China English and Its Application in China’s English Education

Jiao-yan YANG and Xue PENG
Sichuan Agricultural University, Wenjiang District, Chengdu, China

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Abstract. The paper summarizes the recent research on China English and describes its definition and features with the aim to explore ways to apply China English in China’s English education.

Introduction

China English is an English variety, which came into being in the process of intercultural communication between China and the world with the medium of the English language. “English is a native language of the English people. Peoples of other nationality should conform to the idiomatic way of the English people when they use English. However, each nation has its own uniqueness. As for China, there are so many words with typical Chinese features of the past or the present, even if these words are expressed in written or spoken English”(Ge Changui,1980)[1] Therefore it can be said that China English applies the English language to express China’s unique culture. It originates from the mutual interactions between the English language and the Chinese Culture and is promoted by the present accelerating globalization and multi-cultural trend with the popularity of information superhighway. China English, as an English variety, meet the Chinese demands to communicate with the world, hence, it is worth the investigation and research in order to smooth Chinese cross-cultural communication. The paper intends to introduce the characteristics of China English and the methods to combine China English into China’s English education in order to enable Chinese to fulfill their obligation to publicize and spread Chinese culture to the world.

China English

Previous Research on China English

China English has aroused the attention of Chinese language scholars since the 1980s. Ge Chuangui (1980) was the first scholar who definitely propose the term of China English and establishes the real existence of China English. However, his research is confined to the vocabulary of China English from the perspective of translation.[1] Wang Rongpei (1991) extends and develops Ge’s research and he is the first scholar who has comprehensively analyzes the phonetic, lexical, spelling and grammatical features of China English, from the perspective of the relationship between language and culture. He puts forward that when Chinese use English in China, they inevitably add Chinese culture into English, which leads to the localized English—China English, which he defines as “the English that is used in native China, having the Standard English as the core but with Chinese characteristics”[2] Li Wenzhong (1993) expressed his disagreement with Wang’s views on China English, for he pointed out that Wang had confined the usage of China English to the native China while it had been a part of his so-called “standard English” by transliteration and loan translation.[3]In addition, Li demonstrated that the “standard English” used by Wang in his definition of China English was improper for none of the English languages, even the widely-used British English or American English cannot be regarded as the “standard”, but the variety of the English, therefore he suggested that “Normative English” was more proper. And it is worth pointing out that Wenzhong Li has distinguished China English and Chinese English. According to Li, China English is normative English, as an English variety with its unique Chinese characteristics such as unique syntax and discourse structure, which contributes much to cross-cultural communication while Chinese English is a deformed English, which is an unacceptable form of English. Du
Zhengning (1998) researches China English and its characteristics based on sociolinguistics. He points out that China English, as an English variety, enjoys the same position as the other English varieties, which should be valued instead of neglected by English users. When it comes to the attributes of China English, he points out that China English is the outcome from the conflicting and melting of English and Chinese in the two-way cross-cultural communication between the native English speakers and the Chinese English speakers. [4]

Foreign scholars have also noticed the remarkable development of China English. However, the majority of them adopt the jargon of “Chinese English” instead of “China English”, for they are unconscious that “Chinese English”, considered in China as a deformed English—Chinglish with derogative and negative associative meanings, is different from China English, which is widely accepted as an English variety with unique Chinese features. Todd and Hancock(1986) listed “Chinese English” in their co-authored book *International English Usage* and analyzed it from the perspective of phonology, lexicon and grammar.[5] Kirkpatrick and Xu(2002) summarized the previous discussions on the recognition of China English as an English variety, which was characterized by numerous discourse and rhetorical norms deriving from the Chinese language.[6] Bolton(2003) summed up the historical, linguistic and sociolinguistic study on the depiction and analysis of English in China with an attempt to supply a critical overview of present studies on newly-emerging English varieties.[7] Jiang Yajun (1995) has clearly pointed out that the Oxford Companion to the English Languages has already broadened the connotation of English and acknowledged the independent academic status of China English as a kind of English variety.[8]

**Characteristics of China English**

There are various definitions of China English, which has reflected its features, therefore several widely accepted and recognized definitions are listed as follows:

1) China English is employed by Chinese people in China with standard English as the core and unique Chinese feature. (Wang Rongpei 1991)[1]

2) China English is employed to convey Chinese-culture-bound things by means of transliteration, borrowing and semantic regeneration, with the normative English as its core and the Chinese features demonstrated in lexicon, syntax and discourse, and it has avoided the interference from the Chinese language to the largest degree.(Li Wenzhong 1993)[3]

3) As an interferential English variety, China English, whose interference is caused by the Chinese language, the Chinese thinking mode and the Chinese culture, is used by Chinese in the cross-cultural communication and based on the normative English. China English has already been considered as one variety of English, whose use frequency and communicative effects are closely related to the English proficiency of Chinese users. (Xie Zhijun 1995)[9]

4) As an English variety, China English, with the Chinese traits, is adopted by China’s English speakers and based on the standard English, which has played an inevitable and essential part in spreading Chinese culture. (Jia Guanjie & Xiang Mingyou 1997)[10]

5) China English, as the Chinese variety of English, equals linguistic Englishness plus Cultural Chineseness. (Wang Zhixin 1999)[11]

It can be concluded from the above-mentioned definitions that China English has the following four characteristics: 1) its users are Chinese native speakers who participate in cross-cultural communications; 2) it is a grammatically correct standard English; 3) it is an English variety occurring in the process of transferring unique Chinese culture; 4) it has already demonstrated the relatively stable features of pronunciation, lexicon, syntax, and discourse.

In the aspect of pronunciation, China’s English speakers do not demonstrate the changeable rise-and-fall tones, which frequently occur in the pronunciation of native English speakers, but demonstrate a balanced flow under the influence of Chinese intonation and tone. Besides, wrong types of words are stressed by China’s English speakers. Du Ruiqing and Jiang Cajun (2001) have pointed out that Chinese English speakers are inclined to stress some functional words, which are usually not stressed by native English speakers and they lack assimilation and liaison in their pronunciation. Even the hosts of English programs on CCTV (China Central Television)
International, who are proficient in English, tend to stress the articles, prepositions and conjunctions, which are supposed to be weakly pronounced, and their pronunciation lacks assimilation and liaison, which is widely adopted by native English speakers in their speech. [12]

At the level of lexicon, the words and phrases of China English have typically demonstrated the localization of China English, which is formed through transliteration, literal translation and free translation. For example, through transliteration, there are words such as Yamen, Xiucai, Yin, Yang, qipao, doufu, litchi, wushu and phrases such as Tao De Ching in China English. Through literal translation, teacup, teahouse, paper tiger, two-hundred policy, Three Representatives, etc. have arisen in China English. And through free translation, seeking truth from facts and one arrow, two hawks, etc. have come into being in China English.

At the level of syntax, China English demonstrates the cohesive feature of parataxis under the influence of the Chinese grammar, while standard English, hypotaxis. Minor sentences and run-on sentences are common in China English. For example, in China English, there are various umbrellas at the doorway, they are different in size and color and style and the majority of them are made in Hang Zhou while in native English, the same sentence may be expressed as “there are at the doorway various umbrellas with different size, color and style, whose majority are made in Hang Zhou”.

At the level of discourse, researchers have not come to census about the real existence of discourse features in China English for they are unsure whether the feature is classified into that of Chinglish or China English. As a result, there exists no systematic study on the level but considerable scholars have examined the level from different aspects. For example, Lin Dajin (1996) has adopted many specific examples, such as the structure of expository writing, the use of allusions and idioms, and the use of figure of speech, to present the uniqueness of China English at the level of discourse.[13]

Application of China English in China’s English Teaching

Tolerating China English in Learning Process

China English is an inevitable result in the learning process of Chinese, so the teachers should tolerate the students’ strange tones and intonations in pronunciation, such as improper stress of certain functional words and the unchangeable balanced tones. In addition, the teachers should also allow the production of these sentences, such as “I yesterday in the supermarket bought an interesting book”. All these presentations by Chinese English learners are acceptable for they can convey what the speakers want to express and the learners will gradually overcome these improper presentation with the improvement of their language proficiency and with more opportunities to be exposed to the real English environment.

Compiling New Course Books with China English

The new course books compiled will involve the diversified culture, especially Chinese traditional culture. The involvement of Chinese traditional culture cannot only improve the cultural consciousness of Chinese English learners, but also effectively improve their oral ability. Since the present course books are introduced from abroad, or compiled by the adoption of the authentic English materials with the aim to construct the natural and authentic language learning environment, it is hard for Chinese English learners to master the language materials necessary for them to express the things that they get in touch in their daily lives. For example, a Chinese English learner will find it hard for him to express his or her views on the current changes of China’s population policy for he or she does not know the proper expressions for the current population policy such as “Two-Child Policy”, and “The couple, one of whom is the only child, are allowed to have their second child”. And it is worth noticing that the alien culture conveyed in the current widely-used course books only serve to hinder the learners’ understanding and using of the English language, for the learners cannot adequately understand or convey the things alien to their thought. By contrast, language materials related to the learners’ culture and living environment will be easier
for them to understand and express. English newspapers issued in China, such as China Daily, the People’s Daily, can provide good China English materials. Besides, the English versions of Chinese literature works can also demonstrate plentiful Chinese culture. The compilation of new course books can integrate these China English materials to boost Chinese English learners’ visual, aural and oral comprehension ability.

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