

# ETiC

*English Teaching in China* 在华英语教学

*A peer-reviewed journal for teaching professionals*

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## **Featured Articles**

- Intercultural interactions...Jane Jackson
- Cultural intelligence...David Livermore

## **Research**

- Listening to student silence
- Chinese students' writing
- Intelligibility of China English

## **Reflections**

- International student experience
- Cohesion is not coherence
- Indirectness in essays

## **Reviews**

- Books and websites
- Conferences and reports



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大學

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Welcome to ETiC 6! This issue focusses on the theme of intercultural communication, leading with two features from eminent authors: first an article by Jane Jackson, who has conducted a great deal of research into intercultural interactions at home and abroad; secondly an interview with David Livermore, author of a best-selling book on cultural intelligence.

The research section contains three articles on various aspects of intercultural communication within the classroom: the causes of silent behaviour, cultural influences on academic English writing, and teaching for intelligibility versus accuracy. The reflections section meanwhile encompasses the experience of international students studying in China and two articles on academic writing, the first on the issue of coherence and cohesion, the second about whether Chinese students demonstrate "indirectness", as opposed to coherence and cohesion, in their writing. These are followed by ETiC's usual mix of reviews, conferences and calls for papers.

Issue 7's main theme will be "language assessments and testing" (see call for papers, page 53), although submissions on any topic related to English Teaching in China will also be welcome via [etic@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:etic@xjtlu.edu.cn). As ETiC's policy is to accept submissions in any variety of English, emphasising intelligibility, this issue should be an interesting one!

One further note is due: we, Amanda and Mark, are standing down and handing over to two energetic and capable new Editors, Samantha Ng and Jonathan Culbert. We have enjoyed steering the journal in what we believe is an upward direction. It now has an expert Editorial Board as well as committed teams reviewing, copy editing, promoting, translating, designing and maintaining the web site. We would like to thank one and all for their contributions to English Teaching in China and wish the new Editors every success.

Outgoing Editors  
*Amanda and Mark*



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# Intercultural L2 Teaching: Enhancing Intercultural Interactions at Home and Abroad

Jane Jackson



**Jane Jackson** (PhD, OISE/U of Toronto) is Professor in the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She has had teaching and research experience in Canada, the United States, Oman, Egypt, China, England, and Hong Kong. Her research interests include intercultural communication, language and identity, and education abroad. With the support of competitive research grants, she has been investigating the language and (inter)cultural learning of international exchange students and designing research-inspired interventions in education abroad learning. Recent books include *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication* (Routledge, 2014), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (Routledge, 2012) (editor), *Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), and *Language, Identity, and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives* (Equinox, 2008). Jane is the recipient of the 2013 Education Award at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

珍妮·杰克逊（博士，多伦多OISE/ U），香港中文大学英语系教授，具有在加拿大、美国、阿曼、埃及、中国、英国及香港的教学和科研经历。其研究兴趣包括跨文化交际，语言和身份以及留学教育。依托竞争性研究项目的基金支持，她一直在研究国际交换学生的语言和（跨）文化学习，并根据研究设计了针对国外学习的干预措施。近期著作包括《语言和跨文化交际简介》（Routledge出版社，2014），《劳特利奇语言和跨文化交际手册》（Routledge出版社，2012）（主编），《跨文化之旅：从研究到海外居住》（Palgrave Macmillan出版社，2010），以及《语言，身份，和留学：社会文化视角》（Equinox出版社，2008年）。2013年获香港中文大学教育奖。

As internationalization efforts intensify in China, the number of incoming international exchange students is on the rise, and a growing number of local university students are pursuing at least some of their education in other countries. According to UNESCO, China was the greatest exporter of study abroad students in 2012. Among the 694,400 Chinese nationals who were studying abroad, 210,452 were in the United States (UNESCO, 2013). Nearly all of the outgoing international exchange students study in a second language (L2), with the majority taking courses in English in an English-speaking country. With more institutions of higher education signing international exchange agreements, the number of outgoing semester and year abroad students from China will continue to increase in the next few years. There are also large

numbers of students who are joining L2 immersion programs or other study abroad schemes with a shorter duration (e.g., several weeks). This article aims to prompt readers to reflect on the design and delivery of study abroad programs, and argues for intercultural language education to optimize and extend sojourn learning.

It is often assumed that L2 students who study abroad will experience considerable growth in host language proficiency and intercultural sensitivity, but what does the research tell us? A current investigation of the language and intercultural learning of more than 1,700 outgoing international exchange students from Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese universities has challenged these assumptions. While some participants experience gains in L2 self-efficacy (e.g.,

confidence in using English) and intercultural awareness, others have a ‘bubble experience’ abroad and do not acquire either a higher level of intercultural sensitivity or L2 proficiency. Finding intercultural interactions confounding, contrary to their expectations, sojourners may spend most of their time with co-nationals, gaining little exposure to the host language in social situations (Jackson et al., 2014). Similar findings with other populations have led to an appeal for more research that investigates what actually happens on stays abroad (e.g., Kinginger, 2009, 2013; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Many recent studies have shown that advanced proficiency in the host language (e.g., a high TOEFL score) does not correlate with an advanced level of intercultural competence, that is, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who have a different cultural background (Jackson, 2014). For example, L2 speakers of English may have an adequate grasp of English grammar and vocabulary but little understanding of pragmatics, the appropriate use of a language in specific situations and cultural contexts (LoCastro, 2003; Thomas, 1984; van Compernelle, 2014). Limited sociopragmatic awareness can make it difficult to initiate and sustain meaningful intercultural friendships, and this can negatively impact L2 attitudes and learning. The use of avoidance strategies reduces L2 contact, and this can limit growth in intercultural understanding as well as L2 proficiency.

At present, most students in China who join study abroad programs receive little or no pre-sojourn preparation, and many are inadequately prepared for social and academic life in an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environment. English language teachers can play a vital role in changing this (see also Lee, this issue). Intercultural language education can impact the quality of the learning that takes place on stays abroad and also enhance L2 intercultural interactions on home soil. Even ‘advanced’ L2 speakers who achieve satisfactory results on L2 proficiency tests can benefit from L2 courses that center on intercultural elements (e.g., informal discourse in intercultural interactions), provided the curriculum is tailored to their needs.

The call to incorporate cultural elements into L2 teaching is not new (Alred et al., 2003; Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Diaz, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Recognizing that L2

proficiency alone is inadequate in today’s increasingly interconnected world, more applied linguists and education policy makers are recommending that L2 teachers integrate a cultural component into their curricula. In particular, there is now much more awareness that successful intercultural L2 communication requires knowledge of the connections between language and culture and the various ways in which language can be used to negotiate meanings in intercultural situations (Byram, 2012; Jackson, 2014; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 2012). Instead of focusing solely on the teaching of linguistic codes (e.g., grammar, vocabulary), today’s L2 teachers are encouraged to draw attention to the pragmatic, sociocultural, and interpretative components of intercultural competence.

With foreign language educators in mind, Michael Byram (1997) devised a model of intercultural communicative competence. In the first part of the model, he cited the following *linguistic* elements as characteristic of an interculturally competent L2 speaker:

- **Linguistic competence:** the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language.
- **Sociolinguistic competence:** the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor--whether native speaker or not--meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor.
- **Discourse competence:** the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes. (p. 48)

The second part of this framework identifies five *savoirs* or components that are linked to the *cultural* dimension of intercultural competence.

- **Intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*)** – curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about others’ cultures and belief about one’s own intercultural attitudes.

- **Knowledge (*savoirs*)** – of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and an interlocutor’s country.
- **Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*):** the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own.
- **Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/ faire*):** the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and to operate this knowledge in real-time communication.
- **Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*):** the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries. (Byram et al., 2002, pp. 12-13)

This model raises awareness of the importance of paying attention to multiple linguistic *and* cultural dimensions in L2 teaching and learning. What are the implications for intercultural language education in China and the preparation of L2 students for intercultural interactions both at home and abroad?

First, it is important to recognize that the specific aims, content, and activities of intercultural language courses will need to vary depending on the proficiency level and intercultural sensitivity of the participants. Drawing on empirical research, intercultural L2 teaching can foster more awareness of the complex connection between language, culture, and identity. As self-awareness is a core component in intercultural competence, students can be prompted to describe and reflect on their cultural background, language attitudes/use, communication style, and preferred self-identities, as well as their attitudes towards people from other cultures. For example, students who have an intermediate or advanced level of L2 proficiency may write a language and cultural identity essay or journal entries in which they discuss the impact of the socialization process and their intercultural interactions, if any, on their self-identities, language learning/usage, and perceptions of people who have a different linguistic and cultural background.

Guided reflection and introspection (e.g., journal writing, discussions) can lead to more

critical awareness of intercultural behavior, or what Byram (1997) refers to as *critical s’engager*. L2 educators can provide students with a framework to help students make sense of cultural differences (e.g. communication styles, nonverbal codes, values, beliefs). By developing the skills of observation, description, interpretation, and analysis, participants can gradually resist the natural temptation to stereotype and quickly label unfamiliar behaviors as ‘weird’ or ‘impolite’ (Jackson, 2014; Nam, 2012).

In pre-sojourn courses, the curriculum for intercultural language courses could address such issues as language and culture learning strategies, language/culture shock and coping mechanisms, cultural variations in sociopragmatic norms and communication styles, and the dangers of stereotyping, among others (Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014). Explicit instruction in language and culture learning strategies and sociopragmatic elements can help students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to manage language and culture shock and initiate/sustain intercultural relationships. Some materials may be culture-general, focusing more broadly on the intercultural knowledge and skills that can enhance communication and adjustment in a new environment. If a group will sojourn in the same speech community, context-specific linguistic and cultural dimensions may be incorporated into the curriculum (e.g., host culture knowledge, instruction on sociopragmatic norms in the host language) to help the participants make the most of their stay abroad.

Ideally, guided critical reflection should continue once the students are in the host country. In L2 immersion programs, regular on-site debriefing sessions may provide a safe haven for students to freely discuss their L2/ intercultural experiences. The facilitator may field questions about the host language and environment, and encourage the participants to view intercultural situations from multiple perspectives. Sharing sessions, in class or online, can foster personal growth and empower students to take a more active role in the host environment (e.g., initiate L2 interactions). Sojourners may be prompted to describe, interpret, and evaluate their L2 experiences in diary entries, open-ended

surveys, and/or e-journals or blogs (Jackson, 2010; Nam, 2012; Paige et al., 2006). L2 students who are participating in international exchange programs could be encouraged to reflect on their experiences and share their new understandings in essays that are made available online for future sojourners. Reflection and writing can heighten awareness of the L2 environment and the potential impact of attitudes, behavior, and positioning on intercultural relations.

In some L2 study abroad programs, it may be possible to build in experiential activities that require sustained intercultural/L2 contact in the host environment. With adequate pre-sojourn preparation, even short-term sojourners can carry out small-scale projects (e.g., ethnographic tasks) that require close observation of a cultural scene and informal, L2 conversations with host nationals (Jackson, 2006). If sufficient scaffolding and ongoing support are provided, projects of this nature can help L2 sojourners acquire a sense of belonging in the host environment, which can facilitate language and intercultural learning and adjustment.

Near the end of their stay abroad, L2 sojourners should be encouraged to take stock of their learning. When possible, debriefing sessions in the host environment may prompt participants to divulge their re-entry expectations and concerns. They may also write diary/blog entries or respond to open-ended questions that encourage them to revisit their L2/intercultural experiences and assess their sojourn learning (e.g., linguistic, intercultural). For those who are in exchange programs in different parts of the world, the home institution may prompt the participants to complete online reflective questionnaires at strategic intervals (e.g., shortly after their arrival, mid-sojourn, near the end of their stay, on re-entry) or submit reflective entries to a study abroad writing contest. These activities can draw attention to L2 use/attitudes and promote more language and intercultural awareness.

Returnees often receive no support and quickly ‘shoebox’ their international/L2 experience, as they become re-immersed in their L1; valuable opportunities for L2/intercultural learning are then lost. Once the students are back on the home campus, debriefings can stimulate deeper reflection on

sojourn learning and the process of re-entry. In intercultural language education programs, students can be encouraged to assess their L2/intercultural awareness and set realistic goals for further self-enhancement (e.g. L2/culture learning). Ideally, intercultural communicative competence should be nurtured before, during, and after a sojourn.

While this article has primarily focused on the intercultural language education of student sojourners, the theoretical framework and many of the ideas could be incorporated into courses designed for L2 students who will remain on the home campus. Due to globalization and internationalization trends, more and more students in China now have opportunities to interact in English with people who have a different linguistic and cultural background. As noted by Kirkpatrick (2014) in a previous issue of ETiC, speakers of English as an international language (e.g., expatriates from other parts of Asia, incoming international exchange students) “represent excellent opportunities for speakers of Chinese English to engage in intercultural communication and develop their use of English as a lingua franca” (p. 5).

Ultimately, intercultural language education can enhance intercultural, L2 interactions both in the home environment and abroad. Through carefully planned and sequenced activities, English language teachers in China can help propel students to higher levels of English language proficiency and intercultural competence. This stance has clear implications for the preparation and professional support of L2 teachers. To move past basic discussions about cultural festivals and traditions requires intercultural knowledge and awareness as well as linguistic competence. To meet the challenges of our increasingly globalized world, much more attention needs to be devoted to intercultural discourse, identity, and other cultural elements in L2 teacher education programs in China and elsewhere.

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# Speaking with... David Livermore

Interview by Mark Critchley



David Livermore PhD is a thought leader in cultural intelligence (CQ) and global leadership and the author of the recent book, *The Cultural Intelligence Difference* (2011). His book, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* (2009), was named a bestseller in business by The Washington Post. He is president and partner at the Cultural Intelligence Center in East Lansing, Michigan and a visiting research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Previously, David spent 20 years in leadership positions with a variety of non-profit organizations around the world and taught in universities. A frequent speaker and adviser to leaders in Fortune 500s, non-profits and governments, he has worked in over 100 countries across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. [davelivermore@culturalQ.com](mailto:davelivermore@culturalQ.com)

戴夫·利弗莫尔是文化智能（CQ）和全球领导力研究方面的一位思想领袖，也是新作，《文化智能差异》（2011年）的作者。他的《用文化智能领导》（2009），被华盛顿邮报评为商界最畅销的书。戴夫现任密歇根州东兰辛文化智能中心的总裁兼合伙人，也是新加坡南洋理工大学的客座研究员。此前20年间，他在世界各地不同类型的非营利性组织担任领导职务，并在大学任教。他经常作为财富500强企业，非营利组织和政府领导人的发言人和顾问，曾于100多个国家工作，横跨美洲，非洲，亚洲，澳洲和欧洲。

**Let's start with a question that all our readers should be asking themselves. Why is cultural intelligence so important when teaching English to speakers of other languages?**

Well, in most Western classrooms students are rewarded for speaking up, asking questions, and participating in classroom discussions. Conversely, in most Asian classrooms, students are taught to listen carefully, respect the teacher, and only speak when invited to do so. So in the U.S. for instance, *struggle* is an indicator that a student isn't cutting it. Smart kids barely study, finish their work first and still get 'A's; and the high achievers are asked to come to the front of the class to demonstrate their insights, while struggling students are dealt with discreetly to ensure their self-esteem stays intact. In China however, struggle is viewed as a predictable part of the learning process. A student is allowed to struggle because it's a chance to show he or she has what it takes to resolve a problem by persevering through it. The student who can't figure out a problem is

asked to come to the front of the class to work it out in front of peers.

These are gross over-generalizations, but if you're teaching away from home, you know that these kinds of educational differences are the tip of the iceberg for what you experience in the classroom. The importance of learning how to be true to your own teaching style and values while also adapting effectively to your students' personalities, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds is essential. That's almost self-evident... but research now demonstrates that your effectiveness teaching across cultures can be pinned upon something we call your CQ, or your cultural intelligence quotient. Cultural intelligence is "the capability to function effectively in a variety of national, ethnic, and organizational cultures", as referred to in my 2011 book *The Cultural Intelligence Difference*, for example.

**Your body of work shows a rare talent for translating huge amounts of research data into practical tools that are now being applied successfully in all manner of educational and leadership contexts.**

Thank you. I'm grateful to be part of this work, which to date includes academics from more than 50 countries and articles published in over 100 A-level journals. Business professors Chris Earley and Soon Ang built upon existing research on multiple intelligences (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986) to develop the conceptual model of cultural intelligence. Based on that framework, Ang collaborated with Linn Van Dyne to create a twenty-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), which they developed and validated to measure CQ across multiple cultures (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). That initial research, combined with the work of countless others, points to a number of promising results for ESL teachers who improve their CQ. See *The Handbook of Cultural Intelligence* for a fuller picture on the research, or visit the RESEARCH tab on our website [www.culturalQ.com](http://www.culturalQ.com).

Just as emotional intelligence helps you interact effectively with students based upon the cues they send about their emotional state, cultural intelligence allows you to have that kind of insight when you're a cultural outsider. A great deal of what it takes to detect and respond in light of the emotions of a student presumes you know how to interpret their nonverbal behaviors and the subtext beneath their words. That's difficult if not impossible when dealing with someone from an unfamiliar culture. The beauty of cultural intelligence, however, is that it picks up where intuition and skills like emotional intelligence leave off. It allows you to have the same kind of practical sensibility when interacting with students and colleagues who come from different cultural backgrounds than you.

The question that drives our research on cultural intelligence is this: *Why do some teachers easily and effectively adapt their views and behaviors cross-culturally and others don't?* What factors explain the difference? The research reveals four capabilities that consistently emerge among those who are culturally intelligent.

1. **CQ Drive:** Your level of interest, drive and motivation to adapt to the cultures present in your classroom.

2. **CQ Knowledge:** Your overall understanding of cultural similarities and differences.
3. **CQ Strategy:** Your awareness and ability to consciously plan in light of students' cultural backgrounds.
4. **CQ Action:** Your ability to adapt (and *not* adapt) based upon what's most effective while teaching across cultures.

Our CQ Assessments measure your skills in each of these four areas. These have been academically validated (see Matsumoto and Hwang, 2013) to accurately predict your level of effectiveness teaching in a culturally diverse environment.

### So... what does it look like to teach English in China with cultural intelligence?

As many of your readers know, a lot of ESL students are most comfortable learning through rote memorization or by mastering mathematical formulas and grammatical rules. That doesn't necessarily mean they won't benefit from other methodologies that you might view as more effective. But teaching with cultural intelligence means you begin with where your students are most comfortable and then find ways to strategically prepare them for alternative approaches. For example, if you're going to use games, a simulation, or an approach where students role-play a conversation in front of the class, give them an opportunity first to develop their confidence by memorizing material, practicing privately, and working with a peer group. Teaching with cultural intelligence means you adapt your teaching style and content based upon your students' cultural background but that you also must retain your personal style for what makes you authentic and effective in the classroom.

There's a great deal of research behind the kinds of strategies that are most effective for teaching with cultural intelligence. And the good news is, anyone can teach with cultural intelligence. But it's not automatic. It requires an intentional effort to assess and improve your skills and a developmental plan for adjusting the way you teach. But with a conscious effort, you'll find yourself becoming more confident and comfortable in the classroom.

Thanks for this whistle-stop tour of a discipline that is growing exponentially in importance as globalization gains pace.

It's a pleasure. To learn more about cultural intelligence assessments, research and books, or to attend an upcoming CQ Certification program, ETIC readers can visit [www.culturalQ.com](http://www.culturalQ.com)

### Further reading

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**Mark Critchley** has taught languages since 1984, and worked as an adviser to businesses and government for twenty years before joining XJTLU. His key interests are creative writing and Business English.

# Listening to Student Silence in Transnational Education

Richard Galletly & Chanzi Bao

**Abstract.** The purpose of this study was to investigate the influences of culture, gender, pedagogy, pragmatism and province of origin on student silent behaviour (SSB) in transnational education (TNE) in China. Data was collected from a survey of over eight hundred undergraduate business students and interviews of their EAP teachers. Findings indicate that SSB is influenced by pragmatism, pedagogy, culture, student province of origin, and to some extent, student gender. This original empirical study extends the understanding of SSB in the classroom, and contributes toward improved teaching practices in TNE. Further research might investigate the effects of student province of origin.

**摘要.** 本研究旨在探究在中国跨国教育（TNE）中，文化、性别、教学法、实用目的及生源地对学生沉默行为（SSB）的影响。这些数据来自对八百多名商学院的本科生的调查，以及对其学术用途英语（EAP）教师访谈。研究结果表明，学生沉默行为（SSB）主要受实用目的、教学法、文化和生源地的影响，也在一定程度上与学生相关。此原创性实证研究扩展了对课堂上学生沉默行为（SSB）的理解，有助于改善跨国教育（TNE）中的教学实践。然而，关于生源地的影响还有待深入。

## Introduction

Recent years have seen a growth in the higher education (HE) exported from English speaking countries, known as transnational education (TNE), particularly in China (Zhuang, 2009). However, cultural differences and educational traditions mean that the reality for educators and learners alike may continue to be challenging (Zhuang & Tang, 2012). The Chinese educational system is said to be teacher-centred, emphasizing knowledge accumulation (Nield, 2004 cited in Zhuang & Tang, 2012), whereas critical thinking, group discussion and independent learning are more valued in the UK (Zhuang, 2009; Leon, 2000 cited in Zhuang & Tang, 2012, p. 227). Chinese students are not well prepared for a communicative approach, and may be dissatisfied with TNE as a result (Zhuang & Tang, 2012, p. 227). It has been argued that we should seek to understand their behaviour as a reaction to the western higher education environment, and not be tempted by cultural stereotyping (Grimshaw, 2007, p. 308). With this preliminary study, we attempt to see beyond culture by investigating further causes of student silent behaviour (SSB) in TNE, with the aim of enhancing student learning experiences.

King (2013) proposed a taxonomy of the reasons for silent behaviours in class,

suggesting: the ‘silence of disengagement’; ‘silence of teacher-centred methods’; ‘silence of non-verbal activities’; ‘silence of confusion’; and ‘the silence of hypersensitivity to others’ (p. 338). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) describe the silent classroom as a ‘sociocultural maze’ of contextual issues, within which the student is a ‘pawn’ to the larger forces (p. 7). This study contributes to the understanding of SSB in HE by investigating these forces on the classroom ‘system’ (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007); it also explores the mediating effects of province of origin and gender.

## Theory and hypotheses

### Culture

The Chinese can be silent to avoid criticism, ridicule, rejection or punishment, simply for having different opinions, to win approval, acceptance or appreciation (Yang, 1993 cited in Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002, p. 73). Before speaking, they may need to make sure their opinions are “safely the same as those of others” (Yang, 1993 cited in Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002, p. 73) and will seek to establish interpersonal harmony by protecting each other’s “face” (Hu, 1944 cited in Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 171; Yu, 2011; Fang, 2003, p. 363). Chinese students may also be silent due

to a combination of fears: not having the correct answers (Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003, p. 60); making mistakes or supplying incorrect answers; fear of others' conceptions about their competence (Goffman, 1967; Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003, p. 60); and the adverse judgement of others (Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 296). Chinese students will evaluate their answers before speaking, self-censor any incorrect answers and strive to conform to socially expected norms (Qi, 2011, p. 291; Yu, 2003). However, these characteristics may not be consistent across Chinese society, and to group one nation together as a single culture would be to assume cultural values respect national boundaries; findings indicate they do not (Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Kwon, 2012). As the majority of students in the cohort sample were Chinese, the effects of Chinese culture must be considered to be a factor in their behaviour.

**Hypothesis 1** Culture is positively related to SSB in TNE in China.

### **Gender**

Hoare and Butcher (2008) found the effects of "face" to be much stronger for male Chinese consumers; for example, they do not wish to be criticized in public (p. 167). Chinese men are said to be expected to moderate their emotions at all times (Davis et al., 2012, p. 237) affecting their communication. It is likely that female students will also adapt their behaviour according to cultural norms and interactional styles (Talbot, 2010). Chinese women will be affected by the "cultural landscape" within which they live, which determines access to education (Wang, 2010) and family orientation (Huang, 2013). Confucian traditions may accentuate unequal gender relationships in China, and despite the levelling effects of Marxism on gender equality, increasing inequalities have returned (Sung & Pascall, 2014, p. 187).

**Hypothesis 2** Student gender moderates the effects of Chinese culture on SSB in TNE in China.

### **Pedagogy**

Teachers in Chinese schools are said to be authoritarian, and students "quiet and obedient", rarely challenging their teachers since they are assumed to have "deep

knowledge" and to be able to answer all the students' questions (Sit, 2013, p. 37). Chinese students are also said to be passive learners, anxious to cover the entire syllabus – so as to not miss anything – and to be sure of the correct answers (Sit, 2013, p. 38). This may be misperceived as non-participation, but it is more likely that Chinese learners are employing a deep approach to learning and will ask well-considered questions after a long reflection; for example, after class (Sit, 2013, p. 38).

**Hypothesis 3** Pedagogic history affects SSB in TNE in China.

### **Pragmatism**

Silence can indicate a student's right to conceal thoughts, choose words carefully, avoid embarrassment, or a "preservation of privacy" (Bruneau, 1973, pp. 18 & 29). It is not a "void" (Tannen, 1985), but one of the "great arts of conversation" (Cicero cited in Ephratt, 2008). Silence can be a chance for personal exploration or a desire for independence or isolation (Kurzon, 2007), mirroring the Chinese saying: "One should speak only if the quality of what one has to say is greater than the quality of the silence that one interrupts" (Bilmes, 1994; Ephratt, 2008, p. 1924). Silences may contain more meaning than speech (Ephratt, 2008), or may simply be a choice not to act, since action is deemed unnecessary (Fitzpatrick, Davey, & Dai, 2012).

**Hypothesis 4** Pragmatism is positively related to SSB in TNE in China.

### **Province of origin**

Great social and regional inequalities exist in the Chinese education system due to rural migration and rural poverty (Zhiyong, 2010). Chinese minorities will also suffer from difficulties with language of tuition, and this will affect their access to higher education (Zhiyong, 2010). Also, since there are likely to be varieties of cultural effects within the national boundaries of China (Tung & Verbeke, 2010), a student's province of origin might be expected to have a moderating effect on their behaviour.

**Hypothesis 5** Province of origin affects SSB in TNE in China.

## Method

### Sample and procedures

This single case study took place at a Sino-UK joint venture TNE university in Suzhou, China. Participants were taking part in a four-year undergraduate business programme. Business students were selected since theirs is the largest cohort and they are generally more articulate. A total of 605 students participated in this study, aged from 18 to 22 years old, including 428 Females (70.7%) and 177 Males (29.3%). 586 questionnaires were completed from a sample of 681 (response rate: 86.0%).

An initial pilot study was carried out to test the questionnaire, and amendments were made based on students' focus group discussions. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the students' English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutors; students were told the questionnaires were anonymous and their names would not be associated with their responses.

Four native Chinese EAP tutors of the business student sample were selected for interview. These tutors were chosen for their insider knowledge of Chinese culture and the Chinese education system. Chinese students were purposely selected from the sample for the test of student 'province of origin'.

### Measures

Participants were asked to think of a recent situation when they were expected to speak, but remained silent. This approach could be criticized since, without a stimulus, students might fabricate an event (Gass, 2001, p. 227).  
Recollection of a recent event without a

stimulus for recall could also be objected to, since accurate recall cannot be guaranteed, especially where emotions are concerned and furthermore, reliability decreases over time (Bloom, 1954 cited in Gass, 2001; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). However, producing video stimuli would have been impractical for a survey of this scale, and it was felt that students could recall a recent event reliably.

Students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of 24 statements provided in Chinese using a four point Likert scale. Following the pilot study, adaptations were made to the questionnaire. Questions were derived from a literature review (Hwang et al., 2002; King, 2013; Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003) to investigate the hypothesized "attractors" (de Bot et al., 2007; King, 2011). Open-ended responses were invited using a space for "additional comments".

Following the pilot study, the middle item "neither agree nor disagree" was removed. It was felt this omission would be appropriate for Chinese students' culture, despite criticisms of this approach (Adelson & McCoach, 2010; Leung, 2011). A Likert 4 point scale was used to record responses from 1 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree". Sample questionnaire items include "I was avoiding criticism by being silent" and "I didn't want to invite ridicule" (Yang, 1992 cited in Hwang et al., 2002). A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.849 indicates a sufficiently high level of internal consistency (Cohen et al., 2011). The results were analysed using ANOVA and t-tests.

## Results

M	SD	Survey statement/ (source)	Category
2.80	.73	"I was thinking of what to say, which took a long time" (King, 2013).	Pragmatic
2.77	.79	"I am used to a different teaching method at school" (King, 2013).	Pedagogic
2.72	.78	"I was afraid of embarrassing myself in front of other people" (Yang, 1993 cited in Hwang et al., 2002).	Culture
2.64	.69	"I hoped somebody else would answer the question" (King, 2013).	Pragmatic

N=545. Scored such that 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree

**Table 1.** Mean responses indicating student agreement

**Culture**

Mean responses to the survey revealed that students agreed they were silent because they were “afraid of embarrassing [themselves] in front of other people” (Mean = 2.72, SD = .78), a cultural factor (Hwang et al., 2002), see Table 1. Students’ written responses also reflected the influence of cultural norms, including one of many similar examples: “I don’t want to be high-key or conspicuous”. Interviews with Chinese cultural insiders also cited strong cultural influences in the classroom as leading to SSB in Chinese students, supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Student gender and culture**

A significant correlation was found between student gender and the cultural statement: “I wanted to make sure my opinions were the same as other people’s before disclosing them” ( $F(1,602) = 5.26, p = 0.02$ ) – female students were more likely to agree. Not all cultural questions correlated with gender

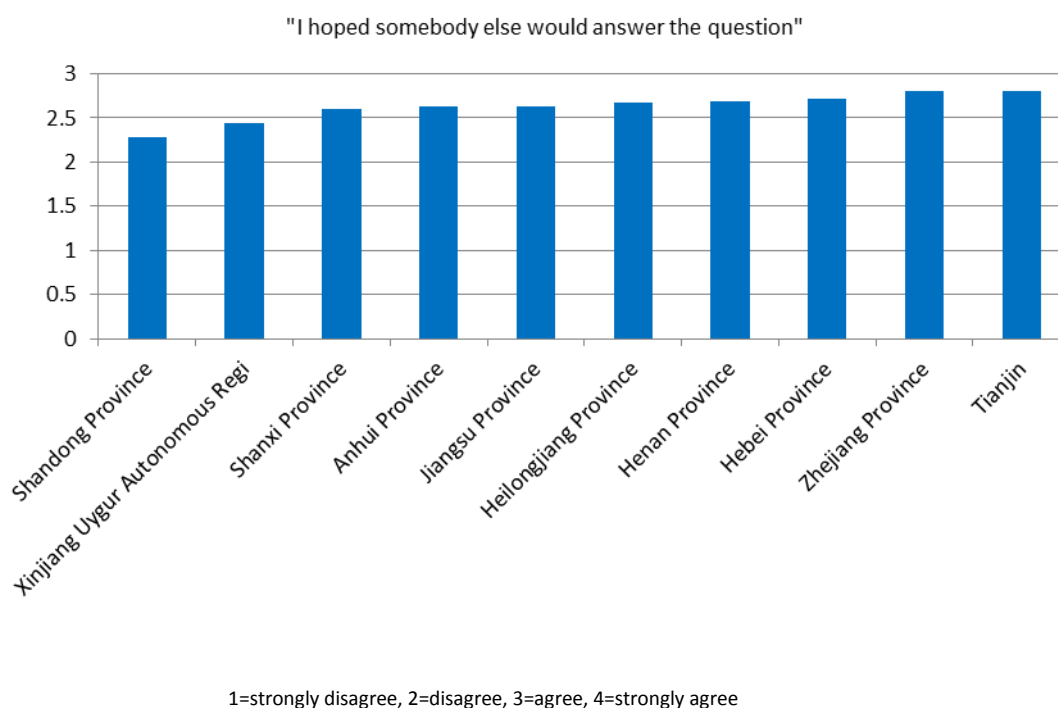
however, and there was no significant correlation between gender and cultural questions grouped together as one category. Therefore Hypothesis 2 was only partially supported, with one cultural statement.

**Pedagogy and pragmatism**

Students generally agreed they were silent for pedagogic reasons, being “used to a different teaching method at school” (Mean = 2.77, SD = .79). Students’ written responses cited pedagogic influences, for example “maybe we need [to] get used to the new teaching style” and “I don’t know what kind of answers that the teacher wants,” supporting Hypothesis 3. Students generally agreed with the pragmatic statement “I hoped somebody else would answer the question” (Mean = 2.64, SD = .69), and their written responses indicated SSB due to pragmatism, for example: “Silence just means [I am] preparing my best answer”, supporting Hypothesis 4.

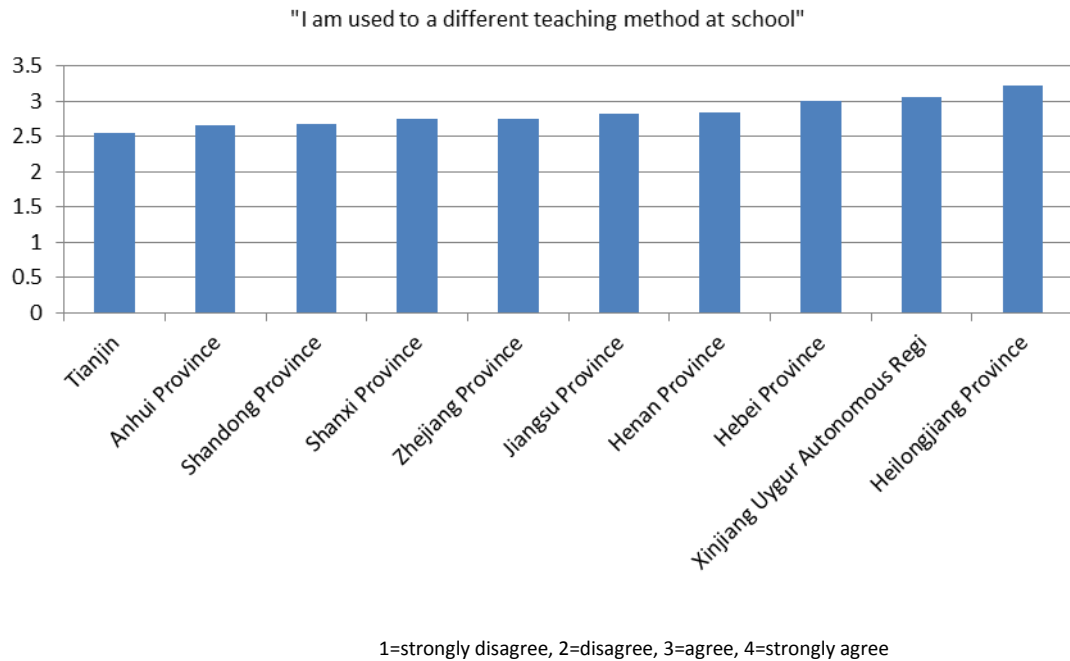
	F	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	p
CULTURE	0.72	32	555	0.87
PEDAGOGIC	1.80	32	555	0.01
PRAGMATIC	1.57	32	555	0.03

**Table 2.** ANOVA correlations: student province of origin.



**Figure 1.** SSB due to pragmatism and province of origin.





**Figure 2.** SSB due to pedagogy and province of origin.

### **Student province of origin**

Students were found to have different pragmatic reasons for silent behaviour according to their province of origin, as shown in Table 2 ( $F(32, 555) = 1.57, p = 0.03$ ). Analysis of student province of origin means and their pedagogic and pragmatic SSB revealed significant variation between the Chinese provinces. Students from Tianjin province generally agreed with the *pragmatic* statement "I hoped somebody else would answer the question" (King, 2013), see Figure 1; students from Xinjiang generally agreed with the *pedagogic* statement "I am used to a different teaching method at school" (King, 2013), see Figure 2. Findings support Hypothesis 5 with statistically significant correlations between student province of origin and both pragmatic ( $p=0.03$ ) and pedagogic ( $p=0.01$ ) silent behaviour.

### **Discussion**

Based on student comments and cultural insider interviews, Chinese culture is likely to have a strong effect on SSB in the classroom. Chinese cultural insiders commented that students will remain silent to avoid attracting attention in an attempt to be "modest" and to avoid "negative feedback". Students' comments supported these predictions, writing they "just want to act like other students" and to avoid being "conspicuous".

The Chinese students in our study agreed they fear the social embarrassment normally associated with Chinese culture (Yang, 1993 cited in Hwang et al., 2002). Significant correlations were not found for "face" effects and gender (Hoare & Butcher, 2008), indicating Chinese males are not as afraid of public embarrassment as might have been expected. In contrast, gender effects were identified for Chinese female students, who stated they strive to make sure their opinions were consistent with other people's, supporting the findings of Yang (1993 cited in Hwang et al., 2002). This indicates the moderating effects of Marxism on Chinese society may have reversed, reinstating Confucian traditional gender roles (Sung & Pascall, 2014, p. 187).

A student's pedagogic history and pragmatism will also affect their silent behaviour in the TNE classroom. Findings indicate that students may be used to a "different teaching method" at school (King, 2011; 2013) and that inequalities exist between the Chinese provinces (Zhiyong, 2010). A student's pedagogic history may cause them to ask "what kind of answers the tutor wants", feeling that teachers should "explain the answers in detail or provide the possible answers", depending on their province of origin. Students who were silent for pragmatic reasons "thinking of what to say", hoping "somebody else would answer

the question”, “preparing [their] best answer”, or reporting the “advantages [of] silence” in class, will have a profound influence on classroom communication (King, 2013), and it is suggested that students from selected provinces may require enhanced support. These findings reflect the challenges highlighted by Zhuang & Tang (2012), and perhaps indicate the consequences of regional sociocultural inequalities (Zhiyong, 2010).

As dynamic state theory emphasizes, small movements in the system can effect large changes in behaviour (de Bot et al., 2007). These changes can be brought about by the teacher in the language classroom through an understanding of the sociocultural landscape (King, 2013). As teachers will have a great deal of impact on SSB in the classroom, counteracting (or accentuating) the influences of pragmatism, pedagogy and culture, and teaching practices which counteract these effects should be shared.

## Conclusion

This preliminary study shows how student silent behaviour is influenced by the silent “attractors” (de Bot et al., 2007) of culture, pedagogy and pragmatism, moderated by student province of origin and student gender. Teaching approaches which encourage a communicative classroom are recommended via an understanding of the sociocultural “landscape” (Wang, 2010). This understanding may allow teachers to make effective changes to the classroom “system” (de Bot et al., 2007). Encouraging students to speak without fear of recrimination in a risk-free environment can empower them with the freedom to make mistakes, which has been termed a ‘democratisation’ of the classroom (van Lier, 2004; Whiteside & Barclay, 2013). This study provides a framework for understanding the silent classroom. Future investigations may include classroom observations, student interviews and longitudinal studies. Enhanced support and teaching practices should be developed and shared with the wider HE community.

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**Richard Galletly** is a Tutor of English for Academic Purposes at XJTLU. Previously he was a Teaching Associate at the University of Birmingham and Sessional Lecturer at Aston University.

[Richard.Galletly@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Richard.Galletly@xjtlu.edu.cn)



**Chanzi Bao** is Associate Professor in HRM and FT MBA director at XJTLU. Previously she was a lecturer in HRM at Robert Gordon University, UK.

[Chanzi.Bao@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Chanzi.Bao@xjtlu.edu.cn)

# Chinese Students' Writing in English: Using Visuals and Lists

Maria Leedham

**Abstract.** In the UK, Chinese students now comprise the largest international student group; yet, little is known about their university-level writing. This study draws on a large corpus of undergraduate student writing from UK universities. It explores Chinese students' written assignments in English, contrasting these with assignments from British students across a range of university disciplines. The paper points to the L1 Chinese students' higher use of visuals, lists and formulae in their discipline-specific writing when compared to the comparison group of L1 English students.

**摘要.** 目前, 中国留学生已构成了英国最大的国际学生群体。然而, 关于中国留学生在大学层次上的写作情况却鲜为人知。基于英国大学本科生的写作语料, 本研究分析了中国留学生的书面作业, 并与不同学科的英国大学生的作业进行比较。文章指出, 就学科内写作而言, 同英国以英语为母语的大学生相比, 中国学生使用图型、列表和公式的频率更高。

## Introduction: Chinese students in the UK

The number of international students in the UK has been rising rapidly in recent years and currently stands at over 600,000 per year, estimated to be worth 8.5 billion pounds to the UK economy (The British Council, 2013). Within the group of all non-UK domiciled students, the single greatest provider of international students to the UK is the PRC, with Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan also among the top ten non-EU senders. Hence, Chinese people now comprise the largest single overseas student group in the UK with more than 105,000 Chinese students registered at all UK educational institutions in 2012 (The British Council, 2013), representing a year on year increase.

Once in the UK, Chinese students must adapt to the writing required, overcoming difficulties such as tutors' lack of articulation as to exactly what they require (Crème & Lea, 2003; Lillis, 1997); tutor and students' varied ideas of what a particular assignment entails (Lea, 2004); and different perceptions of what constitutes 'good writing' (Lillis & Turner, 2001). At university, assignments are framed within a particular discipline and, in contrast to previous assumptions of academic writing being a monolithic 'one size fits all', many researchers have emphasized how university students have to learn to write in ways prescribed by their discipline in order to have their voices recognized (Harwood & Hadley, 2004; Hewings, 1999). To achieve this goal, a high level

of competence in English language is required, including awareness of discipline-specific conventions (Santos, 2014).

Given the scale of the presence of Chinese students in UK universities and the difficulty of the task ahead of them, it might be expected that there would be a considerable body of corpus research into this group's academic writing at all levels. However, the majority of research studies are limited to the short argumentative essays within learner corpora (cf. Paquot, 2010) rather than the longer, discipline-specific writing at undergraduate or postgraduate level. In addition, most corpus studies on student writing contrast first language (L1) and second language (L2) student groups in terms of what is *missing* or *deficient* in the writing of the latter. ETiC is unusual in taking a stand against this deficit model and promoting a range of acceptability in language use (e.g. see Issue 5 on the acceptability of writing in English as a Lingua Franca [ELF]). Based on the findings from the current corpus study, this paper similarly proposes that researchers, lecturers and EAP tutors could consider expanding the notion of what constitutes 'good' student writing in order to encompass a range of intercultural styles.

The next section provides an overview of the data and methodology followed and the following section explores one aspect of the findings: the high use of visuals, lists and formulae by Chinese students.

## Data and methodology of corpus linguistics

The data for this study was extracted from the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). This corpus (or collection of texts) was collected between 2000 and 2008 at the universities of Oxford Brookes, Reading, Warwick and Coventry in the UK and comprises around 6.5 million words within approximately 2,900 student assignments from over 30 disciplines and four levels of study

(three undergraduate years and one Masters year). All writing in BAWE is deemed ‘proficient’ student writing, defined as graded assignments receiving the UK Honours degree classifications of Upper Second (‘merit’) or First (‘distinction’). The data was narrowed to texts from undergraduate L1 Chinese students in a range of disciplines (notably Biology, Economics, Engineering) whose secondary education was mainly in their home country. The same conditions were applied to the L1 English students, resulting in the corpora below.

	L1 Chinese corpus ‘Chi123’	L1 English corpus ‘Eng123’
Number of words	279,695	1,335,676
Number of texts	146	611
Number of students	45	70

**Table 1.** Number of words, texts and students per corpus  
(NB ‘Chi123’ denotes the Chinese corpus, undergraduate years 1, 2 and 3.)

The assignments extracted from the BAWE corpus are primarily investigated through the methodology of corpus linguistics. This enables the comparison of one corpus with another, larger, reference corpus: in this case the L1 Chinese corpus was compared with the larger L1 English corpus. The main means of exploring each dataset in the study was through the corpus linguistic technique of keyword analysis. ‘Keywords’ are those words or n-grams (two or more consecutive words) which occur statistically more frequently in a small corpus than in a larger ‘reference’ corpus, relative to the total number of words in each corpus. A keyword is thus a word which occurs with unusual frequency in a text, or “what the text ‘boils down to’” (Scott & Tribble, 2006, p.78), and as such offers some insight into the differences between two corpora. Many of the keywords uncovered were from semantically coherent areas, and these were grouped together into ‘key categories’.

Four key categories were uncovered through the keyword analysis:

1. connectors (e.g. *on the other hand, last but not least*);
2. informal items (e.g. *lots, a little bit*);

3. use of the first person plural (e.g. *we, we also need to*); and
4. references to data or visuals within the text (e.g. *the figure, according to the*).

For reasons of space, the remainder of this paper focuses on the final of these key categories (a description of the full study and findings are available in Leedham, 2011, 2015).

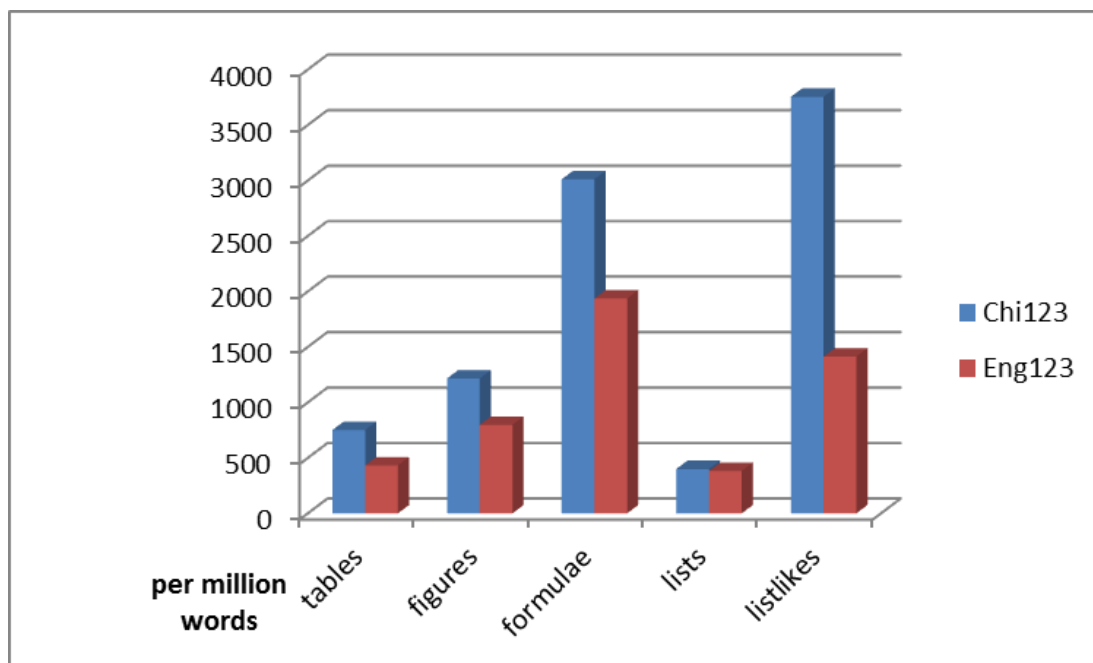
### Findings: High use of visuals, lists and formulae

Student use of lexical items relating to visuals, lists and formulae has not previously been reported on in the student writing literature. This category includes numbers (whether single digits or lengthy numerals), formulae (mathematical, chemical or other), and references or directives to data items (e.g. *according to the + figure/appendix/equation [or eq], refer to (the) + figure/table + [number]*). Here, a ‘table’ consists of any graphic presented using rows and columns while a ‘figure’ covers any graph, diagram, image, picture, or drawing. A ‘list’ is a regular list of noun groups or similar fragments of prose, whereas a ‘listlike’ is formatted as a list but the list items are given in complete sentences.

Examples of prose referring to the use of visuals are given below:

1. According to the program and *refer* to the *figure* 4.1.1, it is easy to find... (Chi123, Engineering).
2. As shown in *Figure* 3, IHG even shows a better performance than... (Chi123, HLTM).
3. *According to the* 3 sets of data calculated above... (Chi123, Food Science).

The existence of frequent references to visuals does not in itself mean the Chinese students use more of these features in their assignments than the English students: it could be that the former are simply naming and referring to external visuals using a small set of lexical items which thus appear many times and become keywords. The next step in the study was to count the number of tables, figures, formulae, lists and listlikes. This revealed that the Chinese students made greater use of all of these features than the British students (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Visuals and lists in the two corpora  
(Significantly greater use by Chinese students for all features except lists,  $p < .0001$ )

One possible explanation for this higher usage of visuals and lists is that employing a table, figure, list or listlike to present information in an assignment is an attractive option for Chinese students since it reduces the quantity of connected (L2) prose required. A great deal of information may be given succinctly in a table or figure, resulting in shorter wordcounts; similarly, lists and listlikes reduce the need for connecting chunks and again reduce the wordcount. More positive explanations for the differences are that visuals and lists are viable alternative means of giving the required information, that they do so concisely, and that they also help visual readers to process information.

Detailed exploration of writing within Biology, Economics and Engineering suggests that using visuals and lists are different, yet

equally acceptable, ways of writing assignments. In a follow-on interview study, lecturers in Biology, Economics and Engineering suggest that visuals and lists are highly favoured in these particular disciplines (see also Leedham, 2012). For example, one Biology lecturer commented that students should 'do whatever it [takes] to make it clearer... tables, pictures, dividing into subsections... whatever helps you'. This degree of flexibility allows for a wide range of variation in answering the assignment question, enabling students to present their data within a table if this is more appropriate, or to provide an image and prose in explaining the method they used in an experiment. An open-minded approach to the display of knowledge and use of a range of multimodal resources to persuade the reader was prevalent among the lecturers interviewed.

## Conclusion

The keyword analysis of the two student corpora suggested that the use of visuals and lists is a significant area of difference in the writing of L1 Chinese and L1 English students. Given the challenges involved in writing at undergraduate level for all students (e.g. uncertainties over the rubric, the wide range of genres required, the discipline specific lexis and disciplinary conventions required) and the additional difficulties for L2 students, it is unsurprising that a range of strategies are developed. Since the writing of both student groups has been judged by discipline specialists to be of a high standard, it seems that differences in the use of visuals and lists illustrate the broad range of acceptability of these features at undergraduate level.

Important features for discipline lecturers – and also EAP tutors – are a level of reflexivity in exploring the ‘taken-for-granted’ procedures and practices in order to demystify academia (Lillis, 2012, p. 245), as well as a flexible attitude in considering what might be acceptable within unfamiliar disciplines and genres (see Leedham, 2015, for further discussion). This open-mindedness moves beyond lexicogrammatical considerations (e.g. the acceptability, or choice, of passive or active voice) to also exploring assignments and multimodality (for instance, the acceptability of a table to display results or presenting a conclusion as a bulleted list). Breadth of vision allows tutors to recognise different ways of achieving the same end goal in writing, and to embrace the different cultural backgrounds L2 English students bring to their studies. It is hoped that this article can help in encouraging this process.

## Note

The data in this study come from the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, developed at the Universities of Warwick, Reading and Oxford Brookes under the directorship of Hilary Nesi and Sheena Gardner (formerly of the Centre for Applied Linguistics [previously called CELTE], Warwick), Paul Thompson (formerly of the Department of Applied Linguistics, Reading) and Paul Wickens (Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes), with funding from the ESRC (RES-000-23-0800).

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Maria Leedham is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the Open University, UK. The material in this article is taken from her recently-published book entitled 'Chinese Students' Writing in English'.

[Maria.leedham@open.ac.uk](mailto:Maria.leedham@open.ac.uk)





# Non-Native Writer (NNW) English Texts versus Native Writer (NW) English Texts: Differences in Intelligibility among Chinese Students

Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn and Ellen E. Touchstone

**Abstract.** With the increasing number of English learners in China, the question of which English they should be learning has begun to occupy the minds of many scholars as well as policy makers. The present study aims to ascertain whether a text written in NNW English for use in an executive education session is intelligible to its users and, hence, whether 'China English' and / or English with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) linguistic features can be used as a model for Chinese students in China rather than a Standard English model. The preliminary results of the study found that an authentic NNW text was as intelligible as a NW text.

**摘要:** 随着中国英语学习者人数的日益增加, 关于他们应该学习什么样的英语的问题已经开始为许多学者和政策制定者深度思考。本研究旨在探知“非英语本族语者作者”所写, 供企业高管教育培训项目使用的一篇英文文本是否为其使用者所理解, 并由此推断“中国英语”和/或具有“英语作为通用语”语言特点的英语, 而非“标准英语模式”是否可以在中国用作中国学生学习的模型。初步研究结果表明, “非英语本族语者作者”所写的真实英文文本和“英语本族语者作者”的文本具有同样的可理解性。

## Background

According to Wei and Su (2013), there were around 390 million learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in mainland China in 2006, based on China's first national survey of foreign language learning carried out in the early 2000s. With such, still increasing numbers, some scholars (He & Li, 2009, Jenkins, 2009, Kachru, 2011, Cook, 2011, Perrin, 2014a) question whether Chinese learners of English should be learning English to a Standard British or American English model or whether eventually China English and/or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) will become the accepted standard in China.

ELF is usually defined as English used between non-native speakers (NNSs) for communication purposes. It is the use of English “underpinned by the notion of mutual intelligibility” (Clark, 2013, p. 52), rather than the notions of native speaker (NS) fluency and accuracy, i.e., as long as a spoken utterance or written text is comprehensible then this should be regarded as effective communication.

ELF forms include incorrect subject-verb agreement, plural forms of uncountable nouns and also omissions of articles and prepositions, as can be seen in the case study below.

China English (or 'Chinese English') may be defined as a variety of English that contains many ELF forms, although it also contains linguistic features of its own (see He & Li, 2009, pp. 72-74; Xu, 2010; McKay, 2011, p. 126) in lexis, discourse and syntax. Wang (1994, p. 7) in Kirkpatrick (2014, p. 4) defines Chinese English as, “the English used by the Chinese people in China, being based on standard English and having Chinese characteristics.” Xu (2010) extends this definition to say that it is:

a developing variety of English, which is subject to ongoing codification and normalization processes.... It is characterized by the transfer of Chinese linguistic and cultural norms at varying levels of language, and it is used primarily by Chinese for intra- and international communication (p. 1).

For many decades, the traditional way of teaching and learning English in Chinese schools has been via textbooks published by the People's Education Press (PEP). These textbooks contain standard linguistic forms of American/British English, which "powerfully shape[s]" learners' perceptions of the language they are learning and are in line with national policy (Orton, 2009, pp. 137-138).

Students are also tested according to NS English models. Their end of high school exam, the *gaokao*, includes a compulsory English component, which is a requirement to pass to gain admission to university. Another testing system is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). 300,000 Chinese candidates take the IELTS exam every year (Li, 2013). This test uses level descriptors to measure students' ability in standard British English. At the higher education level, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is used at some transnational institutions in China to describe levels of achievement by learners. According to Cook (2011, p. 147), the CEFR also concentrates on NS use as the goal of language teaching.

These reasons may account for the fact that many Chinese learners aspire to be like NSs of the English language, i.e. to "submit to the dictates of its form" (Widdowson, 1994, p. 384) rather than "bend" the language to their will. Equally, however, many Chinese students and also their NNS academics at transnational English-medium universities in China and elsewhere successfully use spoken and written ELF along with linguistic features of China English for communication (Perrin, 2014b).

Instead of emphasizing a NS model, Jenkins (2009) argues that, when teaching English as an international language, common linguistic features, such as omission of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular "s", which would normally be considered as "errors" by English EAP teachers, should not be marked as such provided they do not impede understanding. McKay (2002) points out that the English learnt should depend upon the goals and circumstances of the learners:

To the extent that academic success in western contexts depends on the acquisition of western patterns of rhetorical development, bilingual users of English may want to acquire these. On the other hand, when written texts are designed primarily for a bilingual community within a country, the use of local rhetorical

patterns is clearly appropriate. (p. 128)

This statement supports the "think global, act local" mantra (see also Kirkpatrick and Xu, 2012). At the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on English Language Teaching in China, Cheng (2014) questioned a panel on "current trends and issues in ELT" as to how much English Chinese students actually need and on which standards the English curriculum should be based. Discussions like these appear to be on the increase. Furthermore, Gao (2014) at the same conference informed delegates that the policy in China from 2016 is for a reduction in the scores needed for the English section and an increase in the scores for Chinese in school and university entrance exams in order to emphasise that mastery of Chinese is more important than mastery of English. This policy may represent a change in view of the importance of English.

In view of the above, the present study seeks to determine if written China English is as intelligible as written Standard English. This study is part of a larger research project conducted by the authors investigating attitudes towards and intelligibility of China English/ELF. Although some studies have been carried out into attitudes towards spoken China English (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002, Evans, 2010, He & Li, 2009) and into the intelligibility of spoken English varieties (Kirkpatrick, Deterding & Wong 2008), few studies have been conducted into attitudes towards or intelligibility of *written* China English.

This paper relays the results of the first part of the study which aimed to investigate whether there are significant differences in intelligibility between written Standard English and written China English/ELF. The main research question of this study was:

- Do Chinese students understand written China English/ELF as well as or better than written Standard British English?

## Methodology

One of the researchers had encountered an authentic China English text, a case study written by a Chinese executive with an MBA, during a training exercise involving Chinese businesspeople. Throughout the two-hour discussion of this case study, there appeared to be no difficulty understanding the issues in the

case with no mention of 'errors'. Because of this successful use, this authentic text became the stimulus for this research.

In the pre-study, 71 Year 1 Business students at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) read the China English text while 34 students read the control text, the same text which the researchers had rewritten in Standard British English. They were asked to identify the vocabulary and grammar errors. This part of the study was conducted to determine if the text met a threshold level for the students in terms of awareness of errors. It was also used to identify problematic areas of the Standard British English translation which might need to be modified for the main study.

The following is an excerpt from the original case study. The numbers (highlighted in red) represent omissions which the authors believe are common to English learners in China (and elsewhere). Also highlighted are incorrect word forms, verb tense issues and Chinese rhetorical style features or syntactic constructions.

Let us examine the problem faced by Mr. Zhang, Quality Manager of a manufacturing plant. Mr. Zhang is responsible (1) overall quality assurance for (2) Shanghai manufacturing plant which build (3) and ship (3) over 20 million plus products worldwide every year. While working on (4) assurance of quality by design, component and process quality control, he needs to deal with quality deviations (5) unfortunately happened every day.

One day morning when he opened (6) email box, a DMR from US DC showed a safety guard screw on a popular product was found broken in (7) box during (8) normal DC sampling audit. This is a safety potential failure, so the information reached out to global stakeholders right away. Both production and shipment were held accordingly with quality procedure. As (9) suspected screw (10) widely used, so many products and production lines are affected, but a big FOB order will be picked up two weeks later scheduled, if we can't production and ship on schedule (11) plant will face a huge penalty. (12) All related functions come to you for decision if can we resume production?

Key:

- 1 missing preposition and article
- 2 missing article
- 3 incorrect subject-verb agreement
- 4 omission of article
- 5 missing relative pronoun
- 6 and 7 missing possessives
- 8 and 9 missing articles
- 10 missing verb
- 11 missing article
- 12 missing question verb

The highlighted areas could reflect Chinese discourse features and tenses due to transfer from Chinese e.g. "one day morning" and rhetorical style, e.g. "As (9) suspected screw (10) widely used, so many products and production lines are affected..." Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012, p. 111) would refer to this second case as a "cause-effect complex sentence", which in Chinese would be written as 因为 (*yinwei*) (as/because) ... 所以 (*suoyi*) (so/therefore).

The text below is the case study rewritten by the researchers into Standard British English:

Let us examine the problem faced by Mr. Zhang, Quality Manager of a manufacturing plant. Mr. Zhang is responsible for the overall quality assurance of a Shanghai manufacturing plant which builds and ships over 20 million products worldwide every year. His remit includes quality assurance of the design and process of manufacturing components. He deals with quality control issues which unfortunately occur on a daily basis.

One morning when he opened his email, he read that a safety guard screw on a popular product had been found broken in its box during a normal US DC sampling audit. This could potentially cause an equipment failure and have implications for safety. Thus, the information was immediately sent out to global stakeholders. Both production and shipments were suspended in line with quality procedures. As this safety guard screw is widely used, many products and production lines would be affected.

The problem is that a big FOB order has been scheduled to be delivered in two weeks. If the plant were unable to produce and ship on schedule, it would face a huge penalty. What should the decision be as to when the plant could resume production?

The main study used the same texts as stimuli. Survey Monkey software was used with Years 2, 3, and 4 Business students at XJTLU to randomly expose subjects to either the China English or the British English version. This time, the participants were not asked to find “errors” but to answer comprehension questions based on the text. The authors modified the standard text (shown above) to remove the difficult constructions, e.g. the subjunctive, that had been shown to be problematic for NNSs (see below).

Here are the multiple-choice comprehension questions (answers have been left out for brevity):

1. In general, how frequently do problems with product quality occur at this plant?

2. What does the manufacturing plant do?
3. The problem with the screw is ....
4. How did Mr. Zhang learn about the problem with the screw?
5. What factor makes the situation more complicated?
6. How long will it take to fix the problem with the process?
7. If the plant was unable to produce and ship on schedule, what would happen?
8. What is Mr. Zhang's job at the manufacturing plant?
9. Mr. Zhang has ....
10. Mr. Zhang is proud of ....

### Results and discussion

The pre-study confirmed our understanding that the case study did meet the threshold level for salience of errors as the students were able to identify many common ELF “errors”. From the 71 students who received the authentic text, the following number of students identified these errors and omissions:

<u>Errors/omissions</u>	<u>Number of students</u>
1) missing preposition	30
2) subject-verb agreement	41
3) missing articles	39
4) missing relative pronouns	8
5) missing possessives	4
6) missing verbs	34
7) missing subjects of sentence	18
8) Chinese discourse features	0
9) wrong word forms	42
10) wrong tenses	28
11) sing. vs plural	1
12) run-ons (commas)	8
14) missing subjects of sentences	18
14) missing plural	1
15) missing ‘than’	9
16) missing infinitive	6

Not one of the Year 1 students highlighted what native writers would see as Chinese discourse features, e.g. “one day morning.” From this, it can be surmised that, as this style is naturalised, they would not recognise these as “errors” in standard English.

The control group of students reading the standard British English text also identified

features of grammar and lexis which would not be considered as “errors” by native writers. For example, the subjunctive was thought to be an error, as were unfamiliar lexical items and constructions:

if the plant **were** unable to produce...’

What should the decision be **as to** when the plant could resume production?’

‘...were suspended **in line with**’

‘Quality control issues which unfortunately **occur**’

‘**on a daily basis**’

Based on this unexpected finding, the wording was changed for the intelligibility part of the study. However, the main point regarding the pre-study is that students did not identify the same quantity of “errors” in the standard English text as they had found in the China English text. Thus, even year 1 students were aware of standard grammar and lexis probably due to learning these forms at school.

The results of the main study, in which students answered comprehension questions about the texts, revealed that there were *no differences in intelligibility* between the two text versions. Using a G-index factor analysis, questions were rotated with one factor emerging containing Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and only Questions 1, 4 and 10 being excluded from it. This factor was then entered into a Generalised Linear Model/ANOVA, which determined that there was no difference in intelligibility between the two versions of the text.

## Conclusion

This research suggests that accuracy in writing to a native writer standard is not necessary for effective communication to take place. The author of this case study was an effective *user* of English, rather than an accurate writer according to a Standard English model, but his readers understood the meaning intended. Thus, as Hu (2004, as cited in Jenkins, 2009, p. 217) points out, English users in some Asian countries may find that China English is more useful than British or American English “as it reflects more accurately their needs, both culturally and in business.”

This study should have implications for teaching English in China or indeed at transnational English-medium institutions worldwide. The researchers believe that greater emphasis should be placed on the quality of students’ academic subject work, provided it is intelligible, rather than its adherence to Standard English.

However, the study does raise important questions. Many English teachers, to whom the authors presented this research orally, thought that the China English text constituted very low quality English and thus did not deserve the status of ‘China English’, instead deeming it “learner language.” The question of where to draw the distinction between China English and interlanguage is problematic. The issue of the overlap in terms of ELF and China English features is also troublesome. The main point is, however, that the Chinese businessperson who wrote this case study did not require NW English to achieve his goal, which was to produce an intelligible English text for his work peers in a local context, which reinforces McKay’s (2002, p. 128) point (above).

The next stage of this study will be carried out with international students to investigate whether these users of English find the text as intelligible as the Chinese students. It will also be carried out with Language Centre tutors teaching ESAP in the Business stream and Business faculty. Additionally, international students’ attitudes towards the writer of the two texts will be gauged to determine if one variety is considered more prestigious.

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Dr Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn currently teaches English to MA TESOL students at XJTLU. She has a PhD in Sociolinguistics and her main research interests include World Englishes, Language in Education, and language policy and planning.

[Amanda.Hilmarsson@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Amanda.Hilmarsson@xjtlu.edu.cn)



Dr Ellen E Touchstone is the Module Convenor for Postgraduate English in the Language Centre at XJTLU. Her research interests are multilingual marketing, English as a Lingua Franca and language policies in transnational education.

[Ellen.touchstone@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Ellen.touchstone@xjtlu.edu.cn)

# Going to China and Studying EAP: The International Student Experience

James Lee

**Abstract.** Chinese universities are hoping to attract more and more international students to study on international programs. Most of these courses are taught entirely in English and many students study EAP alongside their degree subject. This article looks at recent research into the international student experience; what motivates them, how they can adapt to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) study in China and how they can build their intercultural competence. Key findings from a study of the experiences of international students at a Joint Venture university, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), are then highlighted.

中国的大学希望能吸引越来越多的国际学生来其所开设的国际项目学习。大多数课程都是全英语授课。除学位课程外，很多学生还学习学术用途英语（EAP）。本文着眼于近期关于国际学生学习体验的研究，分析其学习动机、如何在华适应学术英语（EAP）的学习及如何能够建立跨文化交际能力。本文重点呈现一项关于国际学生在西交利物浦

## Introduction

China has embraced the concept of globalisation whole-heartedly. Products made in China are exported worldwide, and on modern Chinese streets, international brands are now commonplace. The world of Higher Education is no exception to this phenomenon. Universities in China currently have a vast majority of native Chinese students, but they are actively looking to attract international students in order to improve their internationalisation credentials and tap into the predicted market of 7-8 million international students worldwide by 2025 (Ball, 2012; Jackson, 2012).

## Internationalisation of Higher Education in China

Internationalisation is seen in China as a way to improve academic standards, particularly in the fields of management, international trade, law, and computer studies (British Council, 2013). It can also bring a global perspective to the teaching and research of an institution, as an influx of international students can diversify the composition of the student body. While Chinese universities hope eventually to begin to reverse the process of internationalisation by exporting their own programs, at present most study programs involve collaborations with Western

institutions (known as Joint Venture Universities) and take place within China.

Joint Venture institutions generally use English as a Medium for Instruction (EMI). Although the ubiquity of EMI has come in for criticism from a number of quarters (see Phillipson, 2009), it is undeniable that English is the language of academia in the modern world. Most journals are published in English and English is the Lingua Franca at the majority of academic conferences. Proficiency in English is therefore a key tool for students to progress within their disciplines. Learners are supported in this through EAP classes. EAP is also provided in order to support learners, particularly in their early years of study. While it may come as little surprise that English teaching in China is being conducted on a large scale, a hitherto unforeseen dimension is the fact that an increasing number of these students are not, in fact, Chinese. These international students are likely to have different learning experiences and language requirements to the average local student.

## Previous research into the international student experience

Three key areas of focus when it comes to the international student experience are as follows:

What motivates international students?

What difficulties do international students have in adjusting?

How well can international students develop intercultural competence?

Many international students are motivated by the chance to spend time abroad, learn the local language and experience another culture. These possibilities 'pull' the student to another country. Other factors may 'push' a student away from their home environment, such as social/political/economic issues or a lack of work or study opportunities (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). Modern communications and increased availability of air travel means that for many students the idea of spending a significant period of time in another country is less daunting than it may have been in the past. It may therefore follow that the fear factor of study abroad is slowly being replaced by an awareness that success in this kind of challenging environment can lead to self-improvement, such as increased maturity and self-confidence (Kelly, 2010; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Should this lead to greater employability, both the student and the institution can consider the experience successful.

This is not to say, however, that the international student experience is without its challenges. Moving abroad to study can be a great upheaval in students' lives, particularly if it involves moving far from home. Students may feel lonely and isolated (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Ramsay, Jones, & Baker, 2007), and it is common for them to form their own social groups, often by default retreating into mono-ethnic communication with students from their home country. Such groups provide support mechanisms and can be useful communities of practice (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), but can also create an impression of unwillingness to get involved in the new culture. A goal for international universities is the creation of a multi-ethnic diverse student body, within which there is true inter-cultural exchange and an environment to which international students can quickly adjust.

Well-adjusted international students could be said to be interculturally competent. Intercultural competence (ICC), defined by Deardorff (2011, p. 66) as 'effective and appropriate behaviour in intercultural situations', incorporates recognition of cultural

differences, willingness to engage with other cultures and self-awareness (Sercu, 2005). Language difficulties can hinder the development of ICC as students find it more difficult to mix. For international students in China, there must be serious questions as to whether an English-speaking environment in an international university setting provides suitable opportunities to acquire intercultural skills. Again, there may be a tendency to revert to fragmented social peer groups.

Group work is one technique which teachers can use in (and out of) class in order to promote ICC. Group work necessitates knowledge sharing, increases confidence, allows interaction and is also a skill that is highly valued in the modern workplace (Sercu 2005; Edmead, 2013). The nature of EAP classes allows perhaps more opportunities for real ICC due to the communicative teaching methods common in the TESOL world over the last few decades.

### International students at XJTLU

A forthcoming article (Lee, 2015) details research into the experiences of international students studying EAP in China. 21 international students across all year groups at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) were interviewed in focus groups. The study found that group work is a popular way of learning for international students and provides them with chances to interact with local students which are not available elsewhere in the university. These interactions often then extend beyond the classroom. One key finding is that it is often important for the teacher to play an active role in allocating students to groups rather than allowing self-selection. Some difficulties with group work are also noted – communication problems, free-riding (non-participation) and the use of Chinese in group discussions have all been raised as issues. Another interesting finding is that international students seem to adopt a pivotal role within the class, and that this can happen voluntarily or otherwise. Some students thrive as the centre of attention, while others may not appreciate the extra pressure.

The study also looked at how international students felt about the teaching methods employed in their EAP classes and found that they are satisfied on the whole with the EAP help they receive. Nevertheless, a number of the international students expressed a desire for



improved feedback on their classwork. While this is unlikely to be an issue limited to international students, it may be that their expectations are different and teachers need to be aware of this. These students may also have their own particular language difficulties which require closer inspection.

The topic of motivation featured heavily in focus group discussions conducted as part of the research for the above study. While student attendance in class can vary for a variety of reasons, there seems to be some evidence to suggest that a number of international students at XJTLU believe that their English ability is at an already-sufficient level, and that, as a result, attending two years of EAP classes is unnecessary. If international students are given tasks which mean little to them, it can reduce their willingness to engage interculturally and affect attendance levels (Montgomery, 2009). Nevertheless, it is clear that the Language Centre has taken positive steps to address this issue through training sessions for teachers on interculturality and the creation of extra optional modules designed specifically for higher-level language students. Clear communication of EAP course objectives and the introduction of teaching strategies which embrace multiculturalism may also prove to be successful strategies as international student numbers and diversity increase.

### Looking forward

International students can play an important role in enabling Chinese universities to become bona-fide international institutions. For this to happen, the universities need to host a diverse student population with various hopes and needs. The institutions can manage and meet international student expectations by facilitating greater intercultural understanding through increased communicative competence, which can happen through the provision of cross-cultural communication opportunities. As EAP teachers at these universities, we have a responsibility to encourage this kind of collaboration in our classes. If we can generate cultural exchange through the medium of English during class, this may provide a platform for increased interaction outside class time. Then, hopefully, we will see truly interculturally competent populations within truly international institutions.

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James Lee is an EAP Tutor at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. He has taught in Slovakia, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Mexico and the UK. He can be contacted at:

[james.lee@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:james.lee@xjtlu.edu.cn)



# Cohesion Is Still Not Coherence, So What Is?

Stephen Waller

**Abstract.** Coherence and cohesion are common and important terms in writing. However, they are sometimes confused, and coherence, in particular, is a difficult concept to understand and explain. If a piece of writing lacks coherence, then it fails in its aim and is meaningless; hence, the importance of coherence cannot be overstated. This article discusses the relationship between coherence and cohesion, showing that cohesion is only one aspect of coherence, and then considers a framework which has been put forward to help both teachers and learners to better understand this crucial concept in writing.

**摘要：** 连贯与衔接是写作中两个普通但很重要的术语。然而，人们有时会将二者混淆，特别是很难理解和解释连贯概念。如果一篇文章缺乏连贯性，它就会失去目标，变得无意义。因此，无论怎样强调连贯的重要性都不为过。本文首先讨论连贯与衔接的关系，指出衔接仅为连贯的一个方面，然后提出一个概念框架，以期帮助教师和学生更好理解这一关键写作概念。

## Introduction

Many authors (e.g. Hoey, 1983; Cook, 1989) state that normal writing is not a random collection of sentences: It has unity and its constituent parts are related in meaningful ways. Language users need to be aware of these relationships, known as coherence and cohesion.

However, coherence is “an elusive concept” (Connor, 1990, p. 72). It has traditionally been thought of as relationships linking ideas in texts to produce meaning for readers (Lee, 2002a, p. 32), but this idea can lead to confusion. Learners can mistakenly think that simply linking sentences together will lead to a coherent whole (Thornbury, 2005).

Cook (1989, p. 4) states that coherent texts are “meaningful and unified.” Without coherence, readers cannot interpret a text; hence, the aim of writing the text is not met. I have encountered many student texts which link sentences cohesively, but still do not produce a meaningful whole. Conversely, some students produce texts which are understandable as a whole despite not showing particularly good use of linking devices. This is because cohesion is simply one aspect of coherence and does not guarantee a coherent text; other aspects (e.g. purpose, structure, and propositional development) are as equally important.

This article firstly discusses the relationship between coherence and cohesion, and shows that cohesion does not always produce coherence. Then it considers other equally important factors of coherence, and reflects upon a useful framework to aid teachers and students to better understand the concept. I concentrate on written discourse (text), and throughout use Cook’s (1989, p. 14) definition of “discourse” as a piece of language that “has unity” and is recognised through “...features outside the language: ...the situation, the people involved, what they know and what they are doing.”

## Cohesion

Cohesion in a text is created using formal links that connect sentences and clauses. Halliday and Hasan (1976) are generally regarded as giving the most complete account of these cohesive devices (Brown and Yule, 1983; Nunan, 1993), and they identified five different types: conjunction, reference, substitution, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion. Other linguistic devices have also been suggested that can help to bind text together, including tense consistency and parallelism (Thornbury, 2005). Hence, there are different types of ties that exist in texts, which form cohesion. These formal links can help to make a succession of sentences meaningful.

## Coherence and its relationship with cohesion

As stated above, coherence itself is considered a difficult concept to understand and express, and this has led to some rather vague explanations. It has been described as “...the feeling that a text hangs together, that it makes sense, and is not just a jumble of sentences” (Neubauer, 1983, p. 7, as cited in McCarthy, 1991, p. 26). Yule (2006, p. 126) adds that coherence is “everything fitting together well.” However, there is more to coherence than just the cohesive qualities of a text. Yule (2006, p. 126) adds that coherence is something that exists in people’s interpretations, not words or structures. People, he says, “...make sense of what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an interpretation that is in line with their experience of the way the world is.” McCarthy (1991, p. 26) asserts that when understanding texts, we interpret items and understand them. Cohesive items are often indications of how texts should be read, not “absolutes” (McCarthy 1991, p. 26). For instance, the pronoun ‘it’ in a text only tells us something non-human is being referred to; we do not necessarily know what. Readers can usually interpret this, so that they produce a coherent reading of the text. Hence, cohesion is only support for coherence, and coherence is “something” created by readers while reading a text, this “something” being a logical interpretation to create a meaningful and unified whole.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argued that cohesion is necessary to create meaningful discourse. However, this has been disputed. Many authors (e.g. Brown and Yule, 1983, p. 196; Widdowson, 1985, p. 30) have given examples of written (and spoken) discourse that have no apparent cohesive ties but demonstrate how they can make up a unified and meaningful whole. Brown and Yule (1983, p.196) state that readers will naturally assume sentences presented as texts are indeed texts, and try to interpret the second sentence after considering the first sentence because they assume semantic relations exist between the sentences. However, Tanskanen (2006, p. 17) claims that these examples are few, with the same ones often quoted. Martin (2001, p. 44) adds that these examples are “short ... and carefully selected” but for those in natural texts, with even only a small number of clauses, the

appearance of cohesion becomes expected. This may be the case, but it would appear that coherence can occur without any explicit cohesion although one can argue that there is actually some form of implicit cohesion which is brought about by the reader’s coherence. Carrell (1982, p. 484) gives such an example of coherence producing cohesion:

The picnic was ruined. No one remembered to bring a corkscrew.

Carrell asserts this is coherent because we can think of a familiar situation in which corkscrews and picnics fit together. However, she adds the text will not cohere for anyone that cannot think of such a situation. Hence, the illusion of lexical cohesion is produced by the text’s coherence, not the other way round.

Many authors have also tried to show that cohesive texts do not necessarily form a unified, meaningful whole. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 197) and Yule (2006, p. 126) both give examples of texts that display cohesive ties but ultimately do not display coherence. However, Tanskanen (2006, p. 18) also considers this type of evidence unsatisfactory as it essentially takes what are “non-texts” with cohesive links. Brown and Yule take a text and rearrange it so that it still has cohesive devices but lacks coherence. Although it cannot be denied that their text displays cohesion, it would seem that, as Halliday (1994, as cited in Tanskanen, 2006, p.18) asserts, this action of changing sentence order in a text is meaningless. The ties in both texts do not produce coherence, and hence are contradictory to the aim of such cohesive devices, which is not only to bind text together but to aid coherence. However, a better example is provided by Witte and Faigley (1981, p. 201, as cited in Carrell, 1984, p. 162):

The quarterback threw the ball toward the tight end. Balls are used in many sports.

Most balls are spheres, but a football is an ellipsoid. The tight end leaped to catch the ball.

The sentences are highly cohesive but not coherent, and do not produce a meaningful and unified whole, because the writer provides information which is irrelevant to the topic, and there is no clear purpose or intended audience. McCarthy (1991, p. 26) gives another example:

Clare loves potatoes. She was born in Ireland.

He says this is cohesive (“she” refers to “Clare”), but is only coherent if the reader shares the

“stereotype ethnic association” between being Irish and loving potatoes, or is willing to assume a cause-effect connection between the two (McCarthy, 1991, p. 26). Thus, cohesion is only part of coherence.

It can be clearly seen that cohesion can help to form coherence (and occasionally vice versa). In addition, a lack of explicit cohesion does not necessarily mean no coherence, although there are underlying forms of cohesion in a coherent piece of discourse which are created by the actual perceived coherence. We have also seen that texts displaying cohesion can lack coherence, and it has been demonstrated that irrelevance or lack of world knowledge can lead to a cohesive text not being coherent. Irrelevance is particularly important because some learners produce “oblique” or “vague” writing (Hinkel, 2011, p. 528), which can appear to be irrelevant.

### Explaining Coherence

The importance of understanding coherence for learners cannot be overstated since, as Lee (2002b, p. 139) explains, the concept may be different in their own language. Furthermore, Chinese students may have a weakness in academic English writing because in China there is a comparative lack of emphasis on developing English writing, and few teachers have good English writing skills (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Hence, Chinese students may not know the discourse patterns expected and use a background-before-main-point presentation of ideas, often misunderstood by native speaker teachers (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). These problems may be exacerbated by the college entrance exam, in which the required structures for answers are provided, so students do not need to learn text organisation (Ma, 2012, p.23).

Although Halliday and Hasan (1976) talk about cohesive texts being coherent, Carrell (1982) argues that in order to learn about textual coherence, we must use wider theories than just cohesion, looking at both reading and writing as interactive processes which involve the writer, the reader and the text. Hence, coherence can be viewed as both text based and reader based (Lee, 2002b; Johns, 1986). Text based coherence is primarily defined by the linking of sentences (cohesion) or as the relationships among propositions in the text (Johns, 1986). However, to have reader based coherence means that a text cannot be

considered separately from the reader. Successful interaction between the reader and the text is required for coherence (Carrell, 1982; Hoey, 2001).

The degree to which readers understand intended meanings and underlying structures from texts (thus finding them coherent) depends greatly on whether their reader-selected schemata (expectations) are consistent with the texts (Johnson, 1982, as cited in Johns, 1986, p.250; Miller & Kintsch, 1980, as cited in Johns, 1986, p. 250). These expectations of the content to be introduced and its form are from the readers’ background knowledge (Carrell, 1983). As readers process texts, these expectations are adapted to establish consistency with content or text structure. Hence, reading is a process of constant interpretation (Hoey, 2001), and, as Johns (1986, p. 251) affirms, learners must consider their audience and task throughout the writing process. Furthermore, instructors should consider both text and reader based approaches when teaching coherence (Johns, 1986, p. 251).

### *Lee’s framework for Coherence*

Lee (1998, 2002a, 2002b) expands on the above ideas, outlining six aspects to facilitate the understanding (and teaching) of coherence:

1. Coherent texts have a purpose, intended audience, and context of situation (including genre and reader-writer relationship). This can be introduced at low levels. Students need to know their reader, understand their reader’s expectations, and understand the reason for their writing.
2. Lee’s second topic is knowledge about different types of text structure, which helps with the planning and writing of texts. Students need to know and understand the expected structure for their text.
3. The best, and expected, way to organise information and help develop topics is to use given information before new. Although often relating to cohesive properties of texts, this is an aspect that some learners find difficult (Hinkel, 2011).
4. The fourth of Lee’s topics is propositional development and modification; in other words, how different claims relate to each other and should be supported with, for instance,

elaboration, illustration or exemplification. Johns (1986) also stresses the importance of a thesis & thesis statement in persuasive essays (a common text type my students have to produce), particularly for inexperienced writers.

5. The fifth topic is cohesion, still an important aspect of coherence.
6. Lee's final topic is metadiscourse ('signalling words'). These linguistic features do not add to propositional content, but aid readers with organising, interpreting, and evaluating the provided information (Crismore et al., 1993, p. 40). For instance, in persuasive essays such features can be textual (e.g. connectives and sequencers) or interpersonal (e.g. hedges and attitude markers) (see Crismore et al., 1993).

This clear framework can help both teachers and learners to acquire a better understanding about the notion of coherence. By covering these points, we can raise learners' awareness of the coherence of texts, and the equal importance of each aspect. Although it is quite possible to teach these ideas without mentioning the term coherence, I would argue that higher-level students (such as university students) can be explicitly taught the concept of coherence using this or a similar framework, and that these aspects can be used to give constructive comments to students about the coherence of their texts as well as help to provide a clear structure to aid writing.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that grammar and vocabulary are also important, and too many errors will also cause a lack of coherence. Indeed, I would suggest that they could be added to the list as topic 7 (I often remind my students about this). It has already been shown how a lack of understanding of lexis can lead to confusion; hence, so can the misuse of lexis, and indeed grammar.

It is clear, however, that correct use of vocabulary and grammar does not necessarily produce a coherent text. Language teaching in China, and elsewhere, has traditionally focused on the basis of language knowledge (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary) while examining how chunks of language become meaningful and unified in context can be neglected. However, it is the latter which draws

learners' attention to the skills they need to use the former in order to achieve successful (coherent) communication (Cook, 1989). It is with this in mind that an explicit method of presenting coherence, such as the one above, is recommended.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have clarified the terms coherence and cohesion, explained how they are related and the important roles they play in written discourse. Cohesion is used to help achieve coherence; conversely, coherence is sometimes required to achieve cohesion. However, coherence, a crucial aspect of writing, is not formed by cohesion alone. It is both text based and reader based and there are a number of factors to take into consideration. Hence, a framework for understanding this concept needs to be concerned with all these factors. For myself, such a framework has proved extremely useful.

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**Stephen Waller** is an EAP tutor at the University of Nottingham Ningbo. He is currently studying for an EdD and his main research interest is the transition from Chinese to U.K. (western) education.

[Stephen.WALLER@nottingham.edu.cn](mailto:Stephen.WALLER@nottingham.edu.cn)



# Indirectness in Chinese Students' Academic Essays

Yang Xu

**Abstract.** There has been much debate regarding indirectness in Chinese students' academic essays but the research to date is inconclusive. Therefore, a small study was conducted at Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University using essay and questionnaire data collected from sixteen Year One Chinese students. It was found that while no work demonstrated the traditional Chinese rhetorical patterns, thesis statements that are placed at the beginning of essays in the English rhetorical style seem to be delayed. In terms of paragraph organization, spiral rhetorical moves are characterised by multiple ideas, and the absence of a topic sentence at the beginning.

**摘要.** 关于中国学生英文学术作文的“不直接”引发了诸多争论但是直到目前一直都没有定论。因此，在西交利物浦大学进行的此项研究旨在就此问题进行进一步地探索。16个大学一年级中国学生参与了本项研究。本研究中所用到的数据均来自学生的作文和问卷调查。研究发现没有一篇作文呈现出传统的中国式修辞模式。但是，与英文作文修辞风格不一样的是，中心句似乎还是没有在一开篇就被引出。至于段落结构，所用段落都呈现出“绕”的修辞模式。这种段落上的“绕”体现在一个段落拥有多个观点以及段落一开始缺乏主题句。

## Introduction

The issue of whether Chinese students' academic essays truly demonstrate indirectness has generated much discussion since Kaplan (1966) claimed that the development of the paragraph in Oriental writing was *spiral* as opposed to the English linear fashion and that Chinese students' L2 writing was influenced by the 八股 (*ba gu*) or *eight-legged* organizational structure (Kaplan, 1968 cited in Cai, 1993). Classroom teachers who are familiar with this approach to writing can inform students of their own rhetorical traditions who can then become conscious of the implicit assumptions behind the way they arrange ideas in writing and behind the way English does (Leki, 1991). Since Kaplan's pioneering work, a number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to address this issue. Some contrastive rhetoricians argue that Chinese students' L2 essays demonstrate indirectness mainly characterized by the *ba gu* or the 起承转合 (*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*) known as *beginning-following-turning-concluding* rhetorical patterns (Matalene, 1985; Fagan & Cheong, 1987; Cai, 1993; Ji, 2011).

*Ba gu* was first used as an essay format in the Chinese civil service examinations during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1645-1911) dynasties. The eight parts in the *ba gu* structure are known as: opening-up, amplification, preliminary exposition, first

point, second point, third point, final point, and conclusion. The thesis is introduced in the second part (Cai, 1993). *Qi-cheng-zhuan-he* was first introduced as an organizational pattern in persuasive and expository writing during the New Cultural Movement in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Zhang, 1938 cited in Cai, 1993). In the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern, *qi* only introduces a topic partly related to the theme (Hinds, 1990 cited in Chen, 2006). *Cheng* follows the beginning paragraph and expands on it. *Zhuan* presents another perspective on the topic and *he* concludes the essay with a particular point that refers to the theme (Chen, 2006). However, others maintain that Chinese students now construct essays in a way similar to that of their Anglo-American counterparts in terms of the placement of a thesis statement and a topic sentence at the beginning (Chien, 2007; Yang & Cahill, 2008). One possible explanation for these contradictions is that school education advocates directness in contemporary Chinese writing manuals and textbooks (Liu, 1996; Yang & Cahill, 2008). As the research findings are contradictory, this study sought to clarify the current situation and to examine the implications this can have on teachers. In addition, to date few studies have investigated paragraph organisation. As a contribution to this ongoing debate, a small study was



conducted at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), which aimed to answer the following questions:

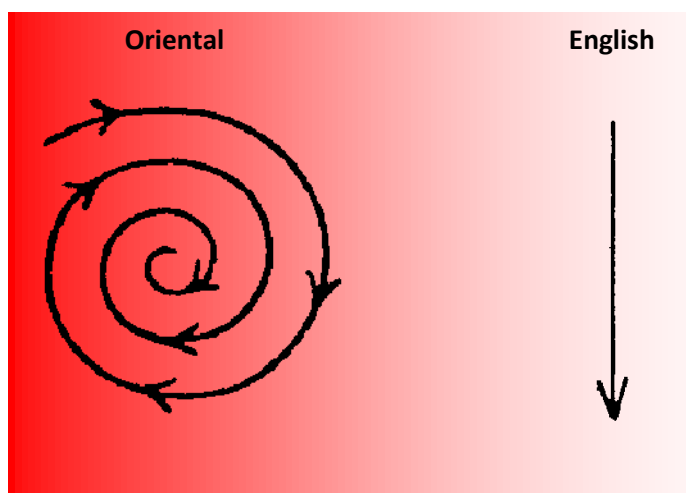
1. Do Chinese students' academic essays still demonstrate the *ba gu* or the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* rhetorical moves?
2. Are thesis statements indeed introduced at the beginning in Chinese students' academic essays as in the Western direct approach?
3. Do Chinese students' paragraphs demonstrate spiral rhetorical moves? If so, to what extent?

In this article, indirectness at the essay level is defined by a delayed thesis statement as opposed to its placement at the beginning of an essay. Indirectness at the paragraph level is defined by a spiral organization of sentences instead of the English deductive and linear

fashion, namely a lack of a clear topic sentence at the beginning and lack of coherence in paragraphs (for a clear outline of coherence and cohesion, see Waller, this issue).

### Literature Review

A number of researchers (Kaplan, 1966; Matalene, 1985; Fagan & Cheong, 1987; Cai, 1993; Ji, 2011) have examined Chinese students' L2 writing and found evidence of indirectness. In his ground-breaking work, "Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education," Kaplan (1966) argues that a typical English paragraph develops in a linear fashion around a central idea while the development of the paragraph in Oriental writing tends to have, in his words, "circles" and "gyres" that turn around the topic (see Figure 1). Kaplan (1968, cited in Cai, 1993) further argues that Chinese students' L2 writing is influenced by the *ba gu* organizational structure, which was used as the classic essay format of Chinese imperial examinations.



**Figure 1.** Kaplan's (1966) "Doodles" of Cross-cultural Differences in Paragraph Organization

Kaplan's (1968) argument is echoed by Matalene (1985) and Cai (1993). Matalene's (1985) study shows that the structure of her Chinese students' L2 essays is influenced by the *ba gu*. Similarly, Cai (1993) claims that Chinese students' L2 essays still inherit the *ba gu* structure or the more modern *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* organizational pattern. In addition, Fagan and Cheong (1987) found empirical evidence of the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* four-part pattern in 50.6% of the sixty L2 compositions by nine-grade Chinese ESL students in Singapore. No relevant research has been identified since that time until Ji (2011)

analysed twenty-six L2 argumentative essays written by undergraduates and found that one third of the essays exhibited *circular* or *indirect* characteristics. He claimed that these essays were not influenced by the structure of the *ba gu* essay but by the modern Chinese prose exhibiting the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern.

Kaplan's (1966) "doodles" may therefore represent a stereotypical view of the culture (Zamel, 1997 cited in Kubota & Lehner, 2004) as well as overgeneralizing models from closely related languages (Connor, 2002) such as Korean and Japanese. As for the *ba gu* theory, it probably

has little influence on contemporary Chinese writing, thus it seems impossible to be transferred into L2 writing (Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1997 cited in Wu & Li, 2010). In Cai's (1993) study, the evidence for the *ba gu* is a Chinese essay of the late Qing dynasty, which is clearly out of date. Moreover, the evidence for the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* organizational pattern is one student ESL essay and one newspaper article (overseas edition). The size of the sample therefore is inadequate to form any solid argument. In Ji's (2011) study, only one third of the sample demonstrates the circular or indirect characteristics which is not statistically convincing. Fagan & Cheong's (1987) finding shows evidence of indirectness in the form of the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* four-part pattern but again the sample size is too small.

In contrast to the studies discussed above, Chien (2007) analysed forty second- and third-year university students' L2 essays and found that the writing was mainly in contemporary Anglo-American direct rhetorical style rather than in traditional Chinese indirect style. However, as the study is conducted among second- and third-year university students, Chien's (2007) finding cannot work as strong evidence that indirectness does not exist in the work of the students who have not received any L2 writing instructions. Yang and Cahill (2008) analysed 200 essays among which fifty were written by American university students in English, fifty by Chinese students in Chinese, and one hundred by Chinese beginners and advanced learners of English. They found that all groups preferred the placement of the thesis statement and the topic sentence in the beginning, indicating a positive cross cultural transfer in terms of writing style from L1 to L2. Yang and Cahill's (2008) finding seems to be a strong proof of directness in both L1 and L2 writing at both text and paragraph levels.

To explain the possible reason behind this directness, Liu (1996) argues against the notion of a Chinese preference of indirectness. Liu claims that the emphasis on straightforwardness as the principle in presenting the main idea of an essay can be found in the standard textbooks for college Chinese majors used in the PRC since the mid-1980s. Likewise, Yang and Cahill (2008) claim that the tendency for direct organization can be found in the expository essays in the senior high school Chinese textbooks published in 2002 and

in contemporary Chinese writing manuals.

The above studies suggest that the direct approach in contemporary Chinese L1 writing can be transferred to the L2 writing. Thus, the present study was designed to further research into whether Chinese students' academic essays are indeed organized in a direct fashion and whether a direct approach is taught in schools, since there has been a lack of qualitative research in Chinese students' educational background. In addition, since few studies have addressed the issue of paragraph structure, this study was also designed to look into the paragraph structure in Chinese students' academic writing.

## Methodology

16 Year One Chinese university students participated in the study. The study was conducted on the first day of Week One of Semester One Year One. Therefore, none of the participants had received any instructions in essay writing in the English style. They were assigned to write a 250-word essay on life at a Chinese high school as homework. A spider gram was provided with subtopics, such as the curriculum and learning styles, to help them organize ideas. A questionnaire survey was also conducted among these participants. It contained 18 closed questions on the placement of a thesis statement, essay, and paragraph structures.

## Results and discussion

### *Do Chinese students' academic essays still demonstrate the ba gu or the qi-cheng-zhuan-he rhetorical moves?*

Regarding the first research question, 13 out of 16 (81%) essays contained three parts: introduction-body-conclusion. No work demonstrated the *ba gu* or the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* four-part structures. This is supported by the questionnaire data. 12 out of 16 (75%) participants reported that they normally included three parts when writing essays in Chinese. Furthermore, 12 out of 16 (75%) participants reported they tended to organize Chinese essays using the *总-分-总* (*zong-fen-zong*) or *general-specific-general* pattern, which is a contemporary rhetorical style in Chinese essays. This Chinese three-part pattern is close to the English introduction-body-conclusion

pattern (Lin, 2007). It can be seen that both the qi-cheng-zhuan-he and the ba gu rhetorical traditions are no longer emphasised writing styles among the Chinese. Hence, they seem unlikely to be transferred to the L2 writing (Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1997 cited in Wu & Li, 2010).

***Are thesis statements indeed introduced at the beginning in Chinese students' academic essays as in the Western direct approach?***

In terms of the second research question, six out of 16 (37%) participants presented a thesis statement at the end of the introduction. Eight out of 16 (50%) participants did not write a thesis statement in the introduction but included a statement that referred to the theme in the conclusion. Here are some typical examples:

*Now when I recall my high school life, I think it is sweet and unforgettable.*

*My high school life was very interesting, and I will remember it forever.*

*All of these make up my life in high school, which I will cherish forever.*

*So, I love my high school life.*

*This is my sweet high school life.*

Interestingly, when asked where they liked to present the theme, 11 out of 16 (69%) participants reported that they liked to present the theme in the beginning known as 开门见山 (*kai men jian shan*). Similarly, when asked about the purpose of the introduction, 10 out of 16 (63%) participants reported that introduction was supposed to introduce the theme. According to Wang (1994), the method *kai men jian shan* (which literally means "open the door to see the mountain") is recommended for a good introduction in Chinese when the writer presents the thesis in the introduction. Therefore, students had probably been taught this method before coming to the university.

The inconsistency between the questionnaire and essay data indicates that students do not necessarily apply the *kai men jian shan* strategy into academic writing. This is further proved by the questionnaire data. When asked whether they wrote their English essays like the way they wrote their Chinese essays, 10

out of 16 (63%) participants reported negative. It seems that L1 transfer might not always be responsible for the way Chinese students construct their academic essays.

***Do Chinese students' paragraphs truly demonstrate spiral rhetorical moves? If so, to what extent?***

Regarding the third research question, in terms of the existence of a topic sentence, nine out of 16 (56%) participants did not write a topic sentence at the beginning of each body paragraph. The issue of topic sentence was also investigated in the questionnaire. When asked whether they wrote topic sentences when writing English paragraphs in high school, the majority (69%) reported negative, suggesting that teachers' writing instruction may significantly influence students' rhetorical strategy (Chien, 2007; Mohan & Lo, 1985).

In terms of paragraph unity, most body paragraphs contained multiple ideas. Here is a typical example of such paragraphs:

*In my high school, we had much homework. Every day we had to do homework and had to return homework at next day. So we are very tired every day. Teachers supervised us tightly, but sometimes we also kidded each other. It is a strange but very splendid relationship between teachers and students. It didn't give us any pressure and even helped us to release our pressure.*

It can be seen that the development of this paragraph is less direct compared to the English direct (deductive and linear) style (see Waller, this issue). Indeed, it seems that the subject is not looked at directly but is shown from tangential views (Kaplan, 1966). The first sentence talks about having much homework. The second sentence expands the topic. The third sentence digresses by talking about being tired as a result of having much homework. The following sentence moves still further away from having too much homework by talking about supervision and teacher-student relationship, which is related to homework but only tangentially. This sentence is tied to the next two sentences which continue the digression of teacher-student relationship. Surprisingly, when asked how many ideas they normally included in one

paragraph, 11 out of 16 (69%) students reported one. This is inconsistent with the above observation. They had probably thought that there was only one idea in each of the paragraphs because the sentences were loosely connected and belonged to the same topic. Thus, what seems spiral to the Western audience may appear to be direct to these Chinese students. In other words, directness can be defined differently by people of various cultural and educational backgrounds, and may span a spectrum.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the issue of indirectness in Chinese students' academic essays. Generally speaking, Chinese students' academic essays no longer demonstrate the *ba gu* or the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* organizational structures but the thesis still tends to be delayed. In addition, Chinese students' academic essays seem to demonstrate the general-specific-general pattern which is close to the English introduction-body-conclusion pattern. Interestingly, though the thesis tends to be delayed in their academic writing, Chinese students seem to be familiar with the strategy to introduce the theme in the introduction when writing Chinese essays. In terms of paragraph organization, Chinese students' paragraphs tend to demonstrate spiral rhetorical moves which lack topic sentences at the beginning and contain multiple ideas. Furthermore, what appears spiral to the Western audience seems direct to the Chinese students. Therefore, when teaching the formal aspects of English essays to Year One Chinese students, teachers can teach with "cultural intelligence" (see Livermore, this issue), reminding students of the general-specific-general structure which they are familiar with, and then introduce the alternative. In addition, teachers could particularly emphasise the initial placement of a thesis statement while borrowing the concept of *kai men jian shan*. Teachers should also focus on the structure of a body paragraph, elaborating on the deductive logic in paragraph organization. They should point out that what seems direct to them might be indirect to the Western audience.

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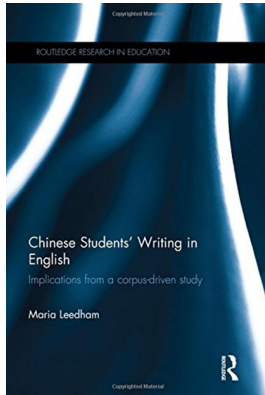


**Yang Xu** currently works at XJTLU, where she teaches EAP on the Year 1 undergraduate programme. She obtained an MA in TESOL in 2010.

[Yang.xu2@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Yang.xu2@xjtlu.edu.cn)

# Book Review: Chinese Students' Writing in English: Implications from a Corpus-Driven Study

Jonathan Culbert



*Chinese Students' Writing in English: Implications from a corpus-driven study*

Author: Maria Leedham

Publisher: Routledge

Available: [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk), £86.70

Published: 2014

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Pages: 184

'Chinese Students' Writing in English' investigates undergraduate writing at UK universities. In particular, the author aims to identify the characteristics which distinguish the writing of two groups of students: those whose first language is Chinese (L1 Chinese) and those whose first language is English (L1 English). A further aim is to examine how these characteristics vary across student year groups and academic disciplines.

The British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus and an additional, although unspecified, collection of texts assembled by the author, were taken as a starting point. From these, two smaller corpora were compiled: one of L1 Chinese (Chi123) and one of L1 English (Eng123) student assignments. A corpus linguistics method was used to interrogate the two corpora. The study was corpus-driven rather than corpus-based in that an initial keyword analysis of the corpora, rather than a detailed set of research questions, provided the impetus for the research. In addition to the quantitative results arrived at through this corpus linguistics approach, a more qualitative analysis was carried out on specific pairs of texts to investigate the data further. The author also made use of interviews with discipline lecturers,

writing tutors and students to illuminate the findings.

The core of the book is the numerical data generated from the keyword analysis. A keyword in this context is a word or label (by which a text has been marked up) which occurs with an unusual frequency in one corpus compared with another (p.42). Keywords were identified in the following areas: connectors, informal language, first person pronouns, and visuals.

The findings are often intriguing. For example, the informal phrases 'what's more', 'a little bit' and 'last but not least' occurred occasionally in Chi123, but did not appear at all in Eng123. However, contractions with 'not' (e.g. 'can't') were significantly more prevalent in Eng123. In the use of first person pronouns, the L1 Chinese group were much more likely to use the pronoun 'we' whereas the L1 English group used 'I' significantly more often. One particularly interesting finding not predicted by the literature is that Chinese students used visual elements such as tables, figures and text written in bulleted lists more frequently in their assignments.

Although the numerical data suggest interesting distinctions between the corpora

they are at times problematic. In particular, in the discussion of informal language, the actual token counts were very low: informal language (as revealed by the keyword analysis) accounts for only 0.05% and 0.004% of Chi123 and Eng123 respectively (the reviewer's calculations). Rather than suggesting difference, these data suggest a remarkable level of similarity in the two corpora. More importantly, when examining variation between academic disciplines, there is the possibility of outlier texts disproportionately affecting the group mean. The author generally does not focus on individual texts, but where she does - for qualitative analysis - it can be seen that the chosen assignments could potentially skew the group average. In the discussion of the use of visuals in Biology, the Chi123 assignment chosen for more detailed analysis (one of eighteen) accounts for more than 25% of all the figures used. In the discussion of bulleted lists in Economics, the chosen Chi123 assignment (one of twenty) accounts for almost 30% of all the relevant features.

A further question concerns the 'implications' of the book's subtitle. It is not clear in exactly what sense this term is to be taken. If the author means consequences or possible recommendations, there is an initial problem. One key feature of the BAWE corpus is that all the assignments were awarded a 'good' grade by their institutions: consistent with a 2:1 or better according to the British system. As such, all the assignments looked at in this study and, by inference, the range of approaches in terms of language and visuals have been deemed acceptable. In light of this, the author's explicitly descriptive, as opposed to deficit, approach towards the L1 Chinese texts is of little significance. In fact, a slightly deficit approach seems to be adopted towards the L1 English texts, when she recommends that L1 English students be encouraged to use more visual elements in their writing.

An alternative reading of 'implications' could be inferences or explanations that can be drawn from the findings. Here, the author makes some interesting suggestions. For example, drawing on Hoey's (2005) lexical priming theory and Hasselgren's (1994) concept of 'lexical teddy bears' the author argues

persuasively that Chinese students' writing in English is the product of a heavily exam-oriented education system in China, which prioritises neither writing skills nor knowledge of register. This argument is made all the more persuasive through the inclusion of sample exam and learning materials.

On the whole, however, these interpretations are only tentatively offered and are not part of the primary research conducted by the author. Furthermore, at times the suggestions do seem to be purely speculative, such as when the author suggests Chinese students are more likely to include visuals as a consequence of their experience learning and using Chinese characters.

Despite the possible pitfalls regarding how the data are interpreted and the at times speculative nature of the explanations given, the author does achieve what she set out to: 'to add to the body of knowledge on current undergraduate student writing' (p.133). With Chinese students expected to continue being the largest international market for UK institutions (Havergal, 2014), this is a topical, yet relatively neglected, area of research to which this study has made a pertinent contribution.

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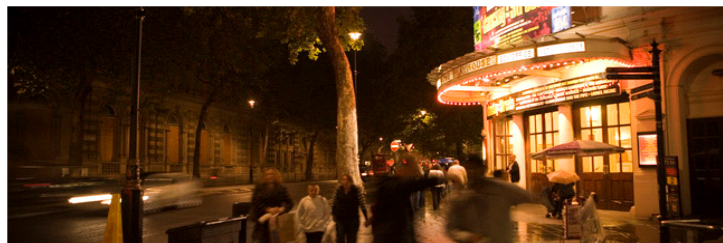


Jonathan Culbert is an EAP tutor at XJTLU. Previously, he worked at the University of York, England. He holds an MA in Linguistics.  
[jonathan.culbert@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:jonathan.culbert@xjtlu.edu.cn)

Antonia Paterson, Jackie Hemingway and Sarah Butler

*This section highlights some useful learning and teaching websites that can help with planning, teaching and professional development. This time we look at using intercultural resources.*

**Future Learn** <https://www.futurelearn.com/>



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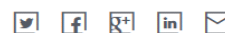
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START DATES

*Future Learn* is a website offering a wide range of free online courses from reputable organisations, including The Open University. The variety of topics, ranging from 'Climate Change' to 'The Secret Power of Brands,' makes it ideal as a self-study resource for students

from all majors. For those hoping to practice their English and get a taste of British culture, the 'Exploring English Language and Culture' course, offered by the British Council, is a good place to start.



This six-week course begins with step-by-step introductory videos to explain how it works, and leads onto topics such as the environment and literature. Each week features a new set of materials, with videos and transcripts, related tasks and quizzes and active discussion forums, all aimed at an Intermediate (B1 CEFR) level of English. While possible to join anytime and work at your own pace, the benefit of following the recommended schedule is that learners can participate actively in online discussions around the week's materials, joining students from around the world to share opinions on the topics. These international forums contribute to a sense of collaborative learning and provide a range of perspectives on key issues such as Global English. A language focus is incorporated each week (for example, examining use of

passive forms) and support is offered by a team of British Council experts who participate in the forums regularly.

Since internet connection problems within China can make access to the site unreliable, it is convenient that videos can be downloaded and saved to watch offline. Combined with a focus on personal reflection, with a weekly writing task based on experience or thoughts on the topic, the course is both user-friendly and engaging. Once registered on the site, *Future Learners* also receive news of upcoming courses, encouraging them to extend their study (for example, 'Study Skills' is one option: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/study-skills-for-international-students-3>). For teachers hoping to inspire interest in self-study, this site provides an impressive collection of potential resources.

## Intercultural Film Database

<http://www.uni-hildesheim.de/interculturalfilm/>

home find movie glossary contact help

choose film

archive | a | b | c-d | e-f | g-h | i-j | k-l | m | n-o | p-r | s | <t-w> | x-z

search by feature click on the title to view an entry

full-text search

- The Terminal (USA, 2004)
- Le thé au harem d'Archimède [French/German] (France, 1985)
- A Thousand Years of Good Prayers (USA, 2007)
- A Time To Kill (USA, 1996)
- Transylvania (France, 2006)
- Türkisch für Anfänger [German, with subtitles] (Germany/Thailand, 2012)
- Under the Tuscan Sun (USA/Italy, 2003)
- Urga (France/Soviet Union, 1991)
- Walkabout (United Kingdom, 1971)

Using film in the classroom can be very engaging for students (King, 2002; Ryan & Francais, 1998), and in particular may be a useful way of illustrating intercultural differences (Briam, 2010; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003). Although the films are clearly scripted and acted, which limits their authenticity, they can nevertheless be helpful in highlighting cross-cultural communication issues and provoking critical discussion.

However, it may be time-consuming to search independently for film scenes illustrating specific cultural behaviours. The *Intercultural Film Database*, produced by Hildesheim

University in Germany, aims to make this simple by providing a collection of films which have been analysed according to various cultural features.

The over 100 films analysed in the database come from a wide range of countries and include several foreign language films. Both mainstream and independent films from various genres can be found in the collection. Of these, about ten films feature Chinese and Western cultural differences, including 'The Wedding Banquet' (1993, directed by Ang Lee) and 'Mao's Last Dancer' (2009, directed by Bruce Beresford).

Searching for specific films and cultural features is straightforward; films are organised alphabetically by title and can also be searched by five features: cultures, cultural dimensions, actors, director, and entry author.

Each database entry contains basic details about the chosen film and a plot synopsis, as well as an analysis of selected scenes. This analysis is based on a framework of twenty cultural dimensions, each of which is explained in the glossary pages of the website. These dimensions include widely accepted criteria for cultural comparison such as individualism versus collectivism, high/low context communication styles, and power distance relationships. Although film excerpts are not provided on the website, the relevant film scenes can be easily located since timings are given in the analysis. Many of the clips examined are very short and therefore convenient for classroom viewing.

Although described as an ongoing project, the site does not appear to be regularly updated, so recent films are unlikely to be found. Therefore, as a project task for those studying intercultural issues, the site might provide inspiration for students to produce their own film analyses, which could then be submitted to the site using the email contact, or used to create students' own database.

## Absolutely Intercultural

<http://www.absolutely-intercultural.com/>

*Absolutely Intercultural* is a website containing monthly podcasts exploring cultural diversity and topics such as customs and working and studying abroad. Interviews are authentic and focus on a variety of issues, including sustainable tourism, corporate social responsibility, and charity volunteering. Some podcasts deal with current issues, such as the recent Scottish Referendum. Many topics will be of value to students planning to study or work abroad. Some of the topics may be more suitable for higher level learners, but much of the material can be used by tutors. There is a written summary of the key points, so listeners can read about the podcast content, although there is no transcript.

As recordings are authentic, learners are exposed to a variety of accents and vocabulary in context. The podcasts also provide the opportunity to raise students' awareness of stress, chunking, slips, and false starts. Although the delivery is well paced, this site may be most suitable for intermediate and upper-intermediate learners, as some of the language can be of a rather high level. All the podcasts are in audio format and there are very few videos.

### Absolutely Intercultural 177 +++ Intercultural Complexity and Simplicity +++ Vietnam, Finland, and Germany +++ Differences in Everyday Cultural Conventions +++ Culture Shocks +++

Published on April 4, 2014 in podcast. 0 Comments

Tags: absolutely intercultural, complexity, cultural shock, culture, dr. laurent borgmann, english, english podcast, everyday cultural practices, finland, german, germany, intercultural complexity, intercultural simplicity, podcast, rheinahrampus, rheinahrampus remagen, shock, vietnam, younes jaber.



If you like the podcast then please also LIKE US ON [FACEBOOK!](#)



Our current exchange students from Vietnam and Lithuania are here in Germany studying and doing their internships. Within their first days after their arrival, they mentioned some cultural differences concerning the complexity and simplicity in their new lives and in their home countries. Cultural anthropologists have discovered and described differences in the level of cultural complexity in

Some students may prefer the latter and be discouraged from using the site.

There are no specific follow-up exercises on the website, but there is a link to an article from the TESL Electronic Journal which suggests ways *Absolutely Intercultural* can be used in teaching. The written summary with each podcast is useful as this gives the listener more background information on some complex topics. The website is regularly updated and there is a new episode every month. It has won two awards: European Podcast National Winner (2010) and the Edu Blog Awards Winner (2006).

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**Sarah Butler** is currently Deputy Director of the Pre-session English course at Coventry University. Her areas of interest include teacher development and learner autonomy.

[ab6631@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ab6631@coventry.ac.uk)



**Antonia Paterson** currently teaches EAP at XJTLU. She has previously taught General English in Italy, the UK and China. She holds an MA in TESOL.

[antonia.paterson@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:antonia.paterson@xjtlu.edu.cn)



**Jackie Hemingway** has taught EAP at XJTLU since September 2011. Prior to joining XJTLU she taught General and Business English in several countries including Austria, Spain, Japan and Oman.

[jacqueline.hemingway@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:jacqueline.hemingway@xjtlu.edu.cn)

# Report on the 17<sup>th</sup> AILA World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics from 10-15 August 2014 in Brisbane, Australia

Ellen E. Touchstone

This report discusses the recent International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) World Congress in Brisbane, Australia, one of the preeminent applied linguistics conferences. In this paper, I focus on issues of relevance to academics in applied linguistics and language teaching professionals such as language variety and language planning. Additionally, new trends in the field like linguistic landscape (LL), lookalike language and the new Chinglish are discussed for their value in understanding the English-language-teaching environment in China.

The title of the conference, “One World, Many Languages”, was reflected in the diversity of participants who attended. Over 1600 delegates from 75 countries were in attendance; a tally of languages represented would undoubtedly number in the hundreds—Australia itself is home to more than 200 aboriginal languages. Not only was this the 17<sup>th</sup> AILA World Congress, but it was also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first AILA conference which was held in Nancy, France in 1964.

The conference kicked off dramatically on Sunday, 10 August, with a representative of one of the Australian aboriginal tribes entering the lecture hall while chanting and then marking the conference as officially open in grand ceremonial fashion. Both Professor Bernd Rüschoff, the current AILA President, and Andy Kirkpatrick, President of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, gave brief welcome speeches to the delegates. The host

organisation, The University of Queensland, was acknowledged as were the co-chairs, Dr. Christina Gitsaki, and the late Professor Dick Baldauf. The organisers publicly recognised Baldauf’s role in planning this conference during the previous three years, as well as his significant impact on the field of applied linguistics.

Fittingly, the first keynote speaker was Professor Nicholas Evans, who has conducted extensive fieldwork on the aboriginal languages of northern Australia. His main interest is in combatting the language death of Australia and Papua New Guinea’s many indigenous languages and, along with that, the loss of their way of “organizing meaning.” He provided an unusual example of how one of the Aboriginal languages he studies uses pronouns that indicate the generational and kinship relationships of the interlocutors. He argues that these important markers of meaning in different cultures will disappear as the languages they are now present in become extinct.

Another highly anticipated and well-attended plenary session was Elana Shohamy’s on linguistic landscape (LL). As mentioned earlier, the study of linguistic landscape is a fairly new field of inquiry within sociolinguistics and language planning, which will soon have its own journal, suitably titled, *Linguistic Landscape*. This 21<sup>st</sup> century discipline investigates signage and oral language usage in areas of language contact to determine how they reflect or influence the vitality and/or

power of multiple languages. As compared to the field of language planning's earlier emphasis on language policies at the national or top-down level, or "*de jure* language planning," this emergent field looks at how individuals, institutions and corporations use language in public spaces – a more bottom-up approach – as a marker of "*de facto* language planning." One example provided from her research in Israel was particularly telling. In one of the multilingual Hebrew-Arabic linguistic landscapes she was investigating, emergency room and bomb shelter signs were only in Hebrew. She argues that the choice to exclude Arabic from these signs could be indicative of a larger policy of exclusion.

Related to the concept of linguistic landscape, Jan Blommaert's plenary argued for more research to be conducted on what he calls "lookalike language." In his talk, he explained that "unimportant language" on signs or even t-shirts can be investigated as an important indicator of identity or belonging: "Linguistically 'empty' signifiers [are] indexically 'full.'" In his travels around the globe, he has noticed that there are an increasing number of signs and names of stores or products which are identifiable as a particular language but which are linguistically nonsensical. Blommaert particularly singled out China as being a country replete with examples of Lookalike Language in the many restaurants with fake French names which are supposed to evoke a particular ambiance, or products with English names that are void of meaning.

The final plenary session of the Congress was presented by Li Wei, a highly respected Chinese researcher and scholar on multilingualism and intercultural communication from Birkbeck College, University of London. He discussed the fact that there are now more learners of English than native speakers who interact using the web, which is leading to a "post-multilingual" world. In this new realm, languages are mixed freely and creatively, and "Chinglish" celebrities such as Joe Liu emerge on video websites doing impersonations of speakers from different regions of China speaking English (for example, [http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/BC92F\\_gRgWI](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/BC92F_gRgWI)). He provided instances in which

Chinese citizens are adapting English to their own experiences. For example, instead of the common terms, "livelihood," "stock market" and "together," these new netizens have coined the expressions "livelihard," "stuck market" and "togayther." He calls this "new Chinglish" a type of creative language use or "translanguaging."

A growing area of research which was discussed at various sessions was the use of "English as a Lingua Franca" in international high-stakes encounters, such as asylum procedures and court interpreting. In one invited symposium convened by Barbara Seidlhofer, one of the presenters, Brigitta Busch, discussed her research into the use of English as the lingua franca of asylum hearings for immigrants in Austria. In these "high-stakes" encounters, English is usually not the native language of anyone involved; neither the asylum seeker nor the judge who will determine whether asylum is granted. After her research group's discourse analysis of court transcripts showed that there was little to no understanding of the concept of world Englishes, which often led to attributions of asylum seekers' mental capacity based on their ability to speak a standard English, her team started conducting workshops with judges to raise their consciousness to this fact. In the same symposium, many academics who are non-native writers (NNW) of English were keenly interested in Mary Jane Curry's presentation of the findings of her Professional Academic Writing (PAW) in Global Context study. In her discussion, she described the "near total dominance of English journals" due to the prominence of the Web of Science citation indexing system in the granting of promotion and tenure within academia. She explained that NNW of English are often disadvantaged because the editors of these English journals function as "literary brokers" or "gatekeepers of journals" imposing standards that are very rigid and do not allow room for negotiation.

Another interesting featured symposium was convened by Terrence G. Wiley of the Center of Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. and James W. Tollefson of the University of Hong Kong. Rani Rubdy from Nanyang

Technological University in Singapore and Sandra Lee McKay of San Francisco State University discussed the Singaporean government's attempts to influence its citizens' use of English. In 2000, the government introduced the "Speak Good English" campaign with its slogan of "Speak proper. Be understood." to counter the popularity of the local variety, Singlish. Rubdy mentioned a popular website, The TalkingCock.com, which encourages Singaporeans to "preserve and advance the authentic voice of Singaporeans." Joe LoBianco discussed how native speakers of English, as well as non-native speakers are

resistant to the acceptance of non-standard varieties. He cited the historic example of Margaret Thatcher deriding non-standard English dialects as "rubbish language."

The presentations singled out for discussion above were simply a small sample of the more than 1500 sessions at the 17<sup>th</sup> AILA World Congress in Brisbane, and there is sure to be a plethora of intriguing new topics at the next AILA World Congress taking place in 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The organisers of the Rio conference are inviting all to come and experience the multilingual, multicultural country of Brazil.



Dr Ellen E Touchstone is the Module Convenor for Postgraduate English in the Language Centre at XJTLU. Her research interests are multilingual marketing, English as a Lingua Franca and language policies in transnational education.

[Ellen.touchstone@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Ellen.touchstone@xjtlu.edu.cn)

# Upcoming Conferences

Seth Hartigan

## Conferences with Open Proposal Deadlines

**5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics: "Language Assessment for Multilingualism: Promoting Linguistic Diversity and Intercultural Communication"**

May 7-9, 2015, International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Proposal due: February 15, 2015

Website: <http://ftal.ibu.edu.ba/>

**ECLL 2015: The European Conference on Language Learning Integrated Practices: Creating Experiences to Enhance Learning**

July 1-5, 2015, Thistle Brighton, East Sussex, England, United Kingdom

Proposal due: March 1, 2015

Web: <http://iafor.org/iafor/conferences/ecll2015/>

**2015 Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) International Conference: Shaping the Past, Learning the Future of English Education in Korea (KATE 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)**

July 3-4, 2015, K Hotel, Seoul, South Korea

Proposal due: February 10, 2015

Website: <http://www.kate.or.kr/>

**8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF 8): Conceptualization and Pedagogical Solutions**

August 25-27, 2015, Beijing International Convention Center, Beijing, China

Proposal due: March 31, 2015

Website: <http://elf.celea.org.cn/2015/en/401539.shtml>

**48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL): Breaking Theory New Directions in Applied Linguistics**

September 3-5, 2015, Aston University, Birmingham, England, United Kingdom

Proposal due: March 31, 2015

Website: <http://www.baal.org.uk/>

**23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Korea TESOL International Conference (KOTESOL) 2015: Transitions in**

**Education - Transitions in ELT**

October 10-11, 2015, COEX Conference Center, Seoul, South Korea

Proposal due: May 31, 2015

Website: <http://www.koreatesol.org/IC2015>

**China Annual Conference for International Education 2015: Going Green: Schools, Businesses and Communities**

October 23-25, 2015, China National Convention Center, Beijing, China

Proposal due: March 1, 2015

Website: <http://www.cacie.cn/cacie/english/>

**Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI) International Conference 2015: ESP: Needs, Pedagogy, and Assessment**

October 29-30, 2015, Pullman Bangkok King Power, Bangkok, Thailand

Proposal due: April 30, 2015

Web: <http://www.culi.chula.ac.th/International/2015InterCon/index.php>

**The 13th Asia TEFL International Conference: Creating the Future for ELT in Asia: Opportunities and Directions**

November 6-8, 2015, Jinling Convention Center, Nanjing, China

Proposal due: July 1, 2015

Web: <http://www.asiatefl.org>

**The 14th Symposium on Second Language Writing: Learning to Write for Academic Purposes**

November 19-21, 2015, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

Proposal due: February 27, 2015

Website: <http://sslw.asu.edu/2015/>

**Japan Association for Language Teaching's (JALT) 2015: 41st Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning**

November 20-23, 2015, Shizuoka Convention & Arts Center "GRANSHIP", Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan

Proposal due: February 15, 2015

Website: <http://jalt.org/conference>

**4th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity (LED 2015)**

November 23-26, 2015, Owen Glenn Building, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Proposal due: February 1, 2015

Website: <https://led.education.auckland.ac.nz/>

**2015 TESOL in Asia Conference: Excellence in Language Instruction: Supporting Classroom Teaching and Learning**

December 3-5, 2015, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Proposal due: April 15, 2015

Website: <http://www.tesol.org/events-landing-page/2014/10/08/excellence-in-language-instruction-supporting-classroom-teaching-learning>

**Conferences with Closed Proposal Deadlines**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Cambodia TESOL (CAMTESOL) Conference 2015**

February 28 - March 1, 2015, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Website: <http://www.camtesol.org/2015-conference>

**2015 Conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL)**

March 21-24, 2015, Fairmont Royal York, Toronto, Canada

Website: <http://www.aal.org/2015conference>

**International Conference on Bilingualism 2015**

March 23-25, 2015, University of Malta Valetta Campus, Malta

Website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/events/bilingualism2015>

**TESOL 2015 International Convention & English Language Expo**

March 25-28, 2015, Toronto, Canada

Website: <http://www.tesol.org/convention2015>

**International Conference on Language Form and Function (ICLFF)**

March 27-29, 2015, School of Foreign Languages, Soochow University, Suzhou, China

Website: <http://www.iclff.com/en/index.asp>

**49th Annual International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Conference**

April 11-15, 2015, Manchester Central, Manchester, England, United Kingdom

Website: <http://www.iatefl.org/annual-conference/manchester-2015>

**2015 TESOL International Conference: TESOL Asia, TESOL International Journal**

May 14-16, 2015, School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China

Website: <http://www.sfl.shu.edu.cn/Default.aspx>

**2015 International Conference on Applied Linguistics (2015 ICAL)**

May 30-31, 2015, Minhsiung Campus, National Chiayi University, Taiwan

Website: [http://www.ncyu.edu.tw/df/content.aspx?site\\_content\\_sn=45760](http://www.ncyu.edu.tw/df/content.aspx?site_content_sn=45760)

**The Sociolinguistics of Globalization: (De)centring and (de)standardization**

June 3-6, 2015, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Website: <http://www.english.hku.hk/events/slxg2015>

**Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES) International Conference: Faces of English: Theory, Practice and Pedagogy**

June 11-13, 2015, Centennial Campus of the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Website: <http://caes.hku.hk/facesofenglish/>

*Although every effort has been made to supply accurate information, readers should visit the conference websites to receive the latest updates. Many conferences choose to extend the date for abstract proposals to ensure the maximum number of presenters.*



Seth Hartigan has taught Academic English for the last ten years at XJTU, Renmin and Tsinghua Universities. His academic interests include the philosophy of education and the science of learning.

[Seth.Hartigan@xjtu.edu.cn](mailto:Seth.Hartigan@xjtu.edu.cn)



# English Teaching in China (ETiC)

## Call for Papers

The next issue of ETiC will focus on the theme of **Assessment and Testing**.

### Possible topics for inclusion:

- Chinese High School/University tests (e.g. College English Tests, National Annual tests)
- Placement Tests
- Assessment theories (incl. issues of test design)
- Use of technology in assessments
- International English Proficiency Tests (IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, etc.)
- Rating criteria (CEFR and others)
- Different types of test (e.g. integrated/discrete point; skills based/language based)
- Results analysis and interpretation (reliability & validity of tests)
- Alternative assessment (e.g. portfolio tasks/continuous assessment)
- Formative assessment (incl. feedback / peer editing / self-assessment)

We also welcome submissions on other topics related to **English Teaching in China**. Contributions can be written in any variety of English which is intelligible to our readers.

Authors must follow the ETiC style guide available on our web site: <http://etic.xjtlu.edu.cn>. Papers received that do not adhere to these guidelines will be sent back for revision by the author/s before consideration. Please email submissions to [etic@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:etic@xjtlu.edu.cn). Deadline for submissions: Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> April, for publication in July 2015.



# Chinese Corner

Titular rectitude - the art of name calling

Mark Critchley and Shu Deng

For foreigners from a culture of informality like Australia, where you can allegedly hail most people as either 'Bruce' or 'Sheila', Chinese naming conventions may seem mind boggling. Accordingly, China Daily provided an excellent short guide to the maze in August 2014, on which we base this Chinese Corner.

At work in particular, there is greater formality and power distance in relationships. Thus, you should refer to a person's family name and job title when addressing them, in deference to their social standing. For example: 李处长 Lǐ chùzhǎng (Director Li); 包经理 Bāo jīnglǐ (Manager Bao); 吴主席 Wú zhǔxí (Chairman Wu); or 梁老师 Liáng lǎoshī (Teacher Liang). However, this does not follow for the lower ranking job roles, so you wouldn't dream of referring to people as 赵保姆 Zhào bǎomǔ (Housemaid Zhao) or 孙服务员 Sūn fúwùyuán (Waiter Sun), except perhaps in a skit for comic effect. Instead, the gentler approaches of 赵阿姨 Zhào āyí (āyí, or 'auntie' being the general address for a housemaid) or 小孙 Xiǎo Sūn (小xiǎo as a diminutive meaning 'young') feel more caring and intimate. Even senior work colleagues frequently call new staff using 小 + 姓 (Xiǎo plus family name), too.

Leadership positions in China generally consist of a chief and several deputies. The chief (正) is the decision maker, sometimes with many deputy (副) positions as assistants under him or her. On formal occasions, deputies should be addressed as "副" to differentiate them from the chief. However, on informal occasions, especially when only the deputy is present, 副 should be omitted, as it is impolite to remind them of their deputy status. So 李副处长 Lǐ fù chùzhǎng (Deputy Director Li) becomes 李处长 Lǐ chùzhǎng (Director Li) or 李处 Lǐ chù when the chief is not around.

If you are invited to KTV to let your hair down with your boss after work, you may be allowed to shorten his or her title. For example, 王董事长 Wáng dǒngshìzhǎng (Chairman of the board Wang) becomes 王董 Wáng dǒng and 包总经理 Bāo zǒng jīnglǐ (General manager Bao) can become 包总 Bāo zǒng, 李处长 Lǐ chùzhǎng (Director Li) can be shortened to 李处 Lǐ chù, although not all titles can be abbreviated. This mercifully makes pronunciation simpler once the inevitable 白酒 bái jiǔ (Chinese vodka) begins to take effect. Highest ranking people should be greeted first, of course!

China Daily further reports that globalized business and cultural norms are increasingly leading the Chinese to call each other 先生 xiānsheng (Mr) and 女士 nǚshì (Ms), while many young people like to be known by their English names at work. Finally, a word of warning not to refer to young ladies using 小姐 xiǎojiě (Miss); this has negative connotations, and could result in immediate and excruciating pain if the lady thus addressed is skilled in the martial arts.

English teaching in China (ETiC) is produced by staff from the Language Centre (LC) of Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), Suzhou, China

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2015 is the Chinese year of the sheep (or goat)

The Chinese character is 羊, pronounced yáng. Traditionally, this 8<sup>th</sup> zodiac sign was associated with the goat, as sheep were not common in ancient China. However, to cater to customers who prefer the fluffy sheep to the spindly goat, many businesses promote the former for the festive season.



## Call for papers

### The Eighth International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF8): Conceptualization and Pedagogical Solutions

The Organizing Committee of ELF8, to be held in Beijing between 25th and 27th August 2015, invites proposals for presentations in any ELF related areas including but not limited to:

1. Conceptualizing ELF
2. Describing ELF
3. Approaches and Methodologies of ELF
4. ELF: Attitudes, Identity and Voices
5. ELF, Culture and Society
6. ELF and Language Policy
7. ELF and Language Education
8. ELF and Translation/Interpretation
9. ELF in Different Contexts

**Deadline for submissions:** 31st March, 2015.

**For further details, see:** <http://elf.celea.org.cn/2015/en/401539.shtml>

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Registration should be made by 20 May 2015 through application to the International Student Recruitment and Support office; [summer.school@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:summer.school@xjtlu.edu.cn). Students will be provided with course outline and preparatory reading material after registration.

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