

The Tolerance of Learning English for Chinese Persons in the Classroom: The Views of Chinese Postgraduates in Thailand

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Abstracts

The research investigates how Chinese ELT students studying abroad in Thailand perceive China English as a variant of English and its tolerance in Chinese English language classroom. Based on semi-structured interviews with seven Chinese ELT students using qualitative content analysis, the study found that the majority of the students did not support the use of China English in English language classes. However, they recognized the legitimacy of China English in terms of different accents and its use in media and intranational and international communication. The students preferred to follow traditional pedagogical approaches that emphasize American and British English, as well as other native English varieties. The findings suggest that language teachers in China could incorporate a range of English varieties in the classroom through the use of authentic learning resources and relevant learning activities. By doing so, students could develop cultural and global awareness while being exposed to a range of English varieties. The study highlights the importance of acknowledging and valuing the diversity of English language use across the world and the need for ELT educators to provide a more inclusive approach to English language teaching.

Keywords: The Tolerance of Learning English; Chinese Persons; The Views of Chinese Postgraduates in Thailand

Introduction

The concept of successful communication in English has evolved from a focus on native-speaker norms to recognizing the validity of different English varieties for diverse communicative purposes (D'Angelo, 2012: 121-139; Jenkins, 2009, Mckay & Brown, 2015). This shift is in line with the principles of World Englishes practices, which acknowledge the emergence of English varieties due to global use and spread of the language in diverse sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts (Author, 2022; Kirkpatrick, 2014: 15-29; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Today, English has become a universal language for communication between people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It has become a global language that anyone or any country can claim proprietorship of and use for any purpose (DAngelo, 2012: 121-139; Crystal, 2008; Jenkins, 2011; Gallloway & Rose, 2015). As a result, there are different names that have been given to this phenomenon, including English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as an international language (EIL), World Englishes (WE), and Global Englishes (GE). Each of these terms highlights different aspects of the pluricentric nature of English and its use in diverse contexts.

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Indeed, the concept of World Englishes challenges the traditional notion of English belonging exclusively to Inner Circle nations and instead recognizes the diverse varieties of English used around the world. This approach acknowledges the unique linguistic, cultural, and social contexts in which English is used and emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting these different varieties. As English continues to spread globally, the World Englishes paradigm has become increasingly relevant and necessary in understanding the complexities of the language and its use (Author, 2021, 2022; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

The slow response of teachers to the shift towards WE-informed pedagogy in the ASEAN context could be due to various factors, such as lack of training and awareness of the pluricentric nature of English, and the perceived prestige associated with Inner-Circle English varieties (Tarrayo et al., 2021). However, it is important to recognize that English language teaching and learning in a WE context is not about rejecting Inner-Circle English varieties but rather acknowledging the diversity of English and recognizing the legitimacy of localized varieties in specific contexts of use. As argued by Seidlhofer (2011), the goal of EIL pedagogy should be to enable students to use English effectively and appropriately in a range of international and intercultural contexts, rather than to teach them to mimic a particular variety of English. In this sense, a pluralist approach to WE pedagogy could benefit not only learners but also teachers, who can develop a more critical and reflexive awareness of their own language ideologies and practices.

Students' views on local China English continue to be crucial in influencing policy in English language teaching (ELT) in China, even though research on China English (CE) has been conducted in professional writing contexts, mass media, or education. (Tupas & Weninger, 2020; Zein, 2018). This study therefore aims to investigate the perceptions of Chinese postgraduate English major students regarding China English (CE) after taking a 15-week course on WE in order to understand how the students felt about the pluricentric nature of English and the use of CE as a regional variety of English in China. The study also aimed to explore how the students' perceptions were related to their beliefs about the tolerance of CE in Chinese classroom. The research was conducted at a Northeastern Thai university, where the students had exposure to various English varieties, including standard English and CE. The study is relevant to the field of English language teaching, particularly in China, where there is a growing interest in WE and the use of CE as a regional variety of English. Put differently, this study examines how Chinese postgraduates in Thailand perceive the tolerance of learning English in the classroom and how these perceptions reflect their beliefs about tolerating China English in Chinese English classroom.

Literature Review

The term "China English" refers to the English variety used by Chinese speakers, which is influenced by their first language and the cultural context in which it is used (Hu, 2005). Some of the linguistic features of China English include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics (Xu, 2010). For example, Chinese speakers may have difficulty distinguishing between certain English sounds that do not exist in Chinese, such as "l" and "r," leading to a characteristic accent. Moreover, Chinese speakers often use different sentence structures and word orders compared to native English speakers. Additionally, they may use vocabulary that is not commonly used in standard English or have unique idiomatic expressions (Hu, 2005; Xu, 2010).

The WE paradigm challenges the notion of native-speakerism, which suggests that

only those who grew up speaking English as their first language can be considered proficient or accurate users of the language. Instead, the WE paradigm emphasizes the legalization of English varieties and recognizes the value and legitimacy of English spoken by non-native speakers (Author, 2022). While some may argue that China English is not as suitable or understandable as standard English, the WE paradigm challenges this view and recognizes the unique linguistic features and cultural context that influence the language variety. As the use of English continues to grow in China, it is likely that China English will continue to evolve and develop as a distinct form of the language.

The linguistic features of China English have been studied across various levels of language, including phonological, morphosyntactic, pragmatic, and discourse-related aspects (Cheng, 1992; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006: 391-409; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002: 269-279.; Xu, 2006, 2010). Phonologically, the distinct accent and pronunciation of Chinese speakers of English have been noted, including difficulty in distinguishing certain English sounds. Morphosyntactically, the influence of Chinese grammar on English usage has been observed, such as the use of null-subject/object utterances, subject pronoun copying, and yes-or-no responses. Lexically, loanwords from Chinese, nativized English words in Chinese contexts, and common English words have been categorized and studied. At the discourse and pragmatic levels, the influence of Chinese cultural concepts on language use has been explored, including the use of politeness markers, deference to authority, and the use of implicatures. These cultural concepts can influence language use and understanding, leading to unique features of China English that reflect the cultural context in which it is used (Xu, 2008, 2010).

The attitudes of Chinese students towards different varieties of English have been studied in several research (Pan, Lui & Fang, 2021; Lui, Zang & Fang, 2021; Fang, 2018). However, there is a limited amount of research that has explored Chinese students' perceptions of their own English variation, China English. Some studies have found that Chinese students generally have negative perceptions of China English accent in terms of correctness, but they have a positive view of its pleasantness. Fang's (2018) study found that a lack of understanding of World Englishes and a predominantly standard English language ideology were the primary reasons for these negative perceptions. Qiong's (2004: 26-33) investigation found that most Chinese students preferred inner circle English accents, such as American and British English, while the majority disliked the China English accent. Xu and Wang's (2012: 103-135) research discovered that stereotypes existed concerning non-native speakers' English accents, which had an impact on Chinese students' perceptions of their own English variation. However, research on Chinese English major students' perceptions of their own variation after taking a World Englishes course in another EFL context remains limited. It is essential to continue exploring these perceptions to gain a better understanding of how Chinese students view their English variation and the impact it has on language teaching and learning.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design is indeed useful in exploring perceptions and attitudes towards a particular phenomenon. It allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals' experiences and perspectives, as well as the social and cultural contexts that shape them. In the case of this study, a qualitative approach can help to uncover the complex attitudes and beliefs that Chinese English major students hold towards their own variation of English, as well as the reasons behind these perceptions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes towards China English.

1. Participants

Seven second-year Chinese students majoring in English language teaching at an institution in the northeast of Thailand made up the study's sample. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that allows the researcher to choose participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research question (Cohen et al., 2011). In this case, the criteria were the students' enrollment in the English language teaching program, their completion of a world Englishes course, and their experience teaching and using English with various linguistic and cultural groups. This type of sampling allows the researcher to select participants who have relevant knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the research question. However, it can also limit the generalizability of the findings to the wider population since the sample is not randomly selected.

2. Instrument

Semi-structured interviews can be an effective method for gathering information in qualitative research, as they allow participants to express their ideas and thoughts in their own words (Creswell, 2007: 236-264). The use of both pre-prepared prompts and spontaneous questions can ensure that the research objectives and questions are addressed. Additionally, semi-structured interviews can allow for flexibility in the interview process, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into certain topics or follow up on unexpected responses (Creswell, 2007: 236-264). Overall, the use of semi-structured interviews in this study was a suitable method for gathering information on the students' perceptions of China English and its tolerance in Chinese ELT classroom from the perspective of World Englishes.

3. Data Collection

The researchers first clarified what China English (CE) means from a sociolinguistic and WE viewpoint to make sure that everyone who participated has the same understanding of CE and its characteristics. In this manner, the meaning of CE within the context of the research goals was understood by all of the students. The seven students agreed to take part in the interview after observing all ethical considerations. In order to promote natural and relaxed conversations, the researchers generally attempted to listen to the voices of the participants by refraining from interrupting during interviews (Creswell, 2007: 236-264). The following methods were used to gather information from the one-on-one interviews: students were each separately interviewed for 40 to 50 minutes at a time and location that worked for them, like a classroom or study area. The informants were briefed by the researchers on the objectives of the study and the interview procedure prior to the interview. With the interviewees' consent, the researchers used a recording device to capture the audio of the conversations. Given that the students were English majors with strong listening and speaking skills, the interview was conducted in English. It also took place in a more relaxed and casual setting so that the students could talk more freely. Individual student responses were provided in response to the researchers' queries. The researchers either asked additional questions to elucidate the initial

response or just asked the student to explain or provide specific examples when the responses were too general or ambiguous. Each student was questioned regarding their remarks after the interviews.

4. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the conversation was analyzed and interpreted using qualitative content analysis. In general, qualitative content analysis looks at meanings in specific situations and aims to offer fundamental patterns and trustworthy conclusions (Patton, 2002: 261-283). It is employed to identify word or idea patterns in texts or collections of texts. Two general stages of content analysis were described by Dörnyei (2007, p. 254): (1) going through each respondent's response one at a time and noting any distinctive content elements, substantive statements, or key points; (2) creating broader categories based on the ideas and concepts highlighted in the texts to describe the content of the response in a way that permits comparison with other responses. Thus, to analyze the qualitative data in this research, the content analysis techniques described by Dörnyei (2007) were used. In addition, Dörnyei (2009: 1-8) divided content analysis methods into four stages: data transcription, pre-coding and coding, growing ideas—memos, vignettes, profiles, and other forms of data display—and interpretation and conclusion-making. While the fieldwork was still ongoing, the audio recordings from the interviews were instantly transcribed. Any prosodic features that occurred during the interviews were not transcribed because the primary focus of this research was the content of the respondents' answers rather than the way in which they provided the information. The meticulously transcribed interviews were sent to each participant for confirmation. Then, by reading the transcript from beginning to finish, the researchers began to spot emerging themes or patterns pertinent to the study. Coding was required for this second procedure in order to describe, organize, and analyze the data. Coding is a tactic used to categorize and arrange the data that has been gathered as well as to find relationships and trends, according to Dörnyei (2007) and Miles et al. (2014). Researchers have the opportunity to "at first summarize data segments" and "identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (Miles, et al, 2014, p. 86). In terms of coding, QSR NVivo 10 was used to keep the transcribed information gathered from the conversations. Additionally, it was used to develop and construct coding for data analysis. After the data were transferred to the Nvivo, the subjects' conceptions of CE, WE, and learning were also coded appropriately. In order to fully understand WE and CE and to address the research goals and research questions, these sets of codes were considered to be the most important coding categories. Many early potential codes emerged from these coding categories. The codes were later enhanced and changed. Memos are "an exploration of the ideas, hunches, and thoughts about the codes," according to Dörnyei (2007, p. 254). These memos should contain ideas or important concepts. They can be brief sentences or phrases or several pages in length. This method helped the analysis concentrate on the new topics for further examination. The final stage of data analysis in this research involved the interpretation of the findings from the participant data and the drawing of conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

This study takes on social constructionism as the conceptual framework. Social constructionism (SC) is perceived as an epistemological position that seeks to understand the social actions and processes that drive knowledge creation, and consequently the formation of social constructs (Dickins, 2004; Burr, 1995). By following this notion, it seems that the ways of building a particular object or person can be changing and dependent on social construction, which is situated historically and culturally, for example, how Chinese students perceive English language users and English language uses in comparison with Thai people (Willig, 2008). Within this study, the researchers attempt to explore how Chinese postgraduates in Thailand construct their ideas of the tolerance of learning English in the classroom and how these constructions reflect their beliefs about tolerating China English in Chinese English classroom.

In relation to SC, moreover, the concepts, experiences and knowledge that a person collects from within a specific historical and cultural context or environment can arguably influence the way they view the world (Khan et al., 2021). Providing a definition of "truth" thus becomes problematic, because knowledge gained from different perspectives from a particular group of people is likely to serve different interests that disallow or make "truth" difficult to form. In other words, what we perceive as the "truth" in one particular context or society might not always be perceived as the "truth" in another context where people have different beliefs, and cultural and historical backgrounds (Gergen, 2001). For this reason, SC prefers to understand the action processes that emerge within society that guide to knowledge, as this is something that people construct together rather than simply possess by birth.

Research Findings and Discussions

This section presents and discusses data from the participants interview based on the two key themes that correspond to the research questions: (1) **Students' views of China English**, (2) **Tolerating China English in Chinese English classroom**. Excerpts from interview data are also presented here word verbatim as reported by the participants. For reasons of anonymity, the participants are represented in this section using their initials (e.g. J), followed by a number to indicate the order in which they were interviewed so as to distinguish them (e.g. J-1 and L-7).

1. Students' views of China English

The participants' general opinions about China English could be evaluated on two levels based on their responses: prospective acceptability (i.e., expanded and regular use) and distinctive characteristics. According to Seilhamer (2015), the frequent use of English relates to "the extent to which language is seen as considerable in terms of quantity," whereas the expanded use of English refers to the use of English in "many diverse spheres in the community in question" (p. 373). According to Excerpts 1 and 2, which demonstrate how China English is a variety of English that Chinese and non-Chinese can comprehend depending on context and culture, the students thought that China English was real at the first level.

Excerpt 1

Yes, I concur. China English is evident all around us. For instance, in China, we frequently witness linguistic mistakes, misspellings, and word misplacement in warning signs, notice boards, billboards, and other places. Some Chinese speakers who combine Chinese and English can also be heard. We feel a little funny perhaps because of the language mistake (Z-6).

Excerpt 2

Asian People who are familiar with the Chinese context, language, and culture use English. Such individuals, in my perspective, include both Chinese and non-Chinese folks who are conversant with the Chinese language (Q-4).

As shown in Excerpts 3 and 4, the participants recognized several distinctive aspects of China English at the second level. These include variations in pronunciation, particular grammatical constructions, and the use of expressions and allusions from Chinese culture.

Excerpt 3

Chinese English is distinguished by its peculiar word stress, intonation, and pronunciation. Some vowels and consonants in English are changed, dropped, or added when spoken by Chinese speakers (M-2).

Excerpt 4

Possibly due to the English pronunciation of Chinese speakers? Chinese speakers of English have their own unique manner of pronouncing words. And I believe it distinguishes them from other Chinese in that they speak English very uniquely (H-3).

The majority of the participants had favorable opinions of these features, demonstrating that they give the language richness and complexity and reflect Chinese identity and culture. (Fang & Ren, 2019). They added that while some of these characteristics might make China English more challenging for non-Chinese speakers to comprehend, this is not always a bad thing. But some of the participants (H-3, Q-4, and L-7) continue to believe that the "so-called China variety of English is just a form of non-standard kind of English used in China," citing instances like newspaper discourse and the tourist industry (Xiaoqiong, 2005: 27-38). (Hu & Liu, 2007). Excerpts 11 and 12 bolster this conflicting opinion.

Excerpt 5

Because of English's changing role and ability to adapt to many contexts to meet unique communicative demands, more non-native speakers are now using it as a common language. This does not automatically render the type of English employed in these situations acceptable, though. In truth, these varieties are more often just types of broken English than a true variety in places like China (H-3).

Excerpt 6

It therefore makes little difference how someone talks or what variety of English they use today, such as the China English variant, as long as they are understood. I believe that China English plays an equally significant function as native variants of English based on my travel and study experience in Thailand. China English is the English variation of China and specifically reflects Chinese' identity, local cultural values, and ways in which they use English. It is not a variety that anyone, especially Chinese, need to be embarrassed of in order to avoid criticism (M-5).

Excerpt 7

Chinese people cannot just run with this idea of China English to believe that it should be promoted as legitimate; it is still considered as bad English in my view (L-7).

Excerpt 8

I have come to appreciate the beauty of such linguistic diversity as it shows how the language has changed. I am always delighted to listen to Chinese people speak using China English. Comprehension is what matters and not the English variety that one uses to express oneself. Chinese should appreciate the beauty of how they use English and feel proud, yet, still aim for native or near-native competence (Q-4).

It is intriguing to note that despite acknowledging China English's non-standard characteristics, the study's participants appear to have a positive outlook on the language. This demonstrates how crucial it is to recognize and value linguistic variety in a world where English is used as a common language. (xu, 2017). It also implies that a variety of elements, including context, society, and individual experiences, shape language attitudes and perceptions.

The participants observed that the dominance of Mandarin as the national language and the lack of widespread English language proficiency among Chinese people may impede the development of China English as a distinctive variety. (e.g. M-5 and Z-6). They also emphasized how crucial institutional support is in helping to promote and legitimize China English as a recognized variety, including government policies, schooling, and the media. The participants also acknowledged that a key element in determining China English's growth and development is its acceptability among prospective users, including non-Chinese speakers (Excerpts 13 and 14).

This highlights the importance of promoting linguistic diversity and recognizing non-standard varieties of English as legitimate forms of communication. It also emphasizes the role of language policies and institutions in promoting and supporting the development of China English as a distinct variety. Furthermore, it suggests that the acceptability of China English among non-Chinese speakers is crucial in its development and acceptance as a valid form of English. Overall, these findings have significant implications for language teaching and learning, as well as language policy and planning.

Excerpt 9

If Chinese people accept the necessity of learning English, English has the potential to develop into a localized variation of English. If they themselves are not particularly comfortable with English, they cannot pretend to speak it. First, they must acknowledge that China English exist before China English can be viewed as a variety of English (M-5).

Excerpt 10

Because Chinese people dislike English, it can be difficult to say that China English exist. There is no China English if they do not enjoy speaking English (Z-6).

In accordance with these findings, the participants (in Excerpts 15 and 16) asserted that there are comparatively few and dubious China English users and adopters.

Excerpt 11

When enough people adopt it, China English will be localized. However, I believe that educated Chinese will not accept the use of China English as a localized version of English. Also, Chinese society places a high value on native speakers, and nearly all of the country's schools mandate that students learn either American or British English. Additionally, they hire teachers from nations with English as the native language (L-7).

Excerpt 12

I do not believe this is the case since, compared to other types of Englishes, less people speak China English, and, as far as I am aware, it has not yet been promoted as the nation's official language (J-1).

Alternatively, comprehensibility and intelligibility in ELF contact should take precedence over the English variety a speaker uses. (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Boonsuk, Ambele & McKinley, 2021: 297-308). As a result, speaking in China with a distinctive Chinese accent, such as an English one, could be endearing and represent the culture of the country as a whole. Others see it as a charming and genuine reflection of Chinese linguistic identity, while some players see it as a type of broken English. "China English should not be viewed as a strange or failed English," as two participants stated. (Q-4 and M-5). The participants agree that comprehension and intelligibility should be prioritized in English as a Lingua Franca encounters rather than accentuating pronunciation and grammar that are similar to those of native speakers. (Baker, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2014: 15 - 29). This viewpoint is consistent with global Englishes-informed pedagogy, which acknowledges the ongoing significance of native English varieties while recognizing and promoting the diversity of English varieties worldwide (Galloway & Rose, 2018: 3-14). The use of English should therefore not be restricted to only the varieties spoken by native speakers (such as British or American Englishes), but also to other English varieties created by the local environment. (Author, 2020, Baker, 2012, 2015). It

is important to recognize and value linguistic diversity in English as a Lingua Franca encounters, rather than adhering to the standard English varieties spoken by native speakers. The participants in this study agree that the comprehensibility and intelligibility of communication should be prioritized over pronunciation and grammar that are similar to those of native speakers. This approach aligns with global Englishes-informed pedagogy, which recognizes the ongoing importance of native English varieties while promoting the diversity of English varieties worldwide. Therefore, it is essential to embrace and acknowledge China English as a legitimate English variety and promote its growth and development.

This acknowledgment of the importance of both native and nonnative English speakers in educational settings is in line with the tenets of world Englishes-informed pedagogy, which aims to advance linguistic inclusivity and variety in the study of the English language. (Fang & Ren, 2018; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012). Therefore, it may only seem like a partial solution to the issue to fully eradicate "native speakerism" (Holliday, 2006: 385-387) and EFL-oriented ideas in ELT settings like China. (Galloway & Rose, 2018: 3-14). This method acknowledges the diversity of English dialects spoken around the globe and promotes learners' creation of their own regional dialects of the language that are representative of their linguistic and cultural identities. Additionally, it recognizes the value of native English dialects in some situations, such as ELT with a global emphasis. In contrast, it contends that nonnative English speakers should be permitted to creatively appropriate and use their own local variety of the language for intracultural conversation rather than being expected to adhere to native standards. (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). Incorporating diverse English varieties in ELT settings can also help promote a greater appreciation for linguistic diversity and intercultural competence among learners. Moreover, it can help reduce the power dynamics between native and nonnative English speakers that can often exist in educational and professional settings. (Holliday, 2006: 385-387; Jenkins, 2007). However, implementing such pedagogical approaches can be challenging and require changes in attitudes, policies, and resources. (Kubota, 2013). Nonetheless, with a growing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusivity in language education, there is hope that world Englishes-informed pedagogy will continue to gain momentum and positively impact language education worldwide.

2. Tolerating China English in Chinese English classroom

Participants in this study perceive American and British English as the "correct" or standard versions of the language, while they perceive China English as deviating from this standard. (Excerpts 17-19). This viewpoint is prevalent in ELT settings where native English types are frequently viewed as the ideal or standard. (Jenkins, 2006). However, as was already stated, world Englishes-informed pedagogy places a strong emphasis on the necessity of recognizing and legitimizing the various English varieties used throughout the world, including regional variants like China English. (Baker, 2012, 2015). The importance of native English varieties in ELT settings should be noted as it may result in linguistic imperialism where nonnative English varieties are viewed as inferior or insufficient (Phillipson, 1992: 12-18). Additionally, this perception may contribute to the privileging of certain cultures and countries over others, reinforcing power imbalances that exist in the world. World Englishes-informed pedagogy, on the other hand, recognizes the validity and richness of all English varieties and aims to promote linguistic inclusivity and cultural diversity. It also acknowledges that language is intimately linked to culture and identity and that individuals should be allowed to express themselves through their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Excerpt 13

The most common and widely acknowledged varieties of English are now both American and British. Although English teachers dislike the concept of the non-native/native dichotomy, the truth is that they unknowingly employ it because textbooks and even schools encouraged it (Z-6).

Excerpt 14

I believe this is so because textbooks, teaching aids, and learning materials frequently use the major varieties. When students are learning a language that may be used with everybody in this world, they should study the varieties that are most frequently used. China English, in my opinion, cannot be used to teach English in a classroom setting. First, the local accent in China has a significant influence on their English. If you instruct students in English using China English, you are giving them the wrong pronunciation of words (J-1).

Excerpt 15

I do not even know much about China English, but if the English spoken by Chinese with a strong Chinese accent is considered to be China English, then using it in a classroom to teach vocabulary and pronunciation in particular does not appear to be a smart idea. To put it another way, I personally would not really advise instructors to utilize China English since I think that learning a language is all about immersing yourself in it, thus if China English is used in the classroom as a medium of instruction, this will limit the students' exposure to standard English (Q-4).

Excerpt 16

British and American English varieties should still be regarded as the best models to prepare Chinese students for high-stakes examinations in English. EFL-oriented pedagogy where native varieties are prioritized as the standard seem to have a strong influence on teaching and learning goals in ELT in China. While this will cater for laissez-faire attitudes in preparing students for real-world exams, certainly, this does not reflect how students use English in the classroom; and most importantly, learners' needs and goals of learning English are disregarded (J-1).

Excerpt 17

Amidst globalization, English remains a significant pedagogical language in East Asia. With English being used to access life opportunities, Chinese learners as citizens in the global village need more responsive ELT strategies in the classroom that will familiarize them with interlocutors of different English varieties and cultures. Therefore, while native English varieties should still be emphasized in the classroom for purposes of exams, for example, the learners own English variety,

for instance, and culture should also be emphasized for effective English language learning (Q-4).

Another way to look at it is that the participants recognized that there was "a kind of China way of using English" (Q-4 in Excerpt 23) in the classroom. On the other hand, some of the participants went on to say that "China English can be allowed to be used alongside native varieties in China English language classrooms." Given that most, if not all, Chinese students will be required to take high-stakes exams in English, all participants agreed that native English varieties (such as British and American Englishes) still predominate in China's EFL classroom (see Excerpts 20–23), and that this should still be the target norm. However, they believed that teachers should emphasize students' awareness of the differences between English variety types as well as their contextual use and appropriateness. (see Excerpts 24–26). The participants appear to concur that without such awareness and preparation, there may be a certain type of *laissez-faire* perceptions that won't prepare the students for "real-world" exams that they are most likely to face after they graduate from school. It seems that the participants recognize the importance of preparing students for high-stakes exams in English by emphasizing native English varieties, but they also believe that students should be made aware of the differences between English variety types and their contextual use. This approach aligns with world Englishes-informed pedagogy, which acknowledges the importance of native English varieties in certain situations but also recognizes and promotes the diversity of English varieties worldwide (Galloway & Rose, 2018: 3–14). By acknowledging and valuing the various English varieties used throughout the world, including regional variants like China English, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of the language and be better prepared for real-world situations where they may encounter a variety of English speakers.

The participants' opinions on China English's function in Chinese English language classes appear to be complex. Given the high stakes of English exams in China, they acknowledge the dominance of native English varieties, such as American and British English, and think that these should still be the goal norm. (Excerpt 20). On the other hand, they accept China English's existence and legality and think that it can coexist in the classroom with native varieties while placing an emphasis on understanding how each variety differs and using it appropriately in each situation. (e.g. J-1, M-2 and Z-6). In other words, it seems that the participants value both the diversity of English varieties and the need for knowledge of their appropriate use while also appreciating the significance of preparing students for real-world exams and contexts. This indicates that a balanced approach to teaching English in China might put equal emphasis on native and non-native varieties of the language while also emphasizing communicative skills and an awareness of the differences between varieties and context. It suggests that a balanced approach that incorporates both native and non-native varieties of English while also emphasizing communicative skills and awareness of linguistic diversity and appropriateness could be effective in preparing students for both high-stakes exams and real-world contexts.

Excerpt 18

British and American English varieties should still be regarded as the best models to prepare Chinese students for high-stakes examinations in English. EFL-oriented pedagogy where native varieties are prioritized as the standard seem to have a strong influence on teaching and learning goals in ELT in China. While this will cater for laissez-faire attitudes in preparing students for real-world exams, certainly, this does not reflect how students use English in the classroom; and most importantly, learners' needs and goals of learning English are disregarded (J-1).

According to the data, participants agree that native American and British English speakers are the finest role models for 'preparing students for real-world exams' (see Except 20) in the classroom. According to the participants, the bulk of students, if not all of them, will have to take significant exams in English. Additionally, policies, curricula, and teaching methods that idolize the native speaker variation have an impact on ELT in China (D'Angelo 2012: 121-139; Saengboon 2015: 131-154.). Fundamentally, according to these curricula (Author, 2021; Fang & Ren, 2018; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012; Saengboon, 2015: 131-154.; Weerachairattana et al., 2019: 125-181), Chinese students and instructors are pressured to follow the norm of native English speakers. The Author (2022, p. 739) claims that "when one thinks of the practicality of using English for international academic tests and exams," this argument "seems to make sense."

It's true that studying and living in nations where English is a second language can give students useful exposure to different English dialects and aid in their understanding of the idea of World Englishes. It is crucial to remember, though, that students' opinions and views toward various forms of English can change depending on their individual backgrounds and experiences. Since earlier studies have shown that Chinese students may have negative perceptions of non-native Englishes, including China English, the perception of China English and its acceptance in the classroom is a complex problem. (Pan, Lui & Fang, 2021). Furthermore, there is ongoing discussion regarding whether China English qualifies as a legitimate form of English or not, highlighting the need for additional empirical research in this field. (Lui, Zang & Fang, 2021; Fang, 2018). It is crucial to keep researching and comprehending the variety of English dialects and how they are used in various settings as this can support more effective and inclusive communication in the international community. Indeed, the issue of which English variety to teach and prioritize in ELT is a complex and ongoing discussion. While the dominance of native English varieties in ELT settings can perpetuate linguistic imperialism and stigmatize non-native varieties, it is also important to acknowledge the practicality of preparing students for international exams and the perceived prestige associated with native English varieties. Additionally, students' perceptions and attitudes towards different English varieties can be influenced by their individual backgrounds and experiences, and further research is needed to understand and address these complexities. As the world becomes more interconnected and globalized, it is essential to promote effective and inclusive communication across diverse English-speaking communities. This requires a nuanced understanding of the various English dialects and their appropriate use in different contexts, as well as an openness to non-native English varieties and a recognition of their legitimacy and value. Ultimately, a balanced approach to ELT that incorporates both native and non-native English varieties and emphasizes communicative skills and cultural awareness can

better prepare students for the globalized world and promote more equitable and inclusive communication practices.

Conclusion

There are differing views on the validity and legitimacy of China English, which is still a hotly debated topic in China. However, it is crucial that educators acknowledge the reality of China English's development and its ability to help students become more comfortable communicating across and within cultures. (Sifakis, 2019: 288-306.). Although local English dialects can also be made more aware of to improve students' communicative skills, standard English still has a role in Chinese education. Learners can benefit from the creation of new laws that address issues with language pluricentricity as well as how diverse and fluid English conversation is today. (Akkakoson, 2019). Ultimately, to make learning and using the language more appropriate in learners' situations, both domestic and foreign teachers in EFL settings should be conscious of and comprehend the diversity of English.

Furthermore, the research did not examine the perspectives of Chinese students who had not studied abroad, whether in Thailand or elsewhere, which might have limited the applicability of the findings to a larger group of Chinese students. A comparative perspective on the use and perceptions of these English varieties in an international setting might have been provided by the study had it taken into account the perspectives of non-Chinese students who had exposure to China English or other non-native English varieties. Another drawback of the research is the possibility of social desirability bias, as participants might have been reluctant to express unfavorable or critical opinions about China English or their experiences studying the language abroad. This might have had an impact on the study's self-reported data's validity and precision. Furthermore, the research did not investigate the efficacy of various pedagogical strategies for teaching China English or other World Englishes in EFL classrooms. Future studies might examine which instructional strategies and resources can best foster the growth of students' international communication skills in a pluricentric English-speaking environment.

Overall, the study highlights the complexity of attitudes towards China English and its role in Chinese English language education. While acknowledging the dominance of native English varieties and the importance of preparing students for real-world exams, educators should also recognize the existence and legitimacy of China English and other World Englishes, and promote an awareness of the differences between varieties and contexts. Further research is needed to explore the efficacy of different pedagogical strategies for teaching China English and other non-native English varieties, and to examine the perspectives of a wider range of Chinese and non-Chinese students in international settings. Overall, a balanced and inclusive approach to English language education in China can help students develop the communication skills needed in today's globalized world.

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