Developing a bibliography on English language education in China: Some Post-reflections

Wenfeng WANG and Xuesong GAO

English Center/Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong

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Outline

❖ Introduction

❖ The project: developing a bibliography

❖ The project: writing a review

❖ Reflections: important factors

❖ Reflections: big and small pictures

❖ Conclusion

Introduction

❖ **HKU Constituent Theme Focal Area Group:**
The mental lives of language teachers and language learners

❖ **All Focal Area Groups** (*http://www.hku.hk/clear/network.html*)
- Language systems and language use
- Language learning in the early years
- Second language writing
- The mental lives of language teachers and language learners
- Language and literacy assessment
- Language use across the disciplines
- Language and literacy policy
- Critical pedagogy

The project- developing a bibliography

❖ **SIGs at the English Centre** (*http://ec.hku.hk/research/interest/*)
- Autonomy reading group
- Assessment: traditional methods and alternatives
- Flexible delivery
- Learning styles and strategies
- Language education in China
- Phonology: the interface between English and Cantonese
- Communication in the health sciences

❖ **SIG: Language Education in China**
- Members and activities
- The bibliography project

The project- developing a bibliography

❖ **Objectives:**

- To develop a bibliography on English language education in China for PhD, MA and Diploma students at the Centre

- To write a review article

The project- developing a bibliography

❖ **Method**
- Stage 1: 12 journals
- Stage 2: 12 journals

key word search
1. The journal was in existence before 2001.
2. The journal has any two of the following words in its title.
   a. Language, linguistics, bilingualism, multilingualism, communication
   b. Education, learning, acquisition, teaching, teacher, curriculum, syllabus
   c. Society, sociolinguistics, sociology, anthropology
   d. China
3. The journal is available in the library of HKU.

Journals surveyed

1	*Applied Linguistics*	13	*Language Policy*
2	*ELT Journal*	14	*Language Teaching*
3	*English Today*	15	*Language Teaching Research*
4	*International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*	16	*Language, Culture, and Curriculum*
5	*International Journal of the Sociology of Language*	17	*Studies in Second Language Acquisition*
6	*IRAL: International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*	18	*System*
7	*Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*	19	*Teaching and Teacher Education*
8	*Journal of Sociolinguistics*	20	*TESOL Quarterly*
9	*Language and Education*	21	*The International Journal of Bilingualism*
10	*Language and Intercultural Communication*	22	*The International Journal of Multilingualism*
11	*Language in Society*	23	*The Modern Language Journal*
12	*Language Learning*	24	*World Englishes*

Categorization of the articles on English language education in China in the 24 journals from 2001 to 2006

	Category	Focus	No. of papers
1	General context of ELT in China	Linguistic situation, culture of learning in China	15
2	Analysis of the corpus of English used in China	The development of English as a language in China, varieties of English, linguistic analysis of English used in China	25
3	Language policy and planning	Models of language education, bilingualism and multilingualism, English for minorities	8
4	Classroom implementation	Curriculum, syllabus, textbook, teaching, testing	16
5	Learners' perspective	Learning methods, learning experiences	14
6	Teacher development	Theory and practice	3
Total			81

The project: writing a review

❖ **Objectives:**

- Something different from Hu and Gu (2002)
- How China fits into the development of ELT in the world?
- How the uniqueness of ELT in China informs the latter?

The project: writing a review

❖ **Critical reading:**
- Similar to qualitative data analysis
- Tensions among different papers
- Particularly interesting ideas

The project: writing a review

❖ Clarence (Wenfeng):
- General context of ELT in China
- Analysis of corpus of English used in China
- Teacher Development
- Introduction, Research Method, and Conclusion
❖ Andy (Xuesong):
- Language policy and planning
- Classroom implementation
- Learners' perspectives

The project: writing a review

❖ **Take Andy's part as an example**
- The tension identified:
- ✓ The effort to localize the global in order to globalize the local
- ✓ How are concerns at the level of language policy and planning reflected in the writings concerning classroom implementations and language learners?
- ✓ The issue of learners

The project: writing a review

❖ **Peer editing:**
· Read and comment on each other's writings
· Respect each other's opinions
· At least three drafts: from notes to final draft

❖ **Supervisor's feedback** (Agnes reads at least three drafts of the paper).

Reflections: important factors

❖ **Supervision support**
· Coordination
· Guidance, advice, feedback
· Affective support
· Time and office space

Reflections: important factors

❖ **Division of labor and cooperation**
· The 24 journals
· The review
    Clarence (Wenfeng):
        General context of ELT in China
        Analysis of corpus of English used in China
    Andy (Xuesong):
        Language policy and planning
        Classroom implementation
    Tom (pseudonym)
        Teacher development
        Learners' perspectives

Reflections: important factors

❖ **Coordination strategies**
· Overall planning
· Keeping summaries of meetings
· Sending reminders for meetings
· Dealing with problems that arise in the process

Reflections: the big picture

❖ Isolated research students in faculties of social sciences and humanity
❖ Loneliness and a lack of adequate supervisory support are typical concerns of humanities graduate students; being used as a 'general dogsbody' is the main source of dissatisfaction for their counterparts in the sciences (Becher, 1994, p. 159)
❖ The typical research in the social sciences is a lone researcher (Deem & Brehony, 2000, p. 152)

Reflections: the big picture

❖ Traditional expectations of autonomous and independent research students (Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000)
❖ Funding policies (Boud & Lee, 2005; Deem & Brehony, 2000)
❖ Peer culture (Deem & Brehony, 2000)
❖ Our conceptions of being research students

Reflections: the big picture

❖ The generic skills in doctoral education
❖ Skills that we should all have and could be applicable to various tasks beyond the university setting, including:
· Leadership and communication
· Project management
· Collaboration and teamwork
· ...
❖ Teaching: support and skills (Gilbert, Balatti, Turner, and Whitehouse, 2004)

Reflections: the big picture

❖ Changing mode of knowledge production
· A lone scholar 'working free from connections with the outside world, [...] driven by the love of ideas, of scholarship alone'
· '[...]new modes of knowledge production will require skills of learning to work with a diverse range of individuals'. It will also encourage recognition of the contribution of others rather than a preoccupation with whether or not one is demonstrating the appropriate characteristic of the autonomous self' (Johnson et al., 2000, p. 146).

Reflections: the big picture

❖ The importance of peer learning
❖ Distributed and horizontalized learning
❖ A high quality research learning environment provides easy 'access to resources, including expertise', 'choice in learning and research conditions', opportunities to engage 'with other students, practising researchers' in 'a community of peers/experts/others'... (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 502).
❖ The relationship between self-direction and guidance from more experienced academics.
❖ 'Peers do not necessarily learn as a natural outcome of their being peers' (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 515).

Reflections: the small picture

❖ Our own learning in the bibliography development project: learn through application
❖ Research Skills: fast reading and bibliographical skills (Becher, 1994)
❖ Writing (communication)
❖ Distributed leadership skills (project management)
❖ Teamwork and collaboration to battle against 'isolation' and 'loneliness'
❖ The role of Agnes: Supervisor or experienced peer in the process?

Conclusion

❖ What have we done so far?
· Bibliography development project and writing processes
· Reflections on our experiences in the process
❖ We firmly recommend similar projects to beginning research students or (if we may) supervisors
❖ Similar bibliographical projects may include:
· Thematic review (like ours)
· Methodological review (See Benson, Chik, Gao, Huang, and Wang, under review)
· and others (see next slide)

Some bibliographies

· Language education in China (http://www.ec.hku.hk/rpg-bibliography.pdf by Agnes Lam, last update: May 2005)
· English language education in China (http://www.ec.hku.hk/rpg.asp by Wang, Gao and Huang, last update: March 2007)
· Language teacher cognition (http://www.personal.leeds.ac.uk/~edusbo/cognition/bibliography.htm by Simon Borg, last update: July 2007)
· Research into Chinese EFL language learning strategies (http://zhang.myplace.nie.edu.sg/Bibliography_on_Rresearch_into_PRC_EFL_Learner_Strategies.htm by Jun Zhang, last update: Aug. 2003)
· Second language writing in Hong Kong, China and other Asian countries (www.hku.hk/clear/doc/L2writing_bibliography.pdf by Lu Lu, last update: July 2007)
· Qualitative research (http://www.ec.hku.hk/rpg-qualitative.pdf by Benson et al, last update: May 2006)
· ...

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