China English, at home and in the world

HU XIAOQIONG

The case for the English of China as a major new variety of the language

FIRST describing the rapid growth of English as a lingua franca in Europe and East Asia, and having drawn attention to similarities and differences in the evolution of the varieties of English worldwide, the author focuses on China where, as in so many other domains, growth and change are currently very rapid. She reports in particular on an investigation into 586 Chinese English teachers' attitudes to both the standard varieties of the language around the world and a new variety, China English. A majority of the teachers surveyed considers that China English will eventually become a standard variety of the language in its own right, and at least stand alongside the current national favourite, American English. In addition, the teachers' views on both the cultural content of teaching materials and the use of native speakers of English in Chinese institutions of education reflect both China's openness to the world and a strong adherence to its own culture. The signs are, she argues, that China English is on its way to becoming another world variety, which will happen when it has been adequately described, codified and officially recognized.

English as a global, an international, and a world language

Globalisation has been defined by Giddens (1990:64) as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. This phenomenon can be perceived in different ways, some tracing it back to the 15th century when Europeans began to map and colonize the world; others give it a much more recent history, as an extension of an American imperialism that has characterized international relations over the past three decades; and yet others hold a more balanced view, rejecting the idea that globalisation is a question of Western dominance over 'the rest'. Globalisation can be thought of as the broadening, speeding up, strengthening, and growing impact of worldwide interconnectedness. Still others, like Yano (2001) and Salverda (2002), argue that globalisation is crucially linked with the rise of the English language.

While the term *globalisation* is ubiquitous, for the many features of this phenomenon three adjectives are currently employed in books, magazines, newspapers, broadcasting, and on websites: *international, global,* and *world* (policy, relations, developments, etc.), in almost any area of politics, economics, and communication. It is not surprising therefore, in the light of the inseparable association established between English and globalisation, to hear this language referred to as *world English*, *international English* and *global English*.

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Although all three refer to standard forms of the one language or to the many varieties that constitute it, each has a history and perspective of its own. *World English* and *international English* have been around since the inter-world war period marked by the emergence of Basic English (Ogden, 1937), to which the British government gave its support. The language was greatly strengthened by American economic and political dominance from the 1950s on, emerging victorious in the 1980s after routing the only contender, French. In the following decade, with its great technological leaps forward, particularly in the realm of communication, the world became a global village where global English was the lingua franca (McArthur: 2004). In this paper, we will use the terms *world English, international English* and *global English* interchangeably. The three attributives mark the spread of the language and its rapidly increasing role in all parts of the world and in many sectors of society. Phillipson (1992) uses the term *linguistic imperialism* to describe this phenomenon.

It is English that allows an Arab and a Japanese, a Chinese, a Russian, an Australian and a German to communicate with each other. English has in effect now become the internationally acknowledged lingua franca. It is estimated that about one third of the world's population is in some sense exposed to it and it is predicted that by 2150 half the world will be more or less proficient in it. English is today the language of world politics, trade, finance, the internet, and global communications, gaining ever-increasing dominance in the media, the world's tourist, sports and leisure industries, and especially in the international scientific community, more than half of whose journals are in English. As a result, it is therefore seen by a growing number of people as the sole means of communicating internationally.

English and the Englishes

There are many standard varieties of English, those of the Inner Circle, where for many generations, English has been the dominant, official and even national language, e.g. in Ireland, Canada, and New Zealand. At an international level, two varieties have dominated and been viewed, if not always adopted, as the standards for English language learning: British and American. Other varieties of English that have evolved alongside other languages and been adopted for official purposes due to the absence of any other common language, as in the West Indies, India, and the Philippines. These Outer Circle varieties, like those of the Inner Circle, also their salient characteristics. Although they too tend to kowtow to the standard set for educaitonal purposes by the American giant and his ailing British forebear, they are not viewed disparagingly, but are referred to respectfully, if not always lovingly, as with *Indian English* and *Filipino English*. In recent years, we have had an endless stream of new varieties, often looked down upon, even ridiculed within their own communities by those trained to respect one of the two standard varieties, often receiving such dismissive names as *Japlish*, *Singlish*, and *Deutschlish*.

We have now reached the point where it is seriously debated whether these forms of the Outer Circle can stand alongside those of the Inner Circle, whether they can be accepted as official Englishes and, like them, cast off the yoke of linguistic imperialism. Against this background, we shall take a brief look at the use of English in two of the three major economic zones of the world before going on to discuss by far the largest non-standard variety of English – *China English* – and reflect on its future. First we shall look at the western side of the world's greatest landmass, namely Europe, before turning to its eastern extremities on the western Pacific. The third, North America, need not be considered: despite the strength of Spanish in the United States and French in Canada, English has from the start been the dominant language of officialdom.

English(es) in Europe

Only in the past four decades, with the disappearance of the Commonwealth, has Britain started to turn its face towards Europe after many centuries of detachment. The headline FOG IN CHANNEL: CONTINENT CUT OFF, although apocryphal, is still revealing. Furthermore, Britain's relations with two of its closest neighbours, France and Ireland, have never been of the best. Despite its decision to 'go into Europe', Britain seems to have closer affinities with the United States, as events in Iraq have demonstrated. The continued British refusal to relinquish the pound in favour of the euro is a further illustration of political and cultural, as well as economic, detachment.

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On the other side of the Channel, attitudes are equally ambivalent. The introduction of the student mobility programme by the European Union (EU) in 1987 was a conscious and deliberate effort to promote the many other languages of Europe and to resist the cultural and linguistic dominance of Anglo-Saxon culture. The colossal sums allocated to translation and interpreting into the twenty official languages of the Union is a further illustration of this will.

Notwithstanding such measures, the spread of English throughout Europe is proving inexorable. It is in effect the only lingua franca of the large numbers of foreign students studying in different countries and more and more universities are providing courses in English to cater for them. English has notably permeated almost every area of life in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, for three main reasons: close cultural, historical and linguistic bonds with English; a long tradition of Protestantism; and trade. In addition, the vast majority of films and many TV programmes are not dubbed in these countries, and so, from an early age, children are exposed to English and progressively guided in their comprehension by subtitles.

In the south of Europe, in the Romance cultures, English is also spreading, even if, in countries like Spain and Italy, the outcome is more divergent from the UK variety than in the north. As a result, regardless of national pride and occasionally hostile feelings towards English, the language is binding Europe together in a way similar to that of Latin centuries earlier. 'If I want to speak to a French person, I have to speak in English,' says one 11-year old German child (McArthur: 2003)

English(es) in the western Pacific

In contrast to mainland Europe where English does not enjoy dominant status in any one country and where its hold is relatively recent, the language has had a sound footing in the western Pacific for a very long time. British colonization was of course primarily responsible, leading to the establishment of English-speaking countries like Australia and New Zealand where, unlike India, it was possible to suppress and, in Australia, exterminate the multitude of local languages, the number of whose speakers was small. However, the contribution of the United States has also been considerable. This country has conducted military activities in the region since the end of the 19th century, as for example in the Philippines in 1898, against the Japanese 1940–45, in Korea 1950–53, and Vietnam for a decade from the mid-60s to the mid-70s. A powerful US military presence persists in the Pacific to this day, and commercial links and immigration (notable by the Chinese as cheap labour building railways and constructing the Panama Canal) all contributed to the spread of American English. In the light of such historical factors, it is not surprising that so many East and South-East Asian countries have English as an official or as a second language.

Apart from former British colonies, Asian varieties of English are marked by American English and in China in particular this variety of English is by far the most positively perceived. This is in sharp contrast to Europe where, until very recently, the American variety tended to be looked down upon; this was particularly the case in France where a certain anti-Americanism was at least partially responsible for the British variety being promoted as the standard in education. Secondly, the multitude of languages on the Pacific rim bear no relation to English, unlike those of Europe where no more than half a dozen of the hundred or so languages are unrelated, which has meant that the varieties of English that have emerged and are emerging in this area are characterized by more marked phonological, structural and lexical differences.

Figures are sometimes advanced in respect of the number of people who are native speakers of English (ENL), those who use it as a second language (ESL), and those who are learning it as a foreign language(EFL). While even approximate figures for the second and third categories are virtually impossible to obtain and any attempt to draw a line between the two is doomed from the outset, it is safe to say that there are now more people using and learning English as a second language than those who speak it as a first language. That is, the Americans, the British, the Canadians, the Irish, the South Africans, the Australians, and the New Zealanders, together with all other members of the Inner Circle, are now outnumbered.

Probably the most important point that emerges from this and the preceding sketch is not simply that English is spreading at a phenomenal speed, but that it is spreading in a multitude of forms. This development is a healthy sign. Whatever the difficulties of com-

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prehension that exist, like those between speakers of different varieties within the one country or community, it is a marked sign of equality that the last vestiges of Anglo-Saxon imperialism are being discarded. Furthermore, it makes sense that speakers of Asian languages, who have a closer cultural and sometimes linguistic affinity with each other, will have greater ease of communication relying on their own varieties rather than on an alien form.

English in China

China is changing, and changing at a remarkable speed, and this can be seen in many areas, one of which is the ever-increasing number of people learning English. This change is relatively recent. Until 1978, China's doors were closed to the rest of the world. When they were suddenly thrown open, it became clear that English was the key to the country's development. Despite the fact that well over one quarter of the world population speaks a form of Chinese, English had already been established as the lingua franca of the world. Chinese, no more than Esperanto, could hope to oust English.

Although the importance of English has been recognized in China for more than two decades, the insufficient standard attained by most learners means that it still acts as a barrier to China's development and limits the contribution that the world's most populous country can make in terms of knowledge and research. The two main reasons for this have been the huge linguistic and cultural gap which, even now, is not helped by the little contact that most learners have with the outside world, and inefficient and outdated methods of language teaching and learning in large part grounded in the traditional Chinese educational system. Already the situation is changing, with more and more teachers and students travelling abroad, while reforms in the language programmes are currently being introduced.

The national examination system requires pupils to pass examinations in Chinese, mathematics and a foreign language in order to have access to further education. There are currently over 60 million pupils in senior and junior schools studying English throughout China. Once a student succeeds in gaining a place at university – by no means an easy task – he or she is required to pursue their language study – more often than not English – throughout their undergraduate years. In order to graduate, they must take and pass national examinations in that language. University students are therefore generally supposed to pass the College English Test (CET) Band 4, while English majors are supposed to pass the Test for English Majors (TEM) Band 4 before graduating.

Until very recently, the Government would guarantee employment to those who obtained a university degree. Graduates would be given a job in virtually any sector and they knew that they were virtually assured of employment for life. However, the breaking of the 'iron rice bowl' means that now students have to find jobs on their own and prove their worth, as they no longer have the guarantee of long-term employment in many sectors of society. In China, just as in many parts of the world, irrespective of the quality of a degree, a sound working knowledge of English is an indispensable qualification in the eyes of many a would-be employer. The joining of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing have driven this message home and meant that graduates who have not acquired a measure of proficiency in English will find many doors closed to them, and will probably have to engage in lengthy and arduous searches for suitable employment, with no guarantee of obtaining it.

Students arriving at university vary considerably in their levels of English – just as in their levels of attainment in standard Chinese! – in much the same way as elsewhere in the world. However, a programme of nine years of compulsory English language instruction from third grade elementary school with at least four periods a week was set in place for all cities and county seats by late 2001 and in townships by late 2002 (Cheng: 2002). This means that one can expect a general improvement in the level of university entrants in the coming years.

Current perceptions of China English

Against the background of this mad rush to learn English, we have been looking at the attitudes of learners to the form of English they are learning or striving to learn. Are they supportive of the official position, namely that the American and/or British varieties should be the goal, and that any other variety that reflects characteristics of the local language and cul-

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ture should be discarded as Chinglish? Do they favour both standard varieties and, if not, to what extent and why do they favour one rather than the other? Is there a growing acceptance that the form of English that most Chinese learners end up using (one that almost inevitably to some degree reflects their language and culture) should be a goal that, as China English, can stand alongside the 'official' varieties? Since it is the perceptions, attitudes and views of the users that ultimately determines the form of English that will become standard in China, I set out to get some answers to these and related questions.

My first investigation was carried out two years ago (Hu, 2004) but, as things are moving so fast in China, I have been concerned to know in what directions these perceptions and views moved in the intervening period. I should mention at the outset that there is a major difference between the two studies which is necessarily a strong contributory factor to some of the very different findings I came up with. In the first study, I consulted over 1,200 students whereas in the second I put my questions to approximately half that number of English teachers. As it is obvious that teachers will have a more developed sense of language and of language change, I felt that their views would be a more accurate predictor of future change.

A questionnaire consisting of nine questions was given to a total of 589 teachers working in five universities in the province of Hubei, central China. Of these, 210 were teachers of English majors, while the remaining 379 taught non-English majors.

Questionnaire and results

Basically the questionnaire was the same as that used in the previous investigation. Some changes were however made: Questions 6 (Where do you like your foreign teachers to come from?) and 7 (Do you think Chinese English and China English are the same?) were not used in this questionnaire, instead of which four new questions were added: Which variety of English do you want your English to sound like? Which type of culture content would you prefer to use in your English class? Will China English stand alongside British, American and other world Englishes? Why/Why not? And finally, how do you, as a Chinese English teacher, view your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to native English-speaking teachers? Do you think it is necessary to introduce native speakers into your university? There were therefore nine questions in all.

I went to the five universities and administered the questionnaires to the Chinese English teachers when they attended their staff meetings. It took them about an hour to finish the questionnaires which were then collected. Of the 589 questionnaires, four were discarded as incomplete, leaving me with 585 in all.

Analysis and discussion

1 Does English have a plural form?

The results show that a large majority of the subjects know or have seen the plural form of the word 'English', which is to be expected and in sharp contrast to the findings of the earlier study when only a tiny minority had heard of the term (5.8%). This finding is in part explained by the fact that teachers have access to the literature where the term is now widely used and in part by the fact that the term is increasingly prevalent.

2 Have you heard of World Englishes?

The result is comparable to that of the first question, only a small percentage of teachers having heard of the first and not the second. As I pointed out earlier, English is spreading into almost every area of human activity and the terms *global*, *international* and *world* are increasingly being applied to English. Even in the centre of China, where contact with the language and the outside world is less felt than elsewhere, this phenomenon is having an impact.

3 Have you heard of China English?

Here the affirmative is five times higher than in the earlier study, where only 15.5% of the subjects had come across the term. Part of this difference could be attributed to the confusion surrounding the use of the terms *China English* and *Chinese English*. For some they are interchangeable, whereas for most the latter is equated with *Chinglish*. It is only to be expected therefore that, given the tendency throughout the globe that we described earlier for cultures to stress the status and characteristics of their own national variety of English, the former term should be gaining wider currency.

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4 What kind of English do you prefer?

Here, where the subjects have more than one choice, American English leads the field. This is to be expected and is almost identical to the finding of the earlier study (79.1%) but falls short of the results of a study conducted by Kirkpatrick & Xu (2002). American English has such a big influence in China that it is regarded as fashionable to speak English with an American accent. The English of most Chinese TV newsreaders, most teaching materials, course books, and films, etc., bears a heavy American flavour. This is a feature of most Asian Englishes, as we mentioned earlier. In Japan, for example, the current English teaching goals are that learners should become speakers of American English (Kirkpatrick, 2000).

Opinions are slightly more divided in respect of British English, which is well viewed by 48% of the subjects in the present study, 29.9% in the earlier study and only 14.6% in that conducted by Kirkpatrick & Xu. The difference in our studies can in large part be attributed to the different perceptions of teachers and students, the latter being more under the influence of current American pop culture, while that of Kirkpatrick, conducted on the coast, reflects the greater cultural and geographical proximity of the population to the United States.

Interestingly, slightly over half of the teachers are in favour of China English. This is in stark contrast to the earlier student finding where only 2.2% viewed it favourably, due doubtless to the fact that most had never heard of it! The positive attitude of so many teachers can be attributed to several causes. On the basis of their teaching experience, they can see that their students can never hope to attain American native speaker competence however great the prestige of this variety of English, primarily because of the absence of a suitable linguistic environment. They also know that very few of their students are learning English to go to an English-speaking country or even to work primarily with native speakers. The vast majority will use English within their own country to communicate with other non-native speakers. It thus does not make sense to spend so much more time and effort on acquiring a variety of English that is not necessary and probably not even useful.

5 What kind of English do you think is standard English?

The results of this question correlate closely with those of the previous question, with American and British English being given the highest ratings. Also China English has risen high in the charts. In the earlier study, subjects gave China English and other native and non-native varieties of English a zero rating, in marked contrast to this study where the score is 51.6 % and 64.8% respectively. Irrespective of the different kind of subject, it is clear that other varieties of English, both from the Inner and the Outer Circle, including China English, now enjoy high prestige. This finding is supported by that of Kirkpatrick & Xu a substantial majority of whose subjects supported the view that there are many standard Englishes.

6 Which variety do you want your English to sound like?

We can see from the table that the teachers are well distributed over three categories: those who want to sound American, those who want to sound British and those who have no wish to mask their Chinese identity. This finding contradicts that of Kirkpatrick & Xu. When their students were asked to react to the statement 'When I speak English, I want people to know I'm from China', 104 out of 171 students (60.8%) strongly rejected the idea and only 30 (17.5%) agreed. The women in their study were particularly firm on this, with 60 out of 64 not wishing to sound Chinese, a finding that points to a gender difference and could be used to support the view that women tend to conform more to standard forms of language than men.

7 Which type of culture content would you prefer to use in your English class?

The results are again fairly evenly distributed. It is interesting to note that both specialist and non-specialist teachers are most in favour of content dealing with life and culture around the world and rate equally highly American, British, and their own culture. This indicates a shift away from materials that focus on American and British culture and which, through TV programmes like *Dallas*, give a distorted picture of Western life. Obviously, this is a teacher's perception and, as can be seen from some of the comments, is different from that held by students. The following views given

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are shared by many of the teachers, the first showing why they consider Chinese cultural content important:

> We should integrate Chinese culture into textbooks and other teaching materials. More often than not, we find that our students know a great deal about the west, but very little about their own country, which is very wrong. This is largely the fault of the teaching materials used. Sadly, there are many young people in China who seem to be acquiring a higher regard for Western culture than for their own.

The following comment explains the importance attached to American and British content:

> American and British content is very important for the students because English originally comes from these places. When our students learn the language, they also have to learn the culture behind it because language and culture can never be separated..

Finally, a comment that shows why teachers so greatly favour content that comprises a variety of cultures:

> If our students know different cultures around the world, they will think that they can communicate with people from everywhere and make friends with people from other cultures; they can travel to the places they want to because travel is a very important part of education. All this may fascinate the students and in turn can help to motivate their English learning.

8 Will China English stand alongside British, American and other world Englishes?

This is probably the most telling finding that emerged from this investigation. The fact that two-thirds of all the teachers think that China English will become a standard is a sign that it almost certainly will. Their reasons for saying so are various. They are best given by using the words of the teachers:

a With so many Chinese people speaking English, I guess China English will become the largest variety of world Englishes in the future.
b There are many things that are unique in Chinese culture and for which English equivalents cannot be found; therefore, we need China English
c If there's Euro English, I don't see why there's not China English.
d We need to communicate with the world, but we can't and don't need to use American or British English for communication.
e After all, the so-called standard English is hard to learn.

The arguments of those who disagree, though these teachers are more numerous, seem weak in comparison:

a I want to sound like an American.
b American English is my dream.
c China is still poor economically, so it's difficult for China English to exist.
d America is the most powerful nation. Its language sounds powerful too.
e American English sounds very fashionable.

In Kirkpatrick & Xu's study (2002), only 28.1% agreed with the statement that one day there will be a variety of English called *Chinese English* (i.e. what we call he *China English*). This suggests that since then an increasing number of people think that it will come about.

9 How do you, as a Chinese English teacher, view your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to native English-speaking teachers? Do you think it is necessary to introduce native speakers to your university?

As the number of people learning English rapidly increases, more and more English teachers are needed. However, China is faced with a shortage of well-trained English teachers. In order to compensate for this dearth of teachers, China recruits large numbers of foreigners, most of whom are employed in universities and institutes of further education. The great majority of these teachers are native speakers of English hailing from English-speaking countries such as Australia, the United States, Britain, Ireland and Canada. It is often believed that having native English speakers as teachers makes the teaching program more attractive and of better quality. In that case, do Chinese English teachers feel challenged? Do they consider themselves advantaged or disadvantaged compared with native speakers? And do they support hiring native English speaking teachers to come and teach alongside them?

On the one hand, they see that they have a clear advantage over the foreigners through their vastly superior knowledge of their own language and the culture. They can give translations and grammatical explanations in Chinese, which saves a considerable amount of time. Also their pronunciation and speech, possessing the characteristics of China English, is more comprehensible to the students than that of foreigners. On the other hand, they are

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Table 1: total numbers of respondents in each category

Questions	Options	English major teachers (209)	Percentage	Non-English major teachers (376)	Percentage	Overall percentage
1 Does English have a plural form?	Yes	156	74.6	252	67	69.7
2. Have you heard of *world Englishes*?	Yes	149	71.3	236	62.8	65.8
3. Have you heard of *China English*?	Yes	182	87.1	259	68.9	75.4
4. What kind of English do you prefer? (You can have more than one choice.)	British English	102	48.8	179	47.6	48
	American English	173	82.8	284	75.5	78.1
	Canadian English	37	17.7	54	14.4	15.6
	Australian English	29	13.9	41	10.9	12
	Singaporean English	3	1	6	1.6	1.5
	Indian English	2	1	6	1.6	1.5
	New Zealand English	10	4.8	12	3.2	4.8
	China English	112	53.6	198	52.7	53
5. What kind of English do you think is standard English? (You can have more than one choice.)	British English	181	86.6	280	74.5	78.8
	American English	196	93.8	343	91.2	92
	China English	107	51.2	195	51.9	51.6
	There are many standard Englishes	152	72.7	227	60.1	64.8
6. Which variety of English do you want your English to sound like?	American English	91	43.5	158	42	42.6
	British English	63	30.1	122	32.5	31.6
	China English	55	26.3	96	25.5	25.8
7. Which type of culture content would you prefer to use in your English class? (You can have more than one choice) Why?(Write reasons on another sheet)	**A.** Content dealing with places and people in China	177	84.7	299	79.5	81.4
	B. Content dealing with aspects of America or British life and culture	183	87.6	304	80.9	83.3
	C. Content dealing with life and culture of countries around the world	198	94.7	317	84.3	88

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Table 1: (continued)

Questions	Options	English major teachers (209)	Percentage	Non-English major teachers (376)	Percentage	Overall percentage
8. Will China English stand alongside British, American and the other world Englishes? Why/why not? (Provide your reasons on another piece of paper.)	Yes	95	45.5	137	36.4	39.7
	No	104	49.8	178	47.3	48.2
	Neutral	10	4.7	61	16.3	12.1
9. Is it necessary to introduce native speakers to your university? How do you view your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to native English-speaking teachers? (write your answers to this question on another piece of paper)	Yes	114	54.5	195	33.3	52.8
	No	95	45.5	181	48.1	47.2

aware of their relative lack of fluency and spontaneity of the foreign teachers' greater knowledge of English-speaking culture, of current affairs and up-to-date language learning materials, mainly through greater ease of access.

A slight majority of teachers (52.8%) are in favour of employing foreign teachers. They see their presence as a means of improving their own as well as the students' English. They perceive this contact with them as a means of getting to know their culture better, making friends and learning about different teaching methods. The remaining 47.2% base their objection to their presence largely on the fact that so few of them are well trained and come, not for professional reasons, but to travel, to fill in time while looking for a job in their own country, or even simply to find a girl friend. They think that many are not deeply interested in Chinese culture, that some have personal problems and difficulties of adjustment, and, above all, that the great majority are simply not teachers.

There is clearly a large discrepancy between the rationale behind the employment of teachers and the reality. The planners and decision-makers, like the majority of the teachers, think they should be able to provide a more accurate model of English, equip students with more up-to-date materials, help them to keep in touch with current affairs, assist them in acquiring a good pronunciation, introduce alternative teaching methods, stimulate an interest in the language, enable them to use it appropriately and provide the necessary insights into English-speaking cultures. Unfortunately, as so many teachers point out, these goals are seldom attained. A cartoon from the *China Daily* gives a good illustration of many people's view of them: two beggars, native speakers of English, are sitting in the street begging when one of them suddenly comes up

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with an idea and says to the other: 'Hey, let's go to China to teach English!'

To do what a slight minority of teachers seem to want, namely to exclude native speakers from the language-learning scene, would be a drastic measure that goes counter to China's open policy and the need for contact with other cultures. It would virtually cut off the only direct, personal contact that many learners would have with English-speaking culture. While more care needs to be taken in the selection of native English speakers, an additional way of raising the standard of the language and creating affinities with the culture would be to send Chinese teachers to countries where English is spoken for periods of time. This experiment has already been conducted in at least my university with very positive results. In July and August, 2004, a group of Chinese English teachers (17 teachers) of Three Gorges University were sent to the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages (CALL), Griffith University in Australia, for TESOL training. They were given both an entrance test and an exit test. The average result of the entrance was 63.5 out of 100 and that of the exit was 85. In the final report of the programme, it was stated:

> CALL was impressed by the incoming level of professional expertise among the group members. Excellent progress in English was made by most of the participants, with particular improvements in listening and speaking. It is also felt that there was a significant increase in the level of confidence among them. These participants made very pleasing improvements, which is a testimony to their drive, determination and willingness to embrace the opportunities available to them during the program."

The future of China English

The overall picture that emerges from this survey is that a broader more open view of the English language is emerging in China. There is an interest in and openness towards other cultures via the learning of English and a recognition that a, or the, variety of English to be learned should be characterized by Chinese language and culture. Learners must no longer be tied to one alien variety of the language. Certain practical consequences and measures stem from this.

Apart from the obvious need for teachers to communicate their support for China English to their students, programmes must be developed that reflect this bias. In particular, instead of simply importing Western teaching materials that often give an incomplete and distorted picture, courses should be developed that illustrate a context to which Chinese learners can relate and in which not only Western customs and values are reflected but also their own and those of other non-English cultures. Also, as Matsuda (2002) points out, 'an incomplete presentation of the English language may also lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users or uses.'

However, there are salient difficulties. Are two varieties to be taught, e.g. American and Chinese, or just one? Should English majors be taught the same variety as non-English majors? It is expected that the former are aiming at a deep knowledge of and contact with the culture of native speakers. The non-specialists, on the other hand, need their knowledge for other, more utilitarian reasons, notably business communication with other non-native speakers. Nevertheless, as they will be taught by English majors, the specialists will obviously have to have a mastery of both varieties, which has serious repercussions on their training.

If China English is to become an educational goal, it needs to be fully described. Norms have to be established that will ensure communication in respect of pronunciation, grammar, syntax and lexis. Already a number of phonological and grammatical forms that are deviant from standard English but facilitate language learning while not impeding communication have been identified in the speech of many non-native speakers of English, e.g. replacing *th* by *t* (many native speakers cannot pronounce it and it is not used in Aviation English); dropping the third person present tense *-s*; using *who* and *which* interchangeably; omitting or inserting definite articles in a non-native speaker way; employing redundant words, e.g. *we study about*; replacing infinitive constructions, e.g. *I want that*….(Seidlhofer, 2004). In respect of lexis, Chinese words have already penetrated into English, e.g. *kow-tow*. However, it is not just terms that are Chinese in origin but English words that have acquired Chinese associations and consequently a rather different meaning, e.g. *to lose face*, *hometown*, *comfortable*, *where are you going?* (a greeting in Chinese which means *Hello* rather than a request for information).

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Table 2: Questions

Options	English major teachers (209)	Percentage	Non-English major teachers (376)	Percentage	Overall percentage
1 Does English have a plural form?					
Yes	156	74.6	252	67	69.7
2 Have you heard of *world Englishes*?					
Yes	149	71.3	236	62.8	65.8
3 Have you heard of *China English*?					
Yes	182	87.1	259	68.9	75.4
4 What kind of English do you prefer? (You can have more than one choice.)					
British English	102	48.8	179	47.6	48
American English	173	82.8	284	75.5	78.1
Canadian English	37	17.7	54	14.4	15.6
Australian English	29	13.9	41	10.9	12
Singaporean English	3	1	6	1.6	1.5
Indian English	2	1	6	1.6	1.5
New Zealand English	10	4.8	12	3.2	4.8
China English	112	53.6	198	52.7	53
5 What kind of English do you think is standard English? You can have more than one choice					
British English	181	86.6	280	74.5	78.8
American English	196	93.8	343	91.2	92
China English	107	51.2	195	51.9	51.6
There are many standard Englishes	152	72.7	227	60.1	64.8
6 Which variety of English do you want your English to sound like?					
American English	91	43.5	158	42	42.6
British English	63	30.1	122	32.5	31.6
China English	55	26.3	96	25.5	25.8
7 Which type of culture would you prefer to use in your English class? (You can have more than one choice) Why? (Write reasons on another sheet)					
A. Content dealing with places and people in China	177	84.7	299	79.5	81.4
B. Content dealing with aspects of America or British life and culture	183	87.6	304	80.9	83.3
C. Content dealing with life and culture of countries around the world	198	94.7	317	84.3	88
8 Will China English stand alongside British, American and the other world Englishes? Why/why not? (Provide your reasons on another piece of paper.)					
Yes	95	45.5	137	36.4	39.7
No	104	49.8	178	47.3	48.2
Neutral	10	4.7	61	16.3	12.1
9 Is it necessary to introduce native speakers to your university? How do you view your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to native English-speaking teachers? (write your answers to this question on another piece of paper)					
Yes	114	54.5	195	33.3	52.8
No	95	45.5	181	48.1	47.2

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Once these forms have been described, they need to be codified so that varieties such as China English 'will eventually appear in grammars, dictionaries and other reference works' (Jenkins, 2004: 63). The next stage is when a literature starts to emerge (poems, songs, novels), and we reach a point when Chinese people take a pride in what will have become their second national language. We are obviously a long way from this target. And in order for it to be attained, for China English to pass successfully through Kachru's three phases (1992) to become a standard variety, it is obvious that official support is called for. This is not the case at present. ■

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