix of 20 English stimulus vowels and diphthongs (in the rows) perceived by ten Sudanese-Arabic listeners (in the columns). Correct responses are on the main diagonal, indicated in bold face. Confusions (≥ 30%) are in grey-shaded cells. The vowel /↔v/ should have been presented but was not.

Target	Responses																			Total		
	∅	ε	A	Θ	A	α	ε	E	ε	I	ι	I	↔	∇	↔	Y	v	Y	↔			
∅	0						1													9	10	
ε		4	1													3						10
A			0													9						10
Θ				9			1															10
Av					5					1						4						10
αI						3				5		2										10
ε				3			5				1							1				10
E		2						6														10
↔																						10
εI						1	1			8												10
I							5				2	3										10
ι							1				4	5										10
I↔								7					3									10

	3												7						10	
ɪ														1					10	
↔														0					10	
Y																			10	
I																10			10	
Y																	2	8	10	
ʊ]																	4	6	10	
Y														3					10	
↔																		7	10	
Total	0	4	0	9	5	3	5	6	8	2	5	3	7	10	4	10	2	6	7	180

Discussion

The perception of the English vowels forms a serious problem for Sudanese Arabic listeners of this study. The listeners frequently confused the low central short vowel / ə/ for the peripheral low and back short vowel / ʌ/, whilst half open vowel /ɛ ɪ/ was identified as / ɪ/ because their L1(Arabic) inventory lacks central vowels (Brett, 2004:103-133). As a matter of fact, the linguistic differences that exist between the listeners' L1 and L2 have a negative transfer (mapping model - Kuhl 2000: 99-115) on the listeners' perception process. That is, listeners are not familiar with the type of vowels needed in English because they are not distinguished in the Arabic phoneme system. Therefore they tend to adapt L2 vowel sounds to their L1 which causes perceptual problems.

A similar case reported by Tomokiyo, Black and Lenzo (2003: 1-4) describes difficulty to achieve inter-coder agreement between Arabic and English vowels, especially the presence of an /ɛ/ or /o/ vowel is not easy for the Arabic listeners to identify with a great deal of consistency. They refer this to the influence of MSA, where formal methods (i.e. the writing system) indicate the existence of only /ɑ/ , /ɪ/ and /ʊ/. More importantly, duration often has a negative influence on the recognition of English vowels. This appears in several cases where the

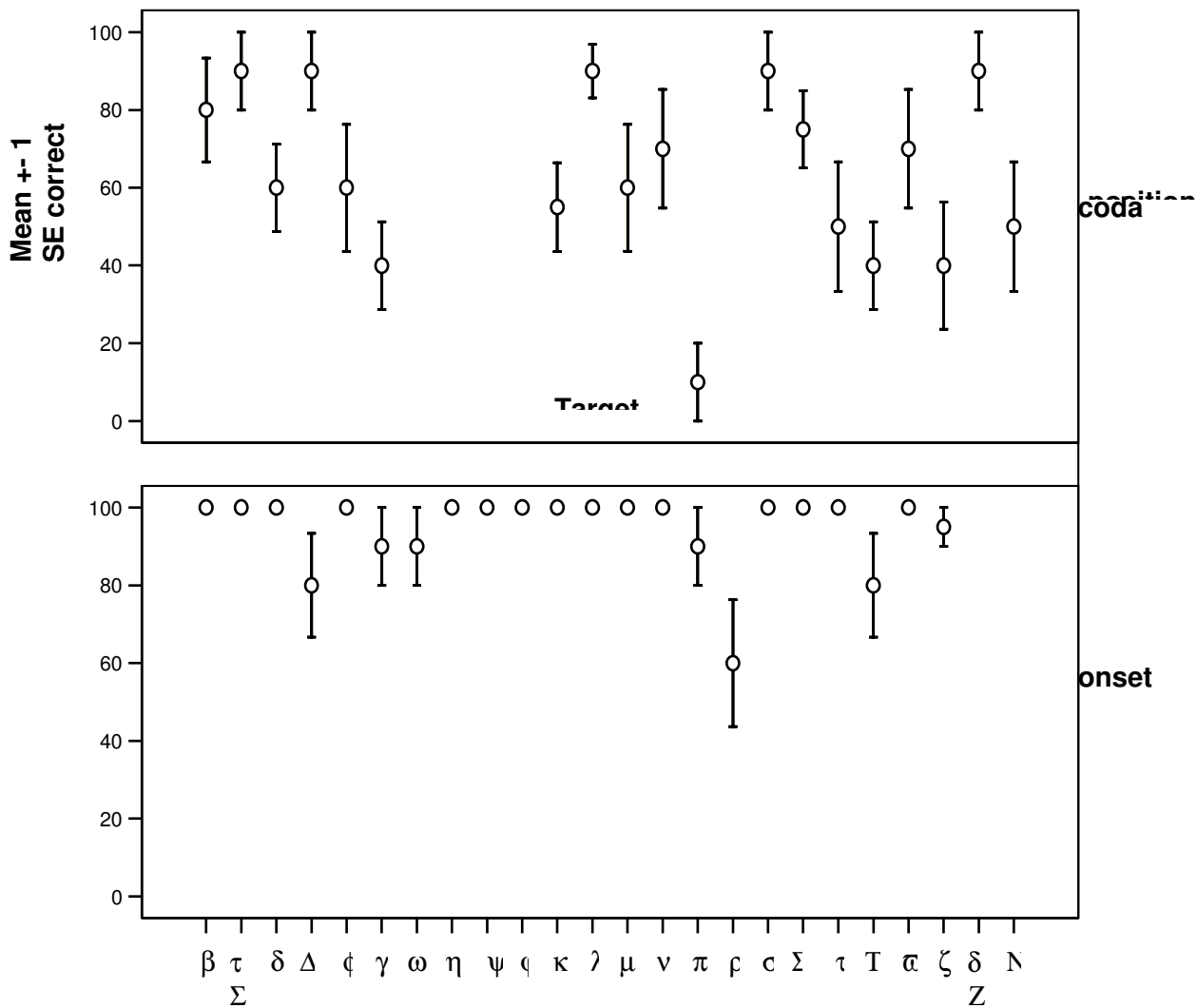
Sudanese listeners conflated /Y/ for /ʊ/ and /I/ for /ɪ/, and confused /A/ for /ɔ/. Such a type of error motivates the hypothesis that durations are important acoustic cues used in cross-linguistics of speech perception (Hillenbrand and Clark 2000: 3014–3022). According to Hillenbrand and Clark, due to duration shortening the vowel /Θ/ tends to be heard as /E/, and /A/ as /ɪ/, whilst the lengthened /E/ tends to shift to /ø/, and /ø/ as /A, or /ɔ/ a change process which leads to confusion. However, Hillenbrand and Clark observed slight alterations in the perception of /Y/, /ʊ/, and /I/, /ɪ/ due to duration effect. A more specific case was reported by Munro (1993: 36-61) that the English vowels interpreted by Arabic groups (including Sudanese) manifested the same ordering of vowel duration differences for front vowels, but different ordering for back ones. This is due to interference of L1 (Arabic), a quantity language where length is an intrinsic element that requires vowels to be realized as short/long (geminated). Thus, our subjects incorrectly interpret English tense-lax vowels in terms of Arabic long / short vowel categories. This data raises the prediction that English tense-lax vowels are close to Arabic long/short vowels in terms of quality and duration.

Moreover, it is possible to refer such perception errors to the inadequate knowledge of English vowels which motivates listeners to conflate, guess, or fall back on their L1 norms (Fokes and Bohn 1995: 81-91, Flege and Font 1980: 117-134, Walker 2001: 1-6). It is also probable that because Sudanese listeners descend from a language background with a small number of vowels, they find the perception of the English vowels difficult. According to Cruttenden (2001: 99-112) this is most predictable in those areas where vowels are close together in the vowel space, thus confusions are potential within these areas; [I, ɪ], [Y, ʊ], [ɛ, Θ, ø,], and [ɔ, , A]. Incidentally, compared to the previously discussed levels, there are very few confusions on the level of diphthongs. The diphthong /AY/ is misidentified as /↔Y/, /I↔/ as /↔/ and /αI/ as /εI/. Misidentification of such English vowels can be attributed to the fact that each two confused diphthongs share at least one sub-phone; a feature which serves to complicate the perception task for listeners. It seems as though the complete absence of such diphthongs in the listeners' L1 phonological system, may have helped them to achieve a better understanding.

Onset consonants results: Figure 2 shows the results of the perception test of ten Sudanese listener group on English consonants.

The results reveal that an overall identification of the onset is better than that of coda consonants (see table 3). On the onset level, listeners show near-perfect perception of stops /β/, /τ/, /δ/, and /κ/, and the fricatives (ϕ, θ, σ, ʃ) as well as (μ, ν, η, ψ). However, there are few errors made in the identification of voiceless labio-dental /π/ and the voiced velar /γ/. Listeners also confused /γ/ for /κ/, which are produced at the same place of articulation (velar), and /dʒ/ for /δ/. Other errors were shown in the recognition of the voiceless fricatives /T/ and the voiced /ζ/. Here listeners confused the voiced sonorant /ζ/ for the voiceless /σ/, /T/ for / σ/, whilst /π/ was confused for /τ>/. An interesting finding is that listeners were observed to frequently perceive the retroflex /ρ/ as /ω/.

Figure (2). Correctly identified percentage of a perception test of English onset and coda



consonants. The test was executed by ten Sudanese listeners. Error bars are +/- 1 Standard error.

Table 2 presents the correctly identified scores of the Sudanese listeners in the perception of English onset consonants. The diagonal line running across the table displays the correct scores of perception while the scores scattered around it represent the problem areas.

Table (2). Confusion matrix of 19 English stimulus onset consonants (in the rows) perceived by ten Sudanese-Arabic listeners (in the columns). Correct responses are on the main diagonal, indicated in bold face. Confusions $\geq 30\%$ are indicated in grey-shaded cells.

Target	Responses																				Total		
	β	τΣ	δ	δZ	φ	γ	η	φ	κ	λ	μ	ν	π	ρ	σ	Σ	τ	T	ω	ω		ψ	ζ
β	10																						10
τΣ		9															1						10
δ			10																				10
δZ			2	8																			10
φ					10																		10
γ						9			1														10
η							10																10
φ								10															10
κ									10														10
λ										10													10
μ											10												10
ν												10											10
π		1											9										10
ρ														6								4	10
σ																							10
Σ																							10
τ																							10
T													1										10

ϑ																							10
ω										1													10
ψ																					10		10
ζ														1								9	10
Total	10	9	8	8	10	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	9	6	10	10	10	8	10	9	10	9	220

Coda consonants results: Compared to onset consonants, results in Figure 2 show that more errors are made by the listeners in the perception of the coda consonants; the overall mean percentage of correctly identified consonants is poorer for codas than for onsets. A confusion of 90% was made in the recognition of the voiceless stop /π/ as /δ/, /κ/ and /ν/. Listeners also made errors in the perception of /γ/; i.e., they confused /γ/ for /k/ and /γ/ for /ν/. Conversely, they confused /κ/ for /γ/ and /k/ for /τ/, whilst /τ/ was misidentified as /d/ often as /κ/. Nasal codas proved to be a problematic area of perception where the confusion rate ranged between 50% and 60%. For example, listeners frequently confused /N/ and /μ/ for /ν/. On the other hand, labiodental /φ/ was confused with /ϑ/, and /ϑ/ with /ζ/. Listeners show very few errors in identifying /β/, /σ/, and /τΣ/, while they made no errors in the perception of /λ/, /Σ/, and /dZ/. Information about the confusion matrix of coda consonant perceptions are in table 3. The diagonal line running across the table displays the correct perception scores while the spots scattered around it represent the confusion areas. In the table the plosives /π, τ, δ, κ, γ/ appear more problematic, whilst /λ, Σ, dZ/ were perfectly perceived.

Table (3). Confusion matrix of 19 English stimulus coda consonants (in the rows) perceived by ten Sudanese-Arabic listeners (in the columns). Correct responses are on the main diagonal, indicated in bold face. Confusions $\geq 30\%$ are indicated in grey-shaded cells.

Target	Responses																			Total
	β	τ>	δ	δZ	φ	γ	κ	λ	μ	ν	N	π	σ	Σ	τ	T	ϖ	ζ	Δ	
β	8						1													10
τΣ		9												1						10
δ			6			1									3					10
dZ				10																10
φ					6												4			10
γ						5	3			2										10
κ						1	6								2					10
λ								10												10
μ									6	4										10
ν										7										10
N				1						3	5									10
π			3				5			1		1								10
σ													9		1					10
Σ														10						10
τ			2				1								5					10
T																4	6			10
ϖ																	7	3		10
ζ													6					4		10
Δ								1											9	10
Total	8	9	6	10	6	5	6	10	6	7	5	1	9	10	5	4	7	4	9	200

Discussion

One of the most important findings is that the Sudanese listeners confused English /ρ/ and /ω/. This problem supports the claim that the learners' production of L1 sounds influences the way they perceive L2 counterpart. That is, it is very likely that the English /ρ/, which is not a trill but a frictionless continuant, is mistaken for the nearest vowel-like sound in Arabic, which would be

/ʁ/. There are strong indications that /ʁ/ is perceptually close to English /r/. Furthermore, there is a sound change in progress in which young speakers of English now pronounce onset /r/ as /ʁ/ (see Watt, Docherty and Foulkes 2003). In the majority of English accents /r/ is articulated as a voiced alveolar or post-alveolar approximant /r/. The retroflex variant of /r/ is distinguished by a particularly low F3 that is close to F2, while energy above F3 is normally weak due to the existence of two anterior constrictions in the vocal tract, one made by the tip or blade of the tongue, and the other by the narrowed lip. The Arabic /r/, on the other hand, is normally a tap or an alveolar trill that requires alternative vibration of the tongue against the ridge. Allophonic variation is mainly concerned with the distinction between single and geminate /r/ in intervocalic position, whereby single /r/ is produced as a tap, and geminates as trills (as they are in Spanish). Because of these phonemic and acoustic differences, the substitution of /ʁ/ for /r/ can occasionally occur (Khattab 2002: 90-129). It is possible also to attribute such type of problem to the learners' lack of knowledge (see Marina 2003: 50-55) and to insufficient practice of the English [r] as a post-alveolar approximant.

On the other hand, the replacement of /ɣ/ by /κ/, /ʒ/ by /σ/, and /T/ by /σ/ shows a systematic pattern of errors. The first two errors are a shift of voiced to voiceless. These cases are produced at the same place of articulation; the sounds /ɣ/ and /κ/ are velar, while /ʒ/ and /σ/ are alveolar. It is most probable that the errors of perception /ɣ, κ/ and /ʒ, σ/ are the result of the effect of similarity of the place of articulation. Although it is possible to suggest that such problems can be interpreted as a violation of the norm of the voiced /voiceless feature; e.g. when [κ] and [ɣ] are confused, it is not just because they are both velar stops but because the voicing feature is not distinguished, or resists learning. However, Flege and Font (1981: 124-146) attribute this type of error in English stops to the place of articulation rather than to voicing. Additionally, the confusion of /T/ for /σ/ is probably caused by interference of the perceptual strategies of the listener's L1 where the English (inter)dental /T/ was mistaken for the nearest Arabic sound which is the (alveolar) dental /σ/. The substitution of /Δ/ as /ʒ/, and /T/ as /σ/ is often attributed to L1 effect. That is, in Sudanese consonant inventory and other Arabic dialects, the interdental /T, Δ/ merged with the apico-dental (often labeled as alveolar or sibilant) /σ, ʒ/ (Dickins 2007: 23-27, Karouri 1996: 60-68, Janet 2002:13-20, Corriente 1978: 50-55). Thus, Arabic words like

($\eta\theta\Delta\alpha$) this, is pronounced as ($\eta\theta\zeta\alpha$), whilst / $T\theta\beta\iota\tau$ / firm is pronounced as / $\sigma\theta\beta\iota\tau$ /, a problem which is reflected in the perception of L2 speech sounds. The affricate / $\tau\Sigma$ / was also misperceived as / π / because the articulation of the two stops / τ / and / π / involves a complete closure followed by a release. This makes listeners think of affricates as stops with a slow fricative release. It is very common among L2 interlocutors that when there is background noise or unfamiliarity with the speaker's accent, intelligibility is compromised (Ball and Rahilly 1999: 178-179, Subramaniam and Ramachandrainh 2006: 28-33).

In comparison to the onset, the perception of the coda consonants proved to be difficult for the Sudanese listeners. The listeners made more errors in the perception of voiceless stop / π /, which was substituted for / κ /, / δ /, and / ν /. They also substituted / τ / for / δ / and / κ /. This can be attributed to several factors. First, the sameness of the manner of articulation of such sounds; i.e., the sudden burst required in producing / π , κ /, and / τ , κ / makes such phonemes sound similar. When all acoustic correlates of L2 are not easy to pick up, listeners are forced to guess the identity of a stop; consequently they will choose the nearest place of articulation, or sound features that are relevant to the intelligibility of their native language which compromises recognition accuracy (Gimson 1989: 19-20). Second, the differences that exist between Arabic and English in both the phonetic detail specifying the voicing contrast, and the stop inventory, add to problems. In Arabic the voiceless stops are aspirated, while there is pre-voicing for syllable initial stops. English stops, on the contrary, exhibit a voicing contrast at all points of articulation; bilabial, alveolar, and velar. These differences function as sufficient cues for the distinction between the stops. Regardless of such differences, in perceiving the English stops particularly in cases like / π , δ / and / τ , δ / the Sudanese listeners use the acoustic correlates of Arabic stops instead which trigger the confusion. This type of error of English stops is described as a wrong approximation of the length of the vowel duration that should precede or follow such stops. To avoid these problems, Arabic speakers learning English need to do a modification in their L1 correlates of voiced and voiceless stops towards the English norm (Fokes et al. 1985: 81-84, Khattab 2000: 99-122). They need to use a longer VOT values for initial voiceless and to lengthen the vowel preceding the syllable-final voiced stops/obstruent. Other perception errors are that the Sudanese listeners confused the voiceless coda consonants with their voiced counterparts as in / σ and ζ /, and / ϕ and ω / as a result of the similarity in the place of articulation, whilst the confusion of [v, ψ and μ] is

due to nasality. Many types of errors of perception are the result of similarity of the place and manner of articulation, on both onset, and coda level. The absence of some phonemes like /θ, ψ and π/, etc., from the Arabic inventory adds up to the perception problems of listeners.

Consonant Onset and Coda Cluster Results

Figure 3 shows means and Standard Error for a group of ten Sudanese listeners in the perception of English consonant clusters.

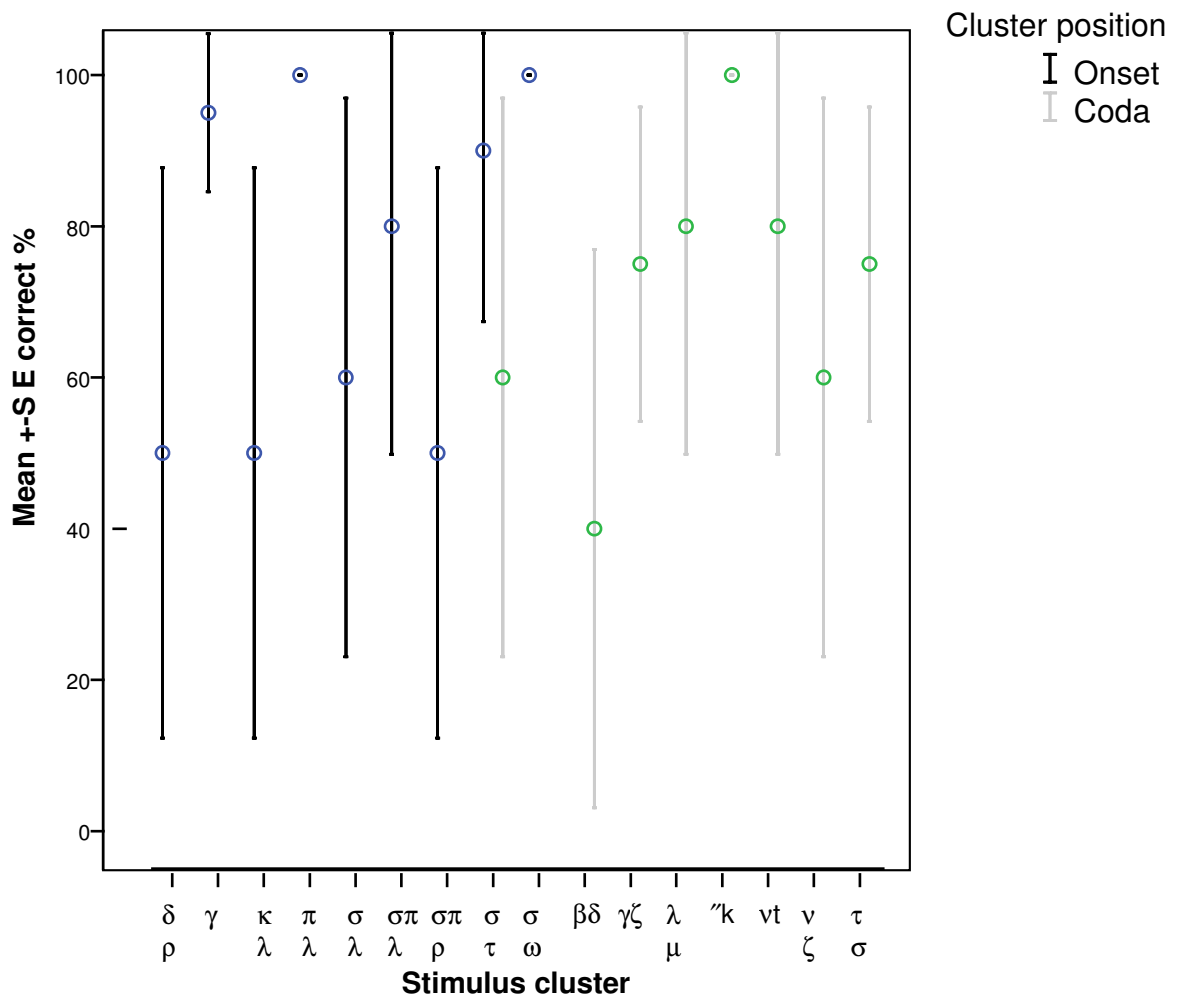


Figure (3): Mean percentage of English onset and coda clusters correctly identified by ten Sudanese listeners. Error bars are +/- 1 Standard error.

As the figure shows, in contrast to vowels, results of consonant clusters reveal fewer errors of perception. Furthermore, the performance of the listeners for onset clusters is better than for coda clusters; the total means of the correct scores are 75.1 and 71 respectively.

Listeners misrecognized /δρ/ as /γρ/ which is more frequent than /δρ/ as /κλ/, and these are followed by the misidentification of /σλ / as /σν/. They are also observed to interchangeably make errors in perceiving /σπλ/ as /σπρ/, /κλ/ as /γρ/, and /σπρ/ as /πρ/ or /σκω/. However, there are no errors shown in the perception of the initial clusters /γλ/, /πλ/, and /σω/. On the other hand, final clusters are more prone to misperception. That is, the rates of errors of perception shown in figure (3) indicate that the most perception errors manifest on the coda level; and these are the substituted /βδ/ for /λδ/, /στ/ for /σκ/, /νζ/ for /μζ/, and /νζ/ for /δζ/. Listeners also made errors in identifying /λμ/, /τσ/, /ντ/ and /μπ/, but fewer errors were observed in recognizing the item /γζ/, whilst /Nκ/ was correctly recognized. More details are shown in the tables 4 and 5 below. They provide a clearer picture of the correct and confused consonant clusters. The correct scores of perception appear on the diagonal line running across the table in bold face, while the cells scattering around represent the confusion areas.

Table (4): Arabic listeners (in the columns). Correct responses are indicated in bold face. Confusions $\geq 30\%$ are indicated in grey-shaded cells.

Target	Responses																	Total
	δρ	γλ	κλ	πλ	σλ	σπλ	σπρ	στ	σω	γρ	κρ	κω	πρ	σκ	σκω	σμ	σν	
δρ	5									4	1							10
γλ		10																10
κλ			5							2		3						10
πλ				10														10
σλ					6											1	3	10
σπλ						8	2											10
σπρ						3	5						1		1			10
στ								9						1				10
σω									10									10
Total	5	10	5	10	6	8	5	9	10	6	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	90

Table (5): Confusion matrix of 8 English stimulus coda consonant clusters (in the rows) perceived by ten Sudanese-Arabic listeners (in the columns). Correct responses are indicated in bold face. Confusions > 30% are indicated in grey-shaded cells.

Target	Responses																			Total
Coda	βδ	γζ	λμ	Νκ	ντ	νζ	στ	τσ	δΖ	δζ	λβ	λδ	λκ	λσ	λσ	μπ	μζ	σκ	ζδ	
βδ	4											6								
γζ		8									1								1	10
λμ			8										2							10
Νκ				10																10
ντ					8										1	1				10
νζ						6				1							3			10
στ							6											4		10
τσ								7	2					1						10
Total	4	8	8	10	8	6	6	7	2	1	1	6	2	2	2	2	3	4	1	80

Discussion

The plosive / liquid replacement of /δρ/ by /γρ/, and the fricative / plosive /στ/ by /σκ/ can be accounted for as an alveolar-to-velar shift within the same manner of articulation. The misperception of /κλ/ as /γρ/ (velar +liquid) can be referred to the factor of velarity in the first cluster members, and to the manners of articulation in the second. Generally speaking, these types of perception errors motivate the linguistic hypothesis that the perception of L2 sounds is often influenced by the perceptual and articulatory properties of L1 (Cruttenden 2001: 20-25, Canepari 2005: 38) where listeners often resort to the nearest corresponding sound. Moreover, such a type of perception error where voiced obstruent precedes the voiced liquid /ρ/ often takes place due to phonological alternations in similar consonant clusters-- mostly in homorganic C/liquid sequences. These phonological alternations usually occur when the speech signal is not detected well due to the lack of experience with voicing leads in phonetically voiced stops, or due to the absence of appropriate phonetic cues (Seo 2003: 20-59). Similar interpretations apply to the misperception of the voiceless sibilant /voiceless stops / liquid clusters /σπλ/ as /σπρ/

interchangeably, and the misperception of /σπρ/ as /πρ/ and /σκω/, where substitution errors of the third cluster member [λ, ρ, ω] took place, respectively. However, this type of error points also to the influence of the similarity of the manner of articulation shared by such approximants. On the other hand, the confusion of the coda nasal/fricative clusters /vζ/ as /μζ/ is due to nasality, but the confusion of nasal/plosive clusters /vζ/ for /δζ/ is probably due to the influence of the place of articulation shared by such members. Additionally, listeners follow a repair strategy in perceiving /vτ/ as /lτ/ (lτ is not a cluster member), and /βδ/ as /λδ/.³ They adopt the nearest speech sound that aids them to understand a word/message; i.e. listeners transfer their L1 phonotactic constraints when listening to English. This strategy reflects the prominent role played by the Sonority Principle Sequence in accounting for phonotactic patterns across languages (Gierut and Champion 2001: 886-904, Gierut 1999: 708-726, Clements and Keyser 1988: 118-129, Carr 1999: 14-39). Thus, the nasal/liquid, obstruent/liquid clusters of homorganic sequences and similar voiceless sibilant plus voiceless plosives etc., are more vulnerable to phonological change than those in heterorganic sequences.

Results of sentences (SPIN test)

Background: The SPIN-test (Speech Perception in Noise test) targets word recognition at the sentence level. It aims to examine the learners' performance in speech perception by including the effect of semantic context. In the SPIN test listeners are exposed to a set of 25 specific meaningful sentences. Their task is to write down the last word embedded in each sentence. In this way, the final goal of such types of test is to provide a measure of the ability of a listener to understand speech in an everyday listening situation.

Figure 4 provides means of Sudanese listeners perception on the SPIN. Correct perception of words proved to be very difficult for listeners; scores are around 30% correct. However, listeners managed to recognize some sounds in the words correctly. For instance, the correctly identified sounds in the onset position of syllables is 70%, whilst vowels and coda consonants are no better than 50% correct. So, the observation that onsets were perceived more accurately than the vowels and codas ties in with the more detailed results of the RMT tests. These results indicate that onsets consonants, whether single or clusters were identified more successfully than vowels and codas.

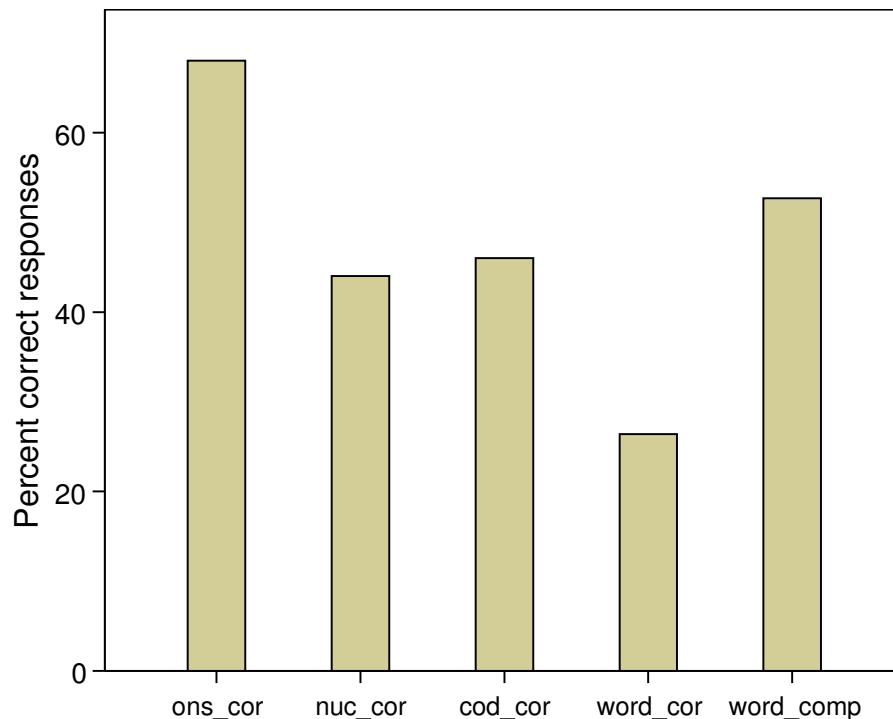


Figure (4): Percentage of (parts of) English words correctly recognized by Sudanese-Arabic listeners (further see text).

Discussion

The Sudanese Listeners had a poor perception in simple, and predictable English sentences that reached 30% correct. However, they had a better performance on single and cluster consonants and poor on vowels level. These observations provide empirical evidence that words and vowels are the most problematic aspects for our listeners. We predicted that vowel perception would be more of a challenge for Sudanese-Arabic listeners of English than single and cluster consonants. This is probably because their L1 has only five or six vowels which makes it difficult for them to attain the vowel system of any variety of English (Cruttenden 2001: 99-112). Moreover, observations bear out our prediction that the large number of consonant sounds existing in the listener's L1 facilitated the perception task (positive transfer); i.e. listeners are at least more familiar with consonants than vowels.

Table 6 presents the results of the correlations coefficient of vowels, single consonants, cluster consonants of English and SPIN sentences of ten Sudanese listeners. It shows the linear relation between the listeners perception scores at the four levels. In the table, the vowels, consonants and cluster components are shown in the upper part, whilst the SPIN sentences components are in the lower part of the table.

Table (6): Correlations coefficient of vowels, single consonants, cluster consonants and SPIN sentences. R-values indicate the linear relation between the listeners perception scores at the four levels.

Items	onsets	codas	Cons	Vow	Clusters			SPIN sentences				
					Ons	Coda	All	Ons	Vow	Cod	Word	
Codas	.591											
Consonants	.782	.965										
Vowels	-.682	-.169	-.353									
Onset clusters	-.327	-.208	-.267	.312								
Coda clusters	-.391	-.057	-.172	.164	-.020							
Clusters	-.505	-.152	-.282	.297	.470	.873						

ons_SPIN	-.135	.057	.000	.507	-.308	-.073	-.215				
vow_SPIN	-.209	.288	.154	.435	-.343	.227	.033	.710			
cod_SPIN	.288	.533	.505	.093	-.330	-.234	-.367	.639	.597		
wrd_SPIN	.194	.584	.514	.214	-.381	.070	-.124	.567	.700	.899	
ovc_SPIN	.000	.327	.253	.386	-.370	-.064	-.237	.908	.845	.866	.822

Bolded $r > .8$: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Bolded $r < .7$: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As table 6 shows the correlation output of the four perception tests contributes to the issue under concern. The purpose of the correlation coefficient in this context is to provide information about matters such as how and to what extent the results of our subjects in the four sections relate to each other. The results show that there is a negative correlation of $r = -.682$ ($p < .05$) between vowels and onset consonants, indicating that poorer identification of vowels goes together with better results for onset consonants. On the other hand, vowels have high positive correlations with correct word identification ($r = .700$, $p < .01$). Positive correlations are also observed between word composition level and vowels $r = .386$, and consonants $r = .253$, which are not significant. These data reveal that a weak relation of consonants identification goes together with better word composition results. Moreover, multiple regression between word composition and

vowels, consonants, and clusters from other side is significant ($r = .638$, $p = .05$). These data suggest that an overall measure of performance on the vowels, consonants and clusters is a strong predictor of connected intelligibility for these data.

To sum up, the perception of the listeners in the SPIN is very low on sentence level, but it provides feedback about which of the three levels of English phonemes is most problematic for Sudanese listeners. In this connection, the results of the Sudanese listeners' correct word identification in the SPIN-test are strongly related to Chinese listeners exposed to a similar SPIN test (Wang, 2007: 70-71). Similarity of performance between the two groups can be attributed to the fact that both Chinese and Sudanese listeners speak English as a second/foreign language.

The listeners also come from linguistic backgrounds that are entirely unrelated to English; Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan, whilst Arabic is a Semitic language. In contrast, Dutch listeners had high word correct percentage, due to more exposure to English than the former groups (Wang 2007: 70-71). Furthermore, linguistically Dutch L1 norm is much closer to English than Chinese listeners. American listeners have the best performance in the SPIN test simply because they are native speakers of English (Wang 2007: 70-71).

General conclusions

Vowels proved to be a difficult area of perception for Sudanese listeners of English. This is most likely because they are unfamiliar with a large number of different types of vowel sounds present in the English language. Listeners found the perception of the English diphthongs, central, and back vowels the most problematic because such types of vowels are absent in their L1.

Duration element does not show serious effect on English vowels identification because there is some kind of correspondence between the listeners' L1 (Arabic) long/short vowel durations and those of English tense-lax vowels. However, the replacement of tense-lax vowels /Y, u/ and less frequently /I, i/ indicates interference of the subjects' L1, and probably the lack of knowledge of English vowel sounds.

With regard to the interdependency existing between the perception and production of speech sounds, differences in the place and manners of articulation between English and Arabic phonetic systems require that the Sudanese listeners to enhance their L1 phoneme inventory to that of L2 so as to achieve a better performance of English speech.

The perception of the English single and cluster coda consonants is more difficult than that of the onset position. The listeners transfer their L1 phonotactic constraints when listening to English consonant clusters. This mostly occurs with coda consonants where the listeners fail to distinguish or implement certain phonetic features.


Conclusions drawn above provide cognitive insights that help us understand the nature and the causes of the speech perception problems, which are experienced by Sudanese listeners of

English. Thus, they present useful guidelines that can contribute to the learning and teaching of such types of problems in ESL/EFL contexts. One important guideline is that successful pedagogical implications of speech perception should target the mastery of the basic principles of English phonology, phonetics, and acoustic cues. Many second/ foreign language learners lacking such knowledge, have difficulties treating English speech issues; e.g., recognizing English vowels in different contexts, or discriminating between quartets such as pit, pat, pot, put, etc. So, there is a need sometimes for pupil involvement in group work for task-based learning, whereby some pupils may have roles which require them to listen or speak quite a lot. Moreover, the listeners' L1 inventory has a real negative effect on the process of the speech intelligibility. This requires that it should be taken more seriously and more practically during the learning/ teaching tasks of English speech perception and production. The teachers, for example, need to create "English atmosphere" in the classroom where more exposure to native English speech is necessary to reduce L1 effect.

Notes

1. In the Arabic script, the harakat /diacritics are special unwritten marks which represent short vowels (α, ι, υ). The literal meaning of harakat is "movements", e.g. in the context of moving air waves that we produce while pronouncing vowels as in the following examples:

i- Fathah; an oblique dash over a consonant like  represents "α" sound

ii-Kasra sign; an oblique dash under a consonant like  represents "ι" sound

iii-Damma sign; a loop over ,resembles like comma, like  represents "υ" sound

In Arabic language, diacritics are not part of Arabic alphabetic or ordinary spelling but understood from context (Hayat 2005: 29-33, Alan 1997:188-204, Chomsky and Halle 1968: 373-374). For example, in word structure of Arabic language, they are sprinkled through the word rather than taking place as continuous segments, a characteristic that is clear in examples such as (darasa = he studied) and (hamala = he carried) where the suffixes (a) are inflectional affixes. They also function to mark the inflectional categories such as tense, gender, and number in a way that reveals the nature of Arabic non-

concatenative morphological system “underlying” a deep phoneme regularities (Kenstowics 1994: 394-405).

2. Inadvertently, the vowel test did not include an item targeting the vowel /↔Y/ as in *boat*.
3. To achieve perceptible pronunciation or to facilitate perception and production of speech sounds, adult L2 learners are equipped with their L1 phonotactic constraints and have to deal with the mismatch that exists between L1 and L2. This process is referred to as a repair strategy (Kang and Hyunsook 2005: 407-419).

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Appendices

Table (1): Stimuli used in the perception tests included vowels, single and cluster consonants of English.

No.	1-Vowels	2-Consonants	2-Consonants	2-Consonants	3-Clusters
1-	pot	sack	Raze	job	sty
2-	pet	mash	Mash	led	splint
3-	pat	pale	Heath	shut	slack
4-	pit	cog	Pale	pin	ply
5-	nut	heath	Page	fid	drain
6-	food	bang	Mad	not	glaze
7-	food	can	With	zeal	swine
8-	peat	sad	Rave	thaw	clean
9-	bird	pat	Zeal	then	fibbed
10-	bard	sack	Den	yen	lint
11-	board	pub	Job	chat	elm

12-	boy	cog	Vest	rent	putts
13-	mile	match	Cold	sip	mast
14-	bay	cop	Hit	Wick	buns
15-	out	lace	Got	bang	bugs
16-	poor	dam	Den	tame	wink
17-	-	safe	Must	-	wits

Table (2): SPIN sentences presented part of the perception test.

4- High predictability SPIN sentences
1- Throw out all the useless junk.
2- She cooked him a hearty meal.
3- Her entry should win the first prize.
4- The stale bread was covered with mold.
5- The fireman heard her frightened scream.
6- Your knees and your elbows are joints.
7- I ate a piece of chocolate fudge.
8- Instead of a fence plant a hedge.
9- The story had a clever plot.
10- The landlord raised the rent.
11- Her hair was tied with a blue bow.
12- He's employed by a large firm.
13- To open the jar twist the lid.
14- The swimmer's leg got a bad cramp.
15- Our seats were in the second row.
16- The thread was wound on the spool.
17- They tracked the lion to his den.
18- Spread some butter on your bread.
19- A spoiled child is a brat.

20- Keep your broken arm in a sling.
21- The mouse was caught in the trap.
22- I have got a cold and a sore throat.
23- Ruth poured herself a cup of tea.
24- The house was robbed by a thief.
25- Wash the floor with a mop.



Title

Strategies for learning English in a cross-cultural learning environment: East Asian students in one UK University

Authors

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Biodata

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Abstract

This paper discusses the experiences of East Asian students (n = 40) taking a full time Master's course at a University in the UK from 2004 - 2005. A mixed methods case study approach was taken with data gathered through three rounds of questionnaire surveys of the whole group and a further three rounds of interviews carried out with a broadly representative sample (n = 8) over the course of a year. The experiences of these students were examined under three interconnected themes: language, socio-cultural environment and academic culture. This paper reports on how participants described the strategies they used for developing their language skills, in both everyday use and academic contexts. These strategies involved independent private study, acting on feedback from more knowledgeable others and participation in groups or social activity. The paper suggests that a mix of strategies can be effective for language learning.

Keywords: Language learning strategies; East Asian international students; culture and learning; informal learning.

Introduction

Notwithstanding the present global economic recession, the internationalisation of higher education will continue to mean large numbers of East Asian students will wish to study in English-speaking countries (Bodycott & Walker 2000) or in the medium of the English language. Competition for international students has become fiercer (Tounson 2009) but there is too little understanding of how international students behave in the new milieu and how they can be best supported. There is, however, a broad consensus that language has been, and remains a key area of concern for international students studying overseas (eg Zhou & Todman 2008; Campbell & Li, 2008) and of even greater concern for students with first languages which have very different linguistic roots to English. Language difficulties markedly affect general academic development and social integration.

Research has explored language learners' strategies (eg. Schneider & Fujishima 1995; Chamot et al 1996; Graham 1997) in and outside formal teaching. Bedell & Oxford (1996:58) claim that culture or ethnicity directly influences language learners' choice of learning strategy as they often, though not always, "behave in certain culturally approved and socially encouraged

ways as they learn”. However, only some research has focused on how learning strategies change when learners move to a culturally different environment (eg. Carson & Longhini 2002; Gao 2002) and to ones offering greater opportunity for informal or incidental language learning.

The study

This study was conducted at a campus based UK university which had an enrolment of 15,833 full-time students in the year 2004-5, of whom 3,213 were from overseas. Students with English as a foreign language were invited to attend a five or a ten-week pre-session course at the University. Indeed, most of those attending had not achieved the required entry level score on a recognised English proficiency test and attendance at the pre-session course was a condition of acceptance. In the summer of 2004, 45 students (23 male; 22 female) attended the full ten-week course; the majority of them (n = 40) were from Asian countries. These students subsequently embarked upon postgraduate courses from October 2004 for at least one year. The study sought to investigate the experiences of the East Asian students and this paper reports on part of that study by showing how participants developed their English language skills, in both everyday use and academic contexts. This was an in depth case study using mixed methods: survey, interviews and observation.

A questionnaire survey was carried out with all 40 students at three points during the year: November, March and June. The questionnaire contained 18 main questions with 12 sub questions. The form of the questions was mixed: both open ended and closed questions were involved. The closed questions were of different types, such as yes / no questions, category questions, list questions, ranking and scale questions.

Three rounds of semi structured interviews were carried out with eight students – this sub group was structured so as to include a range of nationalities and a mix of gender (see Table 1 for biographical details, note that names are anonymised and do not correspond to the anglicised names most of the students adopted during the year).

Table 1

“Name”	Nationality	Area of study	Age (2004)	Gender	Key experiences of language learning in the past	Academic background
Paul	Thai	Economics and Finance	24	Male	Studied English formally at school, one month summer course in UK as a teenager	Academically successful in home country, felt he had effective strategies to pass examinations
Shirley	Thai	English teaching	22	Female	Studied English formally at school, did degree in French	Recently finished first degree, felt she was a successful learner
James	Chinese	Financial Mathematics	22	Male	Studied English formally at school	Recently finished first degree, felt she was a successful learner
Max	Chinese	Chemistry	26	Male	Studied English formally at school	In previous three years worked in non-chemistry related area; felt able to meet academic demands
Emily	Japanese	English teaching	31	Female	Studied English formally at school, and studied in UK language school for one month 10 years ago	Taught English at high school for 7 years in home country, felt able to meet academic demands
Alice	Japanese	English teaching	23	Female	Studied English formally at school; lived in USA for three years as child, later attended summer schools	Recently finished first degree, felt able to meet academic demands
Simon	Taiwanese	Engineering	26	Male	Studied English formally at school; studied Japanese in Japan for 9 months	Already completed Master degree at a Taiwanese university, felt able to meet academic demands
Janet	South Korean	Economics	28	Female	Studied English formally at school	Felt able to meet academic demands

The interviews were in English though Mandarin Chinese was used occasionally with participants from China. Interviews lasted between 45 and 70 minutes. They were conducted at the end of each term (November, April and July) in students' accommodation or researchers' offices where privacy could be secured. The major themes of interviews were related to language skills, academic issues and socio-cultural adaptation.

One of the authors (Wu) carried out participant observation during the pre-session programme, facilitated by her appointment as a student mentor. She led student activities in the evenings (such as film shows, organised sport and social events) and accompanied students on trips to local places of interest. During the year Wu met many of these students, their friends and classmates, and gained knowledge of their progress and frustrations. Wu stayed in contact when the students had returned to their home countries. Comments were recorded in a research diary. Ethical issues, particularly concerning consent for participation in the study, were addressed throughout.

Data was collected, aggregated and then compared and contrasted. Questionnaire data was entered into SPSS software and simple descriptive reporting carried out. Interview data was transcribed and coded around topics and subtopics (Miles & Huberman 1994). These topics had been identified in advance through literature review and questionnaire survey but were adapted, and new codes were identified, as the research progressed. The research diary was consulted for supplementary data, for example to track experiences of individuals over time. The findings which follow concern language learning strategies.

Survey Findings

Overall the large majority (90 per cent) of the 40 students surveyed expressed satisfaction with their experiences of living and studying abroad and most felt that they had developed their language skills. However, there were areas of difficulty. Table 2 shows that over half felt they had developed their listening and reading skills over the year; but for speaking and writing, the productive skills, the level of satisfaction was not as marked. Few students felt confident in their ability to write in English with a lack of vocabulary a major problem. They felt that, when provided, feedback from tutors and examples of explicit models of writing were particularly helpful forms of support. With the exception of reading, satisfaction with language improvement declined in the third term. This seemed to have been because their study programmes typically prioritised independent study towards a dissertation in this term rather than participation in seminars. It might also have been influenced by a growing realisation that learning a language took time and perhaps their initial expectation of how far their English would develop in only nine months was unrealistic.

Table 2

Term	Speaking	Writing	Listening	Reading
First term	40%	34.3 %	65.7 %	45.7 %
Second term	39.4%	57.6 %	66.7%	59.4%
Third term	20.9 %	45.8%	54.2%	66.7%

Table 2: Percentage of students expressing satisfaction with development of particular English language skills over the year (n=40)

Individual Experiences

Within this general picture, interview and research diary data enabled a closer examination of the experiences of the sub group of students. Table 3 provides a list of the strategies which these eight students used to develop their English language skills, as coded within interview data. Of course, these students may well have followed other strategies even if they did not explicitly mention that they had. As with the whole group most (5) in the sub sample felt they had made good progress in English, two had made noticeable progress but one, 'Janet', struggled, and continued to struggle, markedly with the language. All except this one student passed their course assessments, indicating an acceptable level of proficiency in English.

Table 3

Strategies	Emily	Janet	James	Max	Paul	Simon	Alic e	Shirle y
Using ICT to gain access to material in target language	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Asking for feedback from tutor	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Private study of language teaching material (eg textbooks)	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Informal learning (eg learning from flatmates and peers and participation in societies and clubs)	√		√		√	√	√	√

Using a dictionary for understanding meaning in context		√	√	√		√	√	
Attending social gatherings	√			√	√	√		
Imitating models of speaking and writing				√		√		√
Practising skimming and scanning exercises	√		√					√
Playing computer games in English					√		√	√
Rehearsing presentations						√	√	
Asking for feedback from proofreader	√					√		
Learning from course peers and team members	√					√		
Reading English language newspapers		√						
Listening to and transcribing tapes				√				
Attending in-sessional classes							√	

Table 3: Summary of strategies for language learning mentioned by participants (n=8) in interviews

Table 3 suggests that all the interviewed students had used various types of formal and informal strategies to help develop their English skills. Some of the strategies were focused more broadly on academic adjustment, while others were strongly associated with language learning skills in a narrower sense, such as use of a dictionary, listening and transcribing tapes.

How did these strategies evolve over time?

Over time students' motivation and priorities for learning changed and with it their English learning strategies. Table 4 shows how the strategies indicated in Table 3 were prioritised at different stages in the year. The tick indicates in which round or rounds of interviews a particular strategy was mentioned.

Strategies	Pre-sessional	First term	Second term	Third term
Using ICT to gain access to material in target language	√	√	√	√
Private study of language teaching material (eg text books)	√	√	√	√
Using a dictionary for understanding meaning in context		√	√	√
Informal learning (eg learning from flatmates and peers and participation in societies and clubs)		√	√	√
Asking for feedback from tutors		√	√	
Imitating models of speaking and writing		√	√	
Attending social gatherings			√	√
Rehearsing presentations	√	√		
Listening to and transcribing tapes	√	√		
Reading English language newspapers		√		
Attending in-sessional courses		√		
Playing computer games in English		√		
Practising skimming and scanning exercises			√	
Learning from course peers and team members			√	
Asking for feedback from proofreaders			√	

Table 4: How participants (n=8) prioritised strategies at different stages in the year

During the pre-sessional English course, students' main focus was English study. It was the first time most of them had studied English in an authentic English-speaking environment. Most reported that they had followed a traditional grammar translation teaching method in their high schools which had not prepared them, in particular, for speaking and essay writing. The main strategy for developing English skills remained formal study: listening to tutors' modelling of the language; completing set tasks; delivering presentations and processing feedback. For example, one student explained that: "I start to write, like my teacher gives me the topic, and I start to

write essay (sic) and give it back to him, and he will check it and give it back to me. And I looked at every mistake, and find what the problem is. At each point I have to find the good way or the best way to write it". For the most part language demands were manageable; they received feedback and they mixed in class with other students for whom English was a second language.

During term one (October - December), all of the eight students felt highly motivated and keen to meet new challenges, they looked to explore a wider range of strategies to improve their English. During the second term (January - March), most students had settled into routines of study and social activity and life had become more settled and more straightforward. Most reported getting higher scores in assignments or examinations in this term as they had become used to, and had found ways of, coping with academic demands. Students used a similar set of strategies in both terms but in the second, spring, term there was a greater emphasis on more general academic learning and development. This pattern continued in the third term (April - June). There was less assignment writing and fewer 'natural' opportunities to learn from their course peers and tutors. However they reported that they continued to carry out private study of the English language, though with less urgency, as most felt that they could cope with the demands of daily life and wanted to spend more time mixing socially, travelling and generally to take advantage of opportunities associated with living overseas.

Characterising language learning strategies

The majority of the strategies mentioned (for example, use of dictionaries, textbook study, self study tutorials, listening to tapes) involved private study. In fact many of the students put a high value on sustained independent study. All, at some point, sought to learn new vocabulary by heart, to imitate what they had seen or heard, to work in a structured way through text books, rehearse presentations and so on. Most developed strict study habits. As James put it "I think hard working is very necessary... No-one is stupid, they are always clever, so if somebody puts more time into study, they can get (a) better performance." Some of this private study was carried out at the computer. For example, it involved accessing electronic resources, online dictionaries, tutorial packages and language guidance sites. Students used the university intranet to access past examination papers, which they used to guide their revision and they routinely used other electronic sources in their study.

This private study was most effective when informed by feedback from others. There were several ways in which students sought out feedback. A key role was played by the tutor in explaining academic expectations, offering feedback on their organisation of writing and indeed, in a very few cases, specific feedback on vocabulary items. Interestingly, the more general, in-session language support offered on campus was not widely taken advantage of; students wanted feedback within the specific context of their course and familiarity context was more important than explicit knowledge of the English language. For example, 'Shirley' asked her English friends to read through her assignments and had additional feedback from a proof reader she had paid. Likewise 'James', put a high degree of importance on feedback from flatmates and from friends whose opinions he would sometimes seek out in informal situations. There was more targeted departmental support available, but this was rarely made use of – in some cases because students were unaware of its existence.

Alongside these explicit strategies students used English in social gatherings and everyday participation in domestic and study activities. Social activities frequently provided the motivation for using English. For example, 'Shirley' contrasted her lack of motivation 'at home', where she could live comfortably without using English in her daily life, with studying in England where she had to learn and use English or otherwise 'she could not survive'. Key for some students was their participation in places of residence. For example, it was noticeable that students who felt most satisfaction with their English development were using the language extensively, often as a lingua franca with other international students, as they shared cooking, went to parties or simply chatted with flatmates. Most students were, in addition, members of an overseas students' group, for example joining and taking part in University societies for international students and for specific national groups. In these societies members exchanged information, offered language support, organised trips, parties and other events. More senior students gave help to newcomers who would in turn give help to later arrivals. Students had few encounters with communities outside of the campus, instead they tended to mix with other international students. Again some of this was facilitated by ICT in particular through electronic communication via email or chat rooms, interactive email, web chat, MOOs. They also found the internet was important for them to get the latest news and to hold on to existing networks of

friends and relatives in their home country and indeed all over the world. While such exchanges did not necessarily develop their English it did give them a continuing sense of connection and motivated them to study. After finishing their courses some students moved to off-campus accommodation to wait for their graduation ceremony. Lacking an internet connection in their new place of residence, some began to feel homesick for the first time. Maintaining the connection with their friends and family at a distance had encouraged them in their learning rather than held them back in the process of adapting to a new environment.

What works for students in developing their English language?

It is clear that these students stressed private study and their own efforts. This belief is widespread in Asian cultures, which are, in part, influenced by a Confucian heritage in which the learner has a responsibility to practise and work hard (Rogers, 1998, Holmes, 2005). This puts the emphasis on personal dedication and commitment and is often associated with acceptance of hierarchies in learning and use of lower order skills such as rote learning and commitment to memory. However this characterisation of East Asian students can be overstated. For example, Kingston & Forland (2008) suggest that East Asian learners may be perfectly open to reflective, participatory approaches to learning and value these approaches. In this study too, learners were flexible and adapted to academic demands of a new system. Their commitment to private study might as easily be explained by their own financial and emotional commitment to the courses they were taking. Most felt a pressure from their families, too, though it always came in the form of expectation rather than directives. Many felt they had to work harder than local students if they 'were not to waste their money'. The effort they put into learning English did involve commitment to memory but they sometimes used memorising as a means to reflect on what they had learnt, to learn new items in meaningful contexts. This was not always the case and students talked about unproductive commitment, for example to memorising lists of words which were quickly forgotten. Overall, students had confidence in their ability to learn and this undoubtedly motivated them, and was productive for learning, but it also led some to blame themselves excessively when their language development fell short.

Private study seemed most effective when it was informed by feedback from others, for example, reflecting on what was said or written by tutors or by colleagues, or in preparation for

organised learning events such as seminars and presentations. Some students also prepared conscientiously for their participation in social contexts. For example, 'Alice' explained she would rehearse in advance what she wanted to contribute to conversations with her flatmates as otherwise she felt she would be excluded as she 'could not keep up'. In contrast, a problem for 'Janet' seemed to be in making private study a displacement from social activity, not a preparation for it.

These two examples show the importance of learning within, what might be called, a community of practice (see, for example, Montgomery & McDowell, 2008). Indeed, students did feel a sense of community based on interaction and empathy for others, and were drawn from the periphery into the centre of participation in places of residence and university societies (Wenger et al. 2002). This suggests that international students are not as isolated, or disadvantaged, as sometimes presented and can be proactive in organising support and practical help for each other. A more cautionary note, however, is struck by Sawir et al. (2008) who looked at loneliness among international students in an Australian university and found that while students from the same culture can provide support this is not a panacea for an absence of connection with local students. Perhaps one mitigating factor in our study was that internet technology enabled students' access to wider networks, albeit these were not local networks and they were not necessarily conducted through the medium of English.

It is easy to conclude the study with the rather glib advice that international students should pursue a mix of strategies in order to develop language learning. Studying overseas does, indeed, provide a wide range of opportunities for language development but these depend on what kind of colleagues students are asked to work with on a project, who they are living with and who they meet during everyday activity. On the individual level students need to be proactive in using language in everyday situations but on the environmental level the university needs to think about how they place students in accommodation and, at the departmental level, tutors need to create opportunities for collaboration across language groups. In this study learning appears to be a matter of individual independent study and guided instruction and social participation. Flexible, rather than exclusive, theoretical frameworks will be needed to do justice to this range of experience.

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Title

English Language Teaching in China today

Authors

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Biodata

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Abstract

As the world's factory, with an increasingly multinational market, China has achieved enormous economic success and demonstrated great potential for attracting new entrepreneurs. The rapidly changing situation in this vast country has transformed English language learning

into a fashionable trend, and, as a consequence, the ELT market has flourished, encouraging large numbers of Chinese people to want to learn English. The spread and growth of this market has forced teaching reforms and encouraged the renewal of strategies in both public and private schools with a view to meeting market needs and consumer demand.

This paper considers the development of the English Language Teaching industry in China. We will examine the private English language learning industry, how it has grown and in what directions, and the impact of the demand for English on English teaching in public schools. Our research has revealed how, in the face of competition from the private sector, methodologies in public schools have improved, shifting from being examination-oriented to being language and learner-centered. English language teaching and learning is thus concerned not only with the development of general writing, speaking, reading and listening skills, but also with the acquisition of specific market-oriented competences and knowledge of other cultures.

Keywords: China; English Language Teaching; English language schools; Language Teaching Reform

Introduction

Summarizing Graddol, Bolton (2008, p.7) concludes that “the spread of English across Asia has been propelled by a number of related economic and social factors, including demographics, economic change, technology and educational trends”. China, with its accelerated economic growth rate and a population of about 1.3 billion, is no exception. The rapidly changing situation in this vast country has transformed English learning into a fashionable trend, and, as a consequence, the English language learning market has flourished, achieving huge economic and social success. This paper will explore the impact of this on the English Language Teaching industry, which has been forced to reform its teaching strategies in both public and private schools in order to meet market needs and consumer demand.

Economic and social contexts

China’s economic success and potential for growth have made it the world’s factory and its market is becoming increasingly multinational. According to the State Administration for

Industry and Commerce (2008), this nation had attracted about 280,000 registered foreign companies since 2005 (Cui, 2006), making it the third largest nation attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worldwide, after the United States and UK. These companies, from America, England, Germany, Japan, Sweden, South Korea, Portugal, France, Australia or other regions, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, are located all over China and employ more than 20 million native Chinese (Wang, 2008). Meanwhile, Chinese domestic companies have invested their business overseas, mainly in Asia, but also in North and South America, Africa and Europe. Because of the increasingly competitive global market, both Chinese companies investing abroad and international companies investing in China require their Chinese employees to hold National English Exam certificates (Band 4 or Band 6), and to have complete mastery of written and spoken English, as well as technical skills. Moreover, when entering these companies, employees are usually offered foreign language courses in order to further their knowledge and adapt it to the particular working contexts. Since English has become a priority as the international language of business, it is not surprising that this language is used as a working language for daily communication, negotiation and contracting in these companies. In addition, membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 2001, hosting the 29th Summer Olympic Games in 2008 and World Fair in 2010 have made English learning a priority.

The impact of this set of circumstances on Chinese society is strong. Although English is not an easy language for Chinese people, they are enthusiastic about it and spend more time learning this language than any other. The reasons for such enthusiasm are related to the fact that English is considered a means to work or job promotion, to going abroad and to engaging in a wide range of entrepreneurial activities. In fact, the need for English has been apparent in business environments since China opened up in the 1970s, and it is generally regarded as a useful tool for communication and economic advancement. Besides being the largest English learning population in the world (around 400 million) (Li, 2006), Chinese learners of English come from all educational backgrounds, and both professional and non-professional environments. In addition to its adoption in business contexts, English has advanced into many aspects of everyday life in Chinese cities, where streets, shops and restaurants bear English names, bookshops are filled with books about English examinations, English language, literature and culture, and bilingual advertisements are commonly visible.

The spread of English has made it the dominant foreign language in China and given it a status no other language can challenge. Moreover, it has the support of the Chinese government, which has recognized it as an essential tool for scientific and technological advancement. This support will ensure that it continues to have a dominant role in the foreseeable future.

English in public schools

All public schools in China, from kindergarten to university, offer English language classes, providing not only language teaching but also background into the cultural customs of English-speaking nations. Since 2001, China's primary schools in cities have been offering English twice a week from the third grade and some schools in Beijing or coastal areas even offer English from the beginning of primary education. English is a compulsory core subject from middle school to university. In middle schools, students have English classes every day, while at the tertiary level, English is even more in demand. Here students are divided into English majors and non-English majors; the latter being required to learn English for two years, and Specific Purpose English, such as Academic English, English for Tourism and Business, and others, is a popular choice. MA and PhD students are required to pass a national general English exam, as well as a specialized English exam in their field. According to a report by The Assessment and Research Center of Wuhan University (Li, 2007), the first body to assess the BA specializations of China's 667 public universities, English was the most sought after specialization at Chinese universities in 2006, with about 554 universities opening such programs, followed by specializations in computer science (526) and law (407).

Challenges faced in public education

The changing economic and social landscape of China has brought many challenges for public education. Firstly, there is the growing enrolment in universities. Since 1999, China's public universities have enrolled more new students than ever before (Liu, 2002), and the teaching conditions have not been able to keep up with the rapid expansion. The number of teachers will not grow as rapidly as the number of students in the near future, and more seriously, the teacher-student ratio, which reached 1:130 in 2006, will dramatically increase in the near future (Ma, 2006). As a consequence, teachers are over-worked and students are over-tired. Since it is very difficult for teachers to spend time on professional development, their out-dated

knowledge and teaching techniques (based on a piece of chalk, a blackboard and a teacher), and large-sized classes (eighty or more) in which teachers talk, and students listen or repeat, give students little chance to practise their English. Methodologies centered on the teacher, examinations and grammar learning are the norm (Wang, 1999), leading to the acquisition of a kind of “deaf and dumb English” (all listen, no talk). Examination scores are emphasized, while other English skills are ignored. The result of this is that Chinese people are very shy at expressing themselves in public and demonstrate a lack of spoken and listening skills.

Another deepening problem has arisen from the increasing disparity among various regions of China, since the situation of foreign language education varies considerably between different regions, depending on economic level. The educational gap between regions is very large, with more developed provinces or autonomous regions in the East and the South, and backward educational standards in Western or Northern China. This disparity in education between different regions also leads to the gap in English development in mainland China (Li, 2005). Thus, people from Northern (except for the capital city of Beijing) and Western China seem to experience more difficulty in learning English than their peers in Southern and Eastern regions. In addition to this, the ever-increasing disparity between urban and rural regions results in different English learning effects. Most of the Chinese population is located in rural regions and the educational development in these regions is backward. More attention needs to be drawn to educational needs in these contexts. Compared to their peers in cities, rural students urgently require competent teachers and other educational resources. As a result of restrictions on the entry of English media to the Chinese mainland, which allow five-star restaurants and hotels, but not ordinary people, to set up foreign satellite resources (BBC and CNN, for instance), it is difficult for Chinese people to have access to English language and Western cultural customs in their daily lives.

In schools, textbook content has tended to repeat itself at all levels, not even changing much at tertiary level. With little sense of evolution or exploration, students have begun to hate learning English, considering it boring and ineffective and, above all, unable to provide language skills for practical usage (Li, 2005, p. 58). Jing (1999), Professor at Nanjing University of Science and Technology, calculated 4000 vocabulary items listed by the National Unified Curriculum. Using College English teaching results and comparing them to what students learned in their middle schools, Jing found that 1600 English words, like father, mother, brother, cat, dog, etc. are

included in the vocabulary lists of the textbooks at all levels of schooling. This overlap at different levels is wasteful and time consuming (Li, 1996; cited in Chen 1999) and practical words for real life, such as “telex, E-mail, intellectual property, patent, trademark, copyright, social security, enterprise, entrepreneur and premier” are ignored (Jing, 1999). There have also been some problems with the National Curriculum for non-major English students in higher education. The most recent revision of the National Curriculum was in 1999 and there is only one curriculum for all the regions of the country (coastal or inland).

As a result, dissatisfaction with the situation of English teaching amongst students has been recorded. In 1996, for example, a survey was conducted by the Theoretical Group of Beijing College English Research Institute, involving more than 1000 students from 12 of the most prestigious universities in Beijing, which found that 57% of the students were not very satisfied with College English teaching and 18% of them considered the teaching to be very bad. Yang Xiuzhen, an English teacher of Tianjin Normal University, carried out research into English teaching and learning, working with 696 students from 8 universities of Tianjin (a city directly controlled by the central government). Her results revealed that about 78% of the interviewees were dissatisfied with the current College English teaching (Tang, 1999), a finding confirmed by Gu (2004). The example of Zhao Hua (1999) reflects the current teaching situation of English in China. This MA candidate wrote an article on her past experiences of studying English: she had passed all the compulsory English tests and memorized over 5000 English words, yet she could not use English to consult English journals, or to communicate with foreigners.

In sum, English teaching was described as being of “low efficiency and a waste of time” by the former Prime Minister Li Lanqing in 1996. Seven years later, a delegate at the National People’s Congress in 2003, questioned the learning of English in China at the time, raising the important questions: “how to learn English and how much to learn ...” (Fa, 2004)

The boom of the ELT industry

Crystal (1997, p. 103) argues that: “The English language teaching (ELT) business has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the past thirty years.” As in many countries, English language teaching has become a booming industry in China (Jiang, 2003). According to an estimate (Anicca, 2007), the market value of the English language teaching industry had reached about 15 billion € by 2005 (having doubled during the period between 2005

and 2010). In the same year, there were about 50,000 English teaching schools inside mainland China. This market is shared by three groups. The first consists in extra classes offered by tertiary institutions; the second is comprised of foreign language schools like Wall Street (American) and International House (British), and others, with high tuition fees, offering English for all professionals, and the third group comprises schools run by native Chinese with lower prices that ordinary families can afford. This latter group takes the biggest share of the market and has had great success.

The rise of private language schools

Market requirements, English learners' special needs and government promotion have brought opportunities to China's private language schools. The government has promoted private education in general since China opened up in 1978. We can see evidence of this in official regulations and laws, such as the Regulations on Running Schools as Social Initiatives in 1997 and the National Law on the Promotion of Private Education in 2002 (Wang, 2004). With the encouragement of the central government, China's private schools and China-foreign cooperative schools have expanded rapidly. Of the 746 China-foreign cooperative schools in China by the end of 2003 (there were only about 70 in 1995), more than half were run by private enterprise from English-speaking countries, for instance, America (138), Australia (125), Canada (54), Singapore (41), Britain (35), Hong Kong (52) and Taiwan (30) (Wang, 2004). Meanwhile, at China's private universities, as noted above, English is the most sought after BA specialization. In cities, many private language schools challenge the public sector, some famous, others not so internationally known, for example: Li Yang's Crazy English (China), the Beijing New Oriental School (China), English First (Sweden), Green Beans (Canada) and so forth. Most of these have franchise schools throughout China.

In her study into social transformation and private education in China, Lin (1999) identifies some characteristics of private schools in mainland China in comparison with public schools. They tend to be more autonomous and more conscious of market needs (Lin, 1999), their classes are smaller; their teachers are foreign and / or trained abroad and students learn in an English language environment (practising in groups outside class, for example). In addition, the courses are directed towards the needs of students in the changing market and, due to the competitiveness of so many highly skilled language schools, their teaching methods are very flexible, resulting

from advanced research and technologies. Many schools teach English in international, joint-venture or nationally-owned companies. The success of these schools has resulted in the language teaching industry having earned about 20 billion € by 2007.

Among private language schools, Li Yang's Crazy English School and New Oriental Schools have achieved great success in China, and are worth looking at in more detail. Li Yang's Crazy English Company was launched in 1993, at a time when there was a need for something different from the traditional public and private schools (March, 2008). Li Yang studied as a non-English major at Lan Zhou University (Northwest China), and claims that his English was never good. He realized that, for him, the traditional teaching method has not worked. Looking for a new way to learn English, he developed the practice technique of shouting English phrases and sentences in public, coming to completely master the language and rank second at the national College English Test (CET Band 4) at his university! Surprisingly, his success made him so confident in English that he became "crazy" about the language (Jiang, 2003), leading him to open up his own language school—the Crazy English School.

Li Yang's description of Crazy English:

- perseverance of the spirit of life
- highly effective language learning
- fit for learners of any age and any language
- can help get high scores and speak fluent English

Li Yang's method is to make Chinese people open up, lose their shyness and speak English. Lai (2001) described Li Yang's teaching method as a short intensive program conducted like show business, focusing on phonetics and intonation. Mr. Li's technique is sentence-centered, and emphasizes the mastery of words and grammar in sentences, the reciting of short English texts to build confidence in English and to develop communicative abilities. He focuses on speaking English fluently, and grasping the language with confidence. His teaching method was quickly spread by the media throughout China, and in 2000, he was invited to lecture in Japan and South Korea, thus making him and his Crazy English famous in Asia.

His aggressive marketing slogans stirred people's emotions and sense of national identity: "As loudly as possible As quickly as possible As clearly as possible", using his own learning

experiences to give people more confidence. With the slogan “Master English, rejuvenate China”, he also motivated the three hundred million Chinese that already speak English to do it more freely and fluently. Li Yang’s marketing strategy, which has stimulated a range of consumers – students, professionals and others - to learn English, amounts to: it is alright to lose face and to make mistakes. Influenced by traditional culture, the Chinese value their face excessively in public, so it is not surprising to see them shy and silent, and this phenomenon has some impact on their foreign language learning. It was Mr. Li who broke with the traditional way of learning language, encouraging learners to speak out in English, and to “enjoy losing face”. Furthermore, Pang, Zhou and Fu (2002), Professors of Zhejiang University, suggest that some students tend to learn English for patriotic reasons; in other words, to serve China. This opinion is coincident with Li Yang’s strategy. Meanwhile, his successful and now legendary model encourages people to do as he does: to make money and to be famous through English (and to use English to serve China). Li Yang’s students are inspired by his attitudes of striving for success. Some of them even said that before going to his class, they wanted to abandon learning English; but then changed their minds, beginning to love this language because they can open up and speak out, or even shout in English.

As a result, Mr. Li and his Crazy English have achieved huge success: Li Yang got the Chinese government’s full support and by 2007, he had taught about 30~40 million learners, and been interviewed by CNN, the BBC and Japanese and Korean TV Stations. Finally, his success has not made him forget to contribute to society. He has donated money to Chinese primary schools and the university he came from, also cooperating with the organizers of the Olympic Games in 2008 to teach free Olympic English courses in less privileged communities.

Another example of a successful private English school is the New Oriental Language School. This school has existed since 1993 and is a competitor of Mr. Li’s Crazy English. Nowadays it is the largest language school across China (with 37 franchise schools throughout China and another two in Canada). These schools aim to prepare students for international tests, such as: GMAT, TSE, LSAT, IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, and their teaching philosophy is to offer knowledge, explain learning problems, teach people to enjoy English and encourage their life and others.

The New Oriental Language School has developed its own textbooks and new educational technologies, cooperating with international publishing companies. It offers English and other

foreign languages in different fields, such as English-pop and English for children (October, 2007), and English for professionals, which is very welcome in China. It has also become famous in the U.S.A, since more than 70% of all mainland Chinese students studying in this country took English courses at this school (Jakes, 2000; cited in Jiang, 2003, p. 5). The school introduced “different teaching methods” into Chinese schools in 2001, for example, having different teachers teach vocabulary, listening comprehension, reading or writing skills separately. This type of teaching changed traditional teaching methods and was a way of meeting the demands of different learners. Teachers encourage students to learn English through theatre, based on their interests, and use feelings to teach. The New Oriental School also focuses on developing cooperation and group spirit, developing language abilities, learning strategies and confidence, as well as fostering cultural awareness. By 2005, this school had offered English to 2.5 million people (October, 2007). E-learning has also become a very popular way of teaching and learning English. According to China’s National Net Information Center there were about 200 million Chinese Internet citizens in 2007 (January, 2008), and to date, the New Oriental School has tens of thousands of learners online (source: koolearn.com), most of them learning English.

Strategies of private language schools

Thus, it can be observed that, over recent years, the offer of language schools in China has been broadened and shaped by the demands of a wide range of markets. Each language school has its own strategy to promote their products and attract different types of clients. For example, the Canadian Green Bean School is already present in major cities, and promotes their business through outdoors advertising and special window cartoon ads. They employ different strategies to motivate children to learn English through a variety of interactive and playful activities, for example, and multi-media teaching, and use texts and materials designed by American education experts, which follow a continuous syllabus from beginner to advanced level. These programs were selected by the Chinese Educational System and broadcast on China’s Educational TV Station, being taught to 4 million children nationwide in 2007. As a consequence, the school is very popular in local regions.

Another example is EF (English First) company which has designed a “revolutionary new way of learning English” (October, 2008). This is a professional, high-tech and market-oriented company, highly promoted online and through other media, which reaches out to all types of

clients, particularly in the business environment. Their techniques include faster, flexible, targeted and personalized methods, and their curriculum offers Business English Training for Companies, with professional teachers. EF's advantages are "combined with traditional teacher led classes with online based tutorials" (October, 2008).

Language schools run by native Chinese tend to be exam-oriented, offering some guarantee of exam success with high scores. They also promote themselves through the media, but reach out to the public with talks and successful role models to encourage and motivate customers to come and learn in their schools. Based on international co-operation in editing manuals and teaching techniques, they offer the promise to clients that they will be fluent in the language in one week.

Language teaching reform in public schools

In this aggressive environment, public schools have found it difficult to compete and reform has become imperative. Regarding teacher training, and in order to improve teaching quality and effectiveness, governments and schools at all levels have invested time, money and energy in the promotion of foreign language teacher education. The central administration has set up scholarships for teachers to study overseas, especially in English speaking nations since 2002, and the governments of other cities have followed this example (Li, 2005). Since 2006, Chinese primary and middle school students nationwide have no longer been required to pay tuition fee, contributing to some extent to easing of the problem of regional disparities.

On account of other educational differences between regions, the State Education Commission has taken new measures to ensure that seven economically developed provinces have regional autonomy (to work out new curricula, syllabi and textbooks). Shanghai and the Zhejiang province have pioneered curricular change in other parts of China and achieved clear results (Hu, 2002, p. 33-34 & Li, 2005). The College English Curriculum Requirements (for trial implementation) were produced by the Ministry of Education in 2003. They clearly stipulate the aim of fostering students' practical skills, especially in listening comprehension and speaking abilities, and improving the acquisition of cultural knowledge (Chen & Li, 2006). The requirements also propose the introduction of Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) and Internet teaching in particular, emphasizing student-centered teaching methods.

The growth of technology has thus supported reform, and the use of the Internet has brought the opportunity for practising all the language skills. Many universities, including the China People's University (College of Foreign Languages of the China People's University, 2003), have introduced CAI classrooms and teaching methods, reduced class sizes, especially for oral tuition. This has accompanied a new trend for teaching and learning English: for instance, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and Nanjing University of Finance and Economics use advanced teaching software, so students learning English spend half their time in class and the other half on the Internet (training listening comprehension ability and preparing themselves for lessons). Moreover, to satisfy the demands of market requirements, many universities have set up some unique specializations. Dalian University of foreign languages, for example, added German/English; French/English and Korean/Japanese majors, while developing programs for teaching specific language skills, such as foreign languages for international trade, computer usage, travel guides, information management, international economic law and so on. As a result, their graduates are very sought after in the market.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the spread of English in China has had a strong and irreversible impact in the educational domain. The predominant status of English and the demand for it which has emerged from an understanding of this language as vital for achieving national as well as entrepreneurial and personal success has given rise to a rapidly expanding private language teaching sector made up of schools run by both foreign and native enterprise and appealing to a diverse range of clientele.

With the growth of the private sector, the public school system has undertaken innovation and reform as traditional objectives and methods have been challenged by the demand for, above all, communicative and market-oriented skills. In particular, we can observe this trend in the redrafting of the official English syllabus, from the compilation of textbooks at all levels and the importation of teaching materials, as well as the introduction of bilingual (English and Chinese) teaching at all levels in many schools in major cities. Moreover, students are involved in their English learning as never before and the use of technology has been integrated into the overall teaching strategies. These processes, fruit of demand and competition from the private sector, are indicative of a potential for change and empowerment which can reach a greater proportion of the

population than heretofore. These processes have also, in their turn, reinforced the status of English in China and consolidated its spread.

The ongoing developments and reforms in English Language Teaching in China described here will continue, perhaps slowed by the demand for other languages and skills in response to shifting international trends. Nevertheless, Chinese learners of English will be more ready and prepared for the global arena than their predecessors, and able to compete with their peers worldwide in the language domain also.

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Summary

In this book, the linguistic underpinnings of the globalisation of the English Language has been addressed in two broad strands: firstly, the historical macro-socio-linguistic view dealing with language-spread and contact influences and overarching into political and ideological studies. Secondly, its role of the spread of English in modernisation, government and schooling, cultural and literary studies including bilingualism and new identities has also been studied. The authors, both professors of sociolinguistics and scholars of South African English (Mesthrie) and English as spoken in Kashmir (Bhatt) have produced a volume that examines both these aspects of English as spoken globally.

Evaluation:

This slim volume constitutes an important contribution to the study of English as an International Language because it evaluates the evolution of English as it is spoken globally and the linguistic consequences of this process. The heterogeneity of English as it is used not only in England, but also in other parts of the UK and the ex-colonies of the Empire is the object of the book's scrutiny. It also has the added value of discussing its historical and macro-sociological evolution

as well as giving relevance to the strictly linguistic aspect of language evaluation without stopping at the political and ideological aspects. The book is published in the series of sociolinguistic volumes on the Study of New Linguistic Varieties and is an “original research-based work that draws on existing studies and extends them via the intellectual leanings and academic stamp of the authors” (pg.xiii) thus its readership is aimed at scholars, academics and graduate students.

Mesthrie & Bhatt delineate the field by starting with a definition of World Englishes and the standards used to describe what is generally known as L1 and the subtypes or sociolects generally recognized. The question of recognition has been masterfully outlined in a historical description of the evolution of English from its very beginnings and the koinisation of dialects which led to the formation of modern English. A substantial section of this chapter is devoted to a description of how colonial policies have advanced not only the spread of English use but also how the agency of language has affected educational and cultural policy in many of the ex-colonies of the British Empire. The authors describe how the consequence of the expanded use of English has led to sociological models of World Englishes such as those proposed by McArthur, Görlach and Kachru. Other developmental, historical and language-contact models have also been proposed such as the 5-stage lectal development model suggested by Schneider.

The next two chapters are invaluable descriptions of recurrent syntactic and morphological variations of mainly Outer Circle Englishes. This variationist corpus study makes for an excellent survey of the main published works of lectal shift published in the literature on World Englishes and it is interesting to note that most of examples collected were by basilectal speakers thus constituted natural speech in the communities studied. The second chapter itself is devoted to below-the-sentence variations in speech such as article use, the noun phrase, pronoun use and aspect in the verb phrase. The third chapter deals mainly with above-the-sentence variations, such as in word-order, questions, passive formation topicalisation, relative clauses and rank reduction. These excellent chapters give an invaluable overview of the lectal shifts seen and the format used in presenting the examples allows the reader to compare Standard English with the variant.

The authors then attempt to explain syntactic variation seen in their examples in terms of Optimality Theory (OT), a general theory of priority of grammar and syntactic constraints on well-formedness (MacCarthy, 1995) Mesthrie & Bhatt propose that speakers of the varieties of English under study have alternative constraint rankings of grammars available to them and meso- or basilectal speakers prioritize these constraint. They describe variations in three examples: direct and indirect questions and in the pro-drop subject deletion

Chapter 4 deals with lexis and phonology variations seen. Many of the examples have found their way into metropolitan English such as ‘bandanna’ and are not only descriptive and culture-specific like ‘cousin-brother’ (kinship term common in Asia & Africa, pg. 113) but also highly entertaining and metaphoric such as to add sugar to the tea= to offer a bribe,(Nig.Engl: pg 116). Neologisms, re-duplication of words and semantic shifts are also described. This chapter closes with a description of phonological variation of vowel sounds, using the Wells lexical set (1982). Variations in consonant pronunciation are also described and Mesthrie & Bhatt suggest that phonologically, New Englishes often show indigenisation.

The way in which new linguistic forms serve pragmatic discourse functions is discussed in Chapter 5 under three headings: syntactic forms such as tag forms, modal auxiliaries and tag particles; secondly, speech acts including face and politeness and code-switching and finally, variations in discourse structure and moves in informal and formal written English and in literary works having a culture-specific setting.

Chapter 6 discusses the role of substrate pidgins and Creole studies in the context of second language acquisition both by informal contact transmission as well as through the educational system. Mesthrie & Bhatt describe areas for further research in syntax in child-language and interlanguage development.

The recognition of new Englishes within any one specific educational system as a variety in its own right has spawned a debate about resources, attitude, hegemony and perceptions about the role of English. Mesthrie & Bhatt describe this debate which they call the Quirk-Kachru controversy, named after the opposite positions. Quirk holds the position of standard British or

American English should be the norm for communication and teaching and Kachru criticises Quirk's position as "involving applied linguistics as divorced from its context" (pg. 201) and thus hegemonic. Mesthrie & Bhatt outline some crucial issues, such as teacher training, examination standards, textbook choice and briefly describe some interventions aimed at bringing local varieties of language into the mainstream of schooling, such as the Ebonics effort and the introduction of outer-circle teaching assistants and professors. The closing chapter of this book is devoted to Mesthrie & Bhatt's opinion regarding several practical issues: the crisp language of language learners' blogging in internet, problems of communication among non-native users of professional airline English in high-risk situations, call-center training for outsourced businesses in India, advertising in countries like Japan and communication problems among European speakers of English. It is clear that there are purists and those who fear the influence of a 'killer' language but the authors posit a pathway by which the influence of English may become mainstream to the point that large swathes of populations become effectively bilingual.

EVALUATION

This is an important book in that it examines the linguistic underpinnings of the globalisation of the English Language in two broad strands: firstly, the historical macro-socio-linguistic view dealing with language-spread and contact influences and overarching into political and ideological studies. Secondly, its role of the spread of English in modernisation, government and schooling, cultural and literary studies including bilingualism and new identities. It is wonderfully indexed and there is fine glossary for beginners. As a teaching tool, it is excellent in that it proposes several study questions, varying from the simple to more thought-provoking issues, which makes it highly suitable as course-work.

The book is well-structured and orderly and I was thoroughly impressed by the analyses of the examples from new Englishes in the first three chapters and would have liked to see more of this. I found that their use of Optimality Theory was rather heavy going and not convincing since I favour Relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/95) as a more logical explanation for speakers' choices: an issue for debate. Despite this, the book is well worth purchasing for its comprehensive and scholarly approach to an issue of growing importance.

Reviewer Citations

Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson, 1986/1995. *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

About the reviewer

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