

An Investigation into Affiliative Attitudes towards English Language Variety

among Chinese students on an English-medium transnational higher education programme in a (mainland) Chinese university

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Chinese English Learners' Affinity to English

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➤ Non-native English speakers (NNS)

Who would you like to sound like?
Why?

Do you want to speak English like NS?

➤ Native English speakers

Do you judge how well a person's English is by the (near) native-likeness?

What is your criteria of 'good' English?

MY RESEARCH...

➤ "Who do you want to sound like?"

➤ 'you' – Chinese NNS in an English THE programme

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The Context

➤ English Franchised THE (Transnational Higher Education) in China

- English medium
- English curriculum
- English degree



Opportunities	Threats
Chinese Students – more accessibility to HE	At the expense of their mother tongue (Mansbach and Rhodes, 2007)
China - internationalization	An instrument of English cultural & Linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992)

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Concepts of English

English THE - a manifesto of English globalisation (Huang, 2006)

English globalisation is "a *paradoxical term*", manifesting itself in three aspects (Erling, 2005):

- 1) 'World Standard English' - American English & British English
Majority NNS are likely to learn Native varieties of English (Jenkins, 2007).
- 2) 'Lingua Franca English' - a neutral tool
English is the 'property' of anyone whoever uses it mainly among NNS for international communication.
- 3) 'World Englishes' - new varieties of English
English evolves through contact with other languages (Graddol, 1997) such as Indian English, Singapore English & Chinese English.

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Conflicts

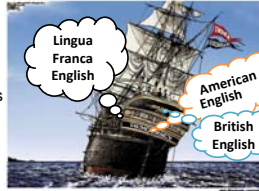
- Facts (Jenkins, 2007):
 - English is used mostly among NNS
 - NS are not the most intelligible English speakers
- Suggestions
 - "Clients have the right to pick the variety they want for their programmes", according to the needs and contexts, rather than the superiority of the model (Baumgardner & Brown, 2003: 249).
 - Learning English as a foreign language, Chinese do not have to conform to NS, rather to "language themselves in another tongue" and use English as a tool (Kramsch, 1997).
- No English Imperialism
ELF in English THE is no longer a tool of imperialism (Mazrui, 1986)

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My Research

➤ Purpose

Is to investigate Chinese students' perspectives on the role of English & their affinity towards different varieties of English



➤ AFFINITY

- affection or preference of a particular English variety
- attraction or closeness to a particular English-speaking individual / group

➤ Is English on a franchised THE a transmission of English imperialism?

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Methodology

➤ Case study: – University of Hertfordshire franchised THE programme in Fuzhou University, China

- 90 Chinese students on Finance & Accounting degree
- English medium
- University of Hertfordshire curriculum & degree

➤ Three Methods:

- Questionnaire – demography & variables
- Focus Group – attitudes to English variety - moderator
- In-depth interview – insight to particular English affinity

➤ Record using a mini digital recorder

➤ Transcription with no glossary

➤ Analysis with Nvivo Software

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Focus Group Questions

- Why have you decided to study in this UH Franchised Transnational Higher Education programme?
- People from where do you think speak the best English?
- While you are speaking English, who would you like to sound like?
- Do you actually learn from the person that you are inclined to be like? If so, how? If not, why?
- Have you heard a famous Chinese person speaking English and are you impressed with the English he/she speaks? Who is she/he? Would you like to be able to speak like him/her?
- In your opinion, what is the difference between the way Chinese people speak English and the way English people speak it?

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Students say

➤ **Affinity to Native English:** "I think the native- ... I want to sound like English men or American, because if I have the good English, I can communicate with them well" (Wen)

British English: "In my point of view, I think in the Britain, the British speak the best English, it's their mother tongue" (Lin)

American English: "I think I like American English, because its movies; some English is more widely to us than the UK" (Qin)

Depends: "Oh well, ah as for me, en:: I think that depends. For example, if I went abroad, like Bri- Bri- the UK, em probably-, I want to sound like (.) the way that they speak; but if I stayed in the USA, probably, I will fit into that environment then, and and sounds like American. But I think, if I- I am in the- em em:: America, but I sound like UK, they they they will find me em a little weird. Em (.) so that really depends on the environment" (Qiang)

➤ Affinity to Individuals

Tony Blair (Ling) / "I want to sound like YANG Lan" (An)
"I would like to sound like you, because firstly you are Chinese, and you are speak very well. If I can be sound like you, I will better" (Bing)

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Students say (continued)

➤ Happy with 'Self' English

"I don't want to speak English like someone ... to be myself" (Ping)
"Maybe your sound, your accent is new to yourself, and you must be the only one in the world, and I think the only thing to do is to- just to form your own (em) ... be yourself" (Li)

➤ Using English as Lingua Franca

"English is a foreign language, a foreign tool that we can use. We should- all kinds Accent, we can understand all kinds of people" (Nuo).
"I think different country have different English, different kind of English, but I think it can become an extra culture." (Peng)
"I think just speak nature (natural) is ok" (Yun)

➤ Attitude to Non-native English varieties

"I know the, the worst speak English, maybe is Japanese." (Cai)
"we like Chinese culture, we should add some Chinese English" (Yun)
"I think because we used to be, to be- English like Chinese Chinglish, so it's hard to change it" (Lu)

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Analysis – Nvivo Software

The screenshot shows the Nvivo software interface with a list of interview questions and responses. Annotations include:

- Q questions:** A cloud-shaped annotation pointing to the list of questions.
- student A:** A circular annotation pointing to a specific response.
- affinity:** A circular annotation pointing to a response.
- Alphabetic students' names:** A cloud-shaped annotation pointing to the list of names on the right.
- affinity coder:** Two circular annotations pointing to specific responses.

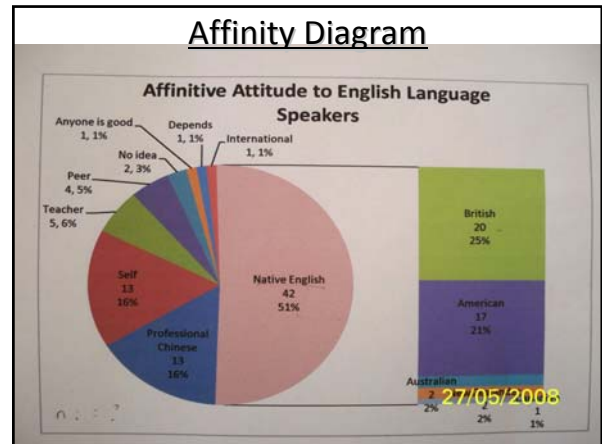
Preliminary Results

- Chinese Affinity to X English
 - Native English (51%)
 - British English (25%)
 - American English (21%)
 - Other NE (5%)
 - Lingua Franca (49%)
 - Professional English (16%)
 - Self English (16%)
 - Other (14%)
 - No idea (3%)

Chinese affinity to

- Nearly half of the Chinese students show NNE affinity**

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Affinity Complexity

- Affinity multiplicity & fluidity

AE - American English
 BE - British English
 IE - Intelligible English
 PE - Professional English
 SE - Self English
 Other - English of Teachers, Peers & No ideas

- cognitive affinity (in mind) =? imitative affinity (in practice)
- ideal affinity (ideally) =? real affinity (in reality)

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Initial Findings

- English Language Teaching in China is communication-orientated. The final purpose of English teaching and learning is communication (College English Syllabus, 1999)
- English Transnational Higher Education may not be a transmission of English imperialism English & ELT in critical pedagogy can be set to liberate students from the hegemony of the English language itself and from an unjust social order (Canagarajah, 1999)

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Thank You

Any Questions?

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