The Development of Englishes in Asia: Chinese English to Join the Family?

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English has been spoken in Asia for several hundred years, with trade being the main vehicle for the introduction of English to the region. For example, when in December 1600, Queen Elizabeth the 1st of England awarded a trade monopoly with India to a group of English merchants, The East India Company, they naturally brought English with them to India (Ferguson, 1996). Trade also brought English to China. The first recorded contact between British and Chinese traders was recalled by one of the British traders, Peter Mundy in his account, *The Travels of Peter Mundy* (Bolton, 2003). As trade developed, so did contact between English speaking traders and their Chinese counterparts and from this contact developed a form of Chinese pidgin English (with 'pidgin' a local realisation of 'business'). Bolton (2003, p. 154ff) provides a fascinating account of the history of English in China and records several examples of early Chinese pidgin English, including :

The real stimulus for the development of varieties of English across Asia was however, colonisation. As the British Empire increased its colonial holdings, so did the English language spread to these colonies. Mufwene (2001) has

| Canton pidgin	Meaning
Chop-chop	very quickly
Chow-chow	food, to eat
Cow-cow	to be noisy and angry; an uproar
Fan kwei	foreign devil

made an important distinction between types of colonies, differentiating between settlement and trade/exploitation colonies. Settlement colonies were typically characterised by small indigenous populations, and the British sent out people from their own shores to settle these lands. Australia is a good example of what was a settlement colony. Trade/exploitation colonies were typically countries which had a thriving local population, but which were also rich in natural resources which the British Empire needed to fund its expansion and create wealth. India is a good example of what was a trade/exploitation colony. Although varieties of English naturally developed in these colonies, following similar stages and phases (Schneider, 2007), there were some differences created by the relative numbers of

settlers/colonists and the indigenous population. Where the indigenous population was relatively small and the number of settlers high, then local languages had less influence upon the new varieties of English that developed. But this is not to say that the local languages and their speakers had no influence. Australian English, for example, is replete with words taken from Aboriginal languages. Indeed the three items most commonly associated with Australia – koalas, kangaroos and boomerangs – are all words from local Aboriginal languages.

On the other hand, where the local population represented the great majority and the colonists a tiny minority, then local languages and their speakers had more influence upon the varieties of English that developed. India is one of the most densely populated nations in the world, and its rich linguistic diversity has been described as a baffling mosaic of multilingualism (Mehrotra, 1998). It is not surprising then that it is possible to talk about varieties of Indian English, rather than a single Indian English. But as both Mufwene (2001) and Schneider (2007) have argued, "postcolonial Englishes follow a fundamentally uniform developmental process" (Schneider 2010, p. 380-381). These postcolonial Englishes typically pass though the following phases:

The foundation phase – when English is introduced.

The exonormative stabilisation phase – the local variety of English is closely modelled on the variety spoken by the English speaking settlers.
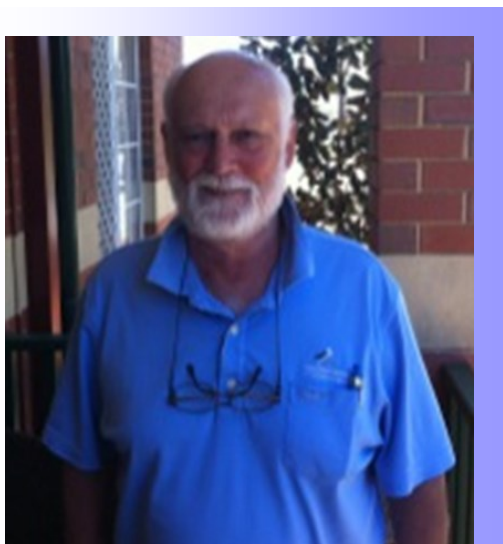
The nativisation phase – when the local varieties of English mix with the settlers/colonists' varieties to produce a locally shaped variety of English.

The endonormative stabilisation phase – when the new local variety gradually becomes accepted as the local norm or model (and can be used as a classroom model, for example).

The differentiation phase – when the new variety, reflecting local identities and cultures has emerged and when more local varieties develop.

If we briefly look at some examples of Indian English, we can see how its speakers have adopted and then adapted the language to suit their own cultural needs and experiences. As Raja Rao, the Indian writer and poet, (cited in Srivastava & Sharma, 1991) pointed out more than 50 years ago:

We shall have English with us and amongst us, and not as our guest or friend, but as one of our own, of our castes, our creed, our sect and our tradition (p. 190). We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can only write as Indians (p. 205).

The examples below of Indian English illustrate a range from vernacular ill-educated to highly formal written varieties (see Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 85ff for a full discussion). The first example is taken from a teenager's journal and shows how code-mixing between local languages and English becomes a natural part of a new variety in certain contexts. *Dhamal* is a Sanskrit word which meant a traditional type of dance, but now means dance more generally. *Beechara bakra* is Hindi for 'poor goat'.

Two rival groups are out to have fun…you know, generally indulge in *dhamal* and pass time. So what do they do? They pick on a *beechara bakra* who has entered college (D'Souza, 2001, p. 152).

The second example is taken from an Indian novel and shows the traditional use of Sikh greetings. *Sat Sri Akal* means 'God is truth'. `Live in plenty. Live a long age' is also a

traditional wish.

> She bent her head to receive her mother -in-law's blessing. '*Sat Sri Akal*'.
> '*Sat Sri Akal*' replied Sabhrai lightly touching Champak's shoulder.
> '*Sat Sri Akal*' said Sher Singh.
> 'Live in plenty, live a long age' replied Sabhrai taking her son's hand and kissing it.
> 'Sleep well' (From *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale Sing*, quoted in Kachru, 1991, p. 301).

The final example is taken from an academic text, a book reviewing and describing the literature published in English in India over a twenty year period. This excerpt itself describes the development of English in India, and is characterised by the use of extended metaphor, a highly respected Indian rhetorical style.

> Years ago, a slender sapling from a foreign field was grafted by 'pale hands' on the mighty and many-branched Indian banyan tree. It has kept growing vigorously and now, an organic part of its parent tree, it has spread its own probing roots into the brown soil below. Its young leaves rustle energetically in the strong winds that blow from the western horizon, but the sunshine that warms it and the rain that cools it are from Indian skies; and it continues to draw its vital sap from 'this earth, this realm, this India' (Naik & Narayan, 2004, p. 253).

The presence of Indian varieties of English is not in doubt. It is possible to argue, indeed, that the use of English in India has reached Schneider's differentiation stage with the emergence of different varieties. Established varieties of English have also emerged in other Asian settings, typically in post-colonial situations. Thus Bruneian, Malaysian, Filipino and Singaporean English have all been grammatically described. The question that is now being debated is whether Englishes in countries that were not colonised, or were not colonies of English speaking empires, are developing in the same way. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an excellent opportunity to study this, now that

English has been made the sole official working language of the ASEAN group. Thus Asian multilinguals from ASEAN countries which were once British or American colonies (Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Singapore) now use English alongside multilinguals from countries which were colonies or dependencies of France and The Netherlands (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia), and from Thailand, the only one of the ten ASEAN nations never to have been colonised. There is not space here to consider this question in any depth, but recent findings from the Asian Corpus of English, a corpus of some one million words of naturally occurring English used as a lingua franca among Asian multilinguals, suggest similar developmental patterns (see Kirkpatrick, 2010, Kirkpatrick and Sussex, 2012 for detailed discussion). Here I move on to consider the question in the context of the development of English in China.

Adamson (2002, 2004) has given a useful summary of the history of English teaching in China, and of the government's and people's changing attitudes towards English. While there have been times in the past where English and English speakers were viewed with suspicion, today the demand for English means that there are probably more learners of English in China than there are native speakers of it. Indeed, Bolton and Graddol (2012) suggest that there may be as many as 400 million English learners in China, but also caution that 'English learners' include all those learning English in school, and that we have no reliable figures of the number of Chinese who actually use English as part of their working lives. Nevertheless, that there are currently many millions of Chinese learning and using English is beyond doubt. The rapid growth of kindergartens which teach English is further evidence of the exponential increase in demand for English in China, especially in the wealthier urban areas (Bolton and Graddol, 2012, p. 5). This demand has taken place over a relatively short period of time, with the first new push for English being seen in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At around this time, Chinese scholars started to debate the existence of a Chinese variety of English (Du and Jiang, 2001). An early pioneer into the study of Chinese English was Wang Rongpei, and he offered this definition of Chinese English as, "the English used by the Chinese

people in China, being based on standard English and having Chinese characteristics" (1994, p. 7).

Since then, many scholars have debated the existence of Chinese English. For example, Jiang (2003) has proposed that "English is indeed becoming a Chinese language" and that "the Chinese variety of English will become more and more distinctive as an independent member of the family of world Englishes" (2003, p. 7). These studies have been supported by research into the distinctive linguistic features of Chinese English. The most complete and first book-length account of Chinese English is Xu (2010), from which the following examples are taken. It is one of the great strengths of Xu's book, that his examples are all drawn from 'real' data.

The most fruitful source of data for Chinese English comes from vocabulary items. Xu identifies categories of Chinese English lexis, using Kachru's classification of inner and outer circles of English as an analogy (see Hilmarsson -Dunn, 2013, p. 17-18). Inner circle Chinese English words comprise Chinese loanwords and loan translations. Examples of loanwords include: *yamen; dazibao; fengshui; ganbei; Pinyin; pi-p*a; and *Putonghua*. Examples of loan transliterations include: *birds' nest; dragon boat; Cultural Revolution; the reform and opening up;* and *the Four Books and Five Classics.*

'Outer circle' words of Chinese English comprise words whose original meanings have shifted to reflect Chinese culture and society. Examples include the concept of 'face', which has a very specific meaning in Chinese English. Further examples of words that have shifted in meaning are *Puke*, meaning card games in general in Chinese English, but a specific card game in American English, and 'migrant workers', which, in Chinese English, refers to people who have migrated from the countryside to the town, but which in British English, means workers who have come from overseas.

Xu also identifies and describes in detail a number of syntactic constructions which are representative of Chinese English (2010, p. 60-106). These include the co-occurrence of connective pairs ("*though* I've been busy for a long time, *but* I got no time"), subject-pronoun copying ("*one of my roommates, he* found it"…) and a preference for topic-comment sentence structure ("I think being a teacher, the life will

be too busy"). He also identifies the frequent use of complex nominalisations in Chinese English with examples such as "*A just concluded two-day rural work conference*…." and "Hu's remarks demonstrate a *down-to-earth evaluation of the current generally bright picture for the nation's development*".

Xu also considers the discourse and pragmatic features of Chinese English. Again using real and authentic data, he shows how Chinese cultural values such as 'politeness', 'face' and 'hierarchy' are realised in Chinese English. He discusses in-depth the concept of *guanxi,* and illustrates how the desire to *zhao guanxi* (seek relations), *la guanxi* (pull relations) and *gao guanxi* (manipulate relations) are reflected in a short story of Ha Jin, the Chinese writer who writes in English. Xu also notes that, on first meeting, Chinese, unlike the English, who tend to make comments about the weather, ask and answer questions on their home towns. He calls this "ancestral hometown discourse" (2010, p. 127-133) and gives a series of examples of how this is managed in Chinese English.

Xu's work provides strong evidence that it is possible to talk sensibly about the existence of a Chinese variety of English. In addition to linguistic features of the type illustrated above, a key feature of varieties of English is their frequent use of code-mixing, as we saw in the examples of Indian English above. In this, Chinese English proves no exception. Wei Zhang shows how a "mixed code variety of Chinese English" (2012, p. 40) is becoming increasingly popular, especially among users of social media. Indeed she even cites one on-line group who insists that every sentence posted on the site "should be mixed with English" (2012, p. 42). This use of mixing by speakers of Chinese English reflects the development of multicultural identities by these speakers. Similar uses of mixed codes, especially in popular culture and the social media, can be seen in the English used by Asian multilinguals across the region.

At the same time, however, as China is seeing the rapid rise in the use of English and the simultaneous development of Chinese English, one scholar has sounded the alarm concerning the apparently paradoxical demise of English departments in Chinese universities. Even as more and more people are learning and using English, there has been a steep decline in students taking English as a major at

university level (Qu, 2012). The demand from students has shifted away from traditional aspects of English study, such as literature. Students now see English as a tool that they need "in order to facilitate their participation in international business activities" (Qu, 2012, p. 16). As a consequence, the Ministry of Education has revised the syllabus for English majors to ensure it meets the "demands of the socialist market economy" (2012, p. 17). As Qu notes, few academics in English departments are either interested in or qualified in teaching professional English, and he thus predicts an unhappy future for English departments in Chinese universities, despite the increasing demand for the language.

As noted above, the development of English in post-colonial societies tends to follow similarly sequenced phases. As Schneider (2007, 2010) points out, it is not until phase 4 – the endonormative stage – that the local indigenous variety becomes accepted as the norm and classroom model. While it is beyond the scope of this article to consider whether the development of Chinese English will follow stages similar to those identified by Schneider for post-colonial Englishes, similar processes of nativisation can be seen. It is also probably true to say however, that Chinese English has yet to be accepted as a socially acceptable norm and potential classroom model. A number of scholars have conducted studies into the acceptability of Chinese English (e.g. He and Li, 2009) that suggest that attitudes towards Chinese English are becoming more positive. Further studies are needed in this field to see to what extent, for example, Chinese English is acceptable at the increasing number of universities in China that are teaching courses through the medium of English. In other words, does the 'E' in English medium of instruction (EMI) refer only to native speaker varieties of English, or does it also include different varieties of English, such as Chinese and/or English as a lingua franca (Kirkpatrick, 2014)?

In a recent article in *English Teaching in China* (ETiC), Fan and Tong (2014) suggest that English remains seen as owned exclusively by native speakers, as they lament that even in Shanghai, "there are …relatively few foreigners. As a consequence, Chinese people rarely have the opportunity to communicate

with native speakers" (2014, p. 9). But as the Chinese themselves have adequately proved, there are now many more multilinguals using English for whom English is a learned or additional language, than there are native speakers of it. The majority of those foreigners in Shanghai are likely to be multilinguals for whom English is an additional language, and who use English as a lingua franca. As such, they represent excellent opportunities for speakers of Chinese English to engage in intercultural communication and develop their use of English as a lingua franca (ELF). Chinese learners of English do not need to rely solely on native speakers for their practice. The major use of English in today's world is as a lingua franca and speakers of Chinese English are likely to become a vital and vibrant part of the international ELF community. Chinese English is here to stay.

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