

## ***'China English': Facts, Fantasies, and Fallacies***

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Does 'China English'— a Chinese variety of English — exist? This question has been a topic of much debate for more than two decades among Chinese scholars and teachers of English. At the moment, the advocates of 'China English' seem to be winning, as their position caters to Chinese patriotic feelings, e.g. we can do anything, including nativizing a foreign language, and their opponents have failed to present solid proof. This paper argues that 'China English' is totally self-proclaimed, neither meeting international standards nor acknowledged by native-speaking experts of English, and that the supporters have ignored the sociolinguistic history of the language. After examining English in China by three sets of different but similar international standards for the recognition of a new variety of English, it concludes that the so-called 'China English' is not a reality yet. Nor will it be or should it be.

**Key words:** China English, facts, fantasies, fallacies

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is common knowledge that when one judges matters of world scope and importance, international standards should be adopted. The question of recognizing English in China as a variety of new Englishes is such a matter, for which there are well-established criteria that the international community generally acknowledge. Yet the debate over 'China English', with a 28-year

history since Ge Chuangui coined the term in 1980 (cf. Jiang, 2003), is characterized by the diversity of definitions and standards, which more often than not are the results of personal experiments, observations and speculations. Some of the advocates of 'China English', in their enthusiasm to advance the cause, bend linguistic facts and ignore historical lessons in order to present a more eloquent argument. Consequently, some of their conclusions are so erroneously grounded that they verge on absurdity. At this point, as the campaign seems to be gathering some momentum, it is imperative that facts are reiterated, fantasies discussed and fallacies exposed.

### **FACTS: Does 'China English' Exist?**

Many will not hesitate to answer 'Yes'. They speak of 'China English' as if it was already a mature variety of English that is waiting to be recognized by an unsympathetic world. For example, Wei and Fei (2003) discuss the three stages that English in China has gone through, the third stage being 'a more recent indigenization that has resulted in a variety known as both *Chinese English* and, more recently (with a subtle change of emphasis), *China English*' (p. 42). For Wang, 'China English is real' (1991, p. 3). Jiang (2003) is positive that 'there is already something called Chinese or Sinicized English, or China English' (p. 6). Cui (2006) holds a similar view, claiming that 'China English' is 'a variety on its own right' (p. 41), though she modifies it later by making the contradictory statement that 'China English has been integrated into the family of world Englishes, of which it is becoming a variety' (p. 43).

Notably, most advocates of 'China English' have one thing in common: they have their own definitions of 'China English' or no definition at all. For Wei and Fei (2003), 'China English' is simply 'English as used in China' (p. 42), whereas for Hu (2005), it is 'the form of English that most Chinese end up using' (p. 31). Others define 'China English' more elaborately and hence more concretely. According to Li Wenzhong, for example, "China English is

based on a standard English, expresses Chinese culture, has Chinese characteristics in lexis, sentence structure and discourse but does not show any L1 interference” (cited in Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002, p. 269). Whatever their definitions, however, these advocates seem to be unaware of the existence of international criteria for a new variety of English when they assert that ‘China English’ is already one or becoming one. As such, their ‘declaration of independence’ is self-proclaimed, unendorsed by individuals and organizations with the expertise in and authority over the English language. Prominent native-speaking scholars of English are reluctant to participate in the debate over ‘China English’ among Chinese teachers and scholars of English, whether in its major arena in China, mostly in Chinese, or on the international forum, e.g. in such specialized journals as *World Englishes* and *English Today*. They even avoid, unless in quotation, such ambitious and ambivalent labels as ‘China English’ and ‘Chinese English’ when referring to the subject and use the more descriptive and objective term ‘English in China’ instead. This attitude unmistakably conveys an unwillingness to authorize the claim that ‘China English’ is a new variety. When Tom McArthur (2006) wants his readers to know that ‘I have never argued (explicitly or implicitly) that English is being nativized in China’ (p. 2), the implication is clear enough: China English is not yet a new variety. The key thing here is nativization, a fundamental stage in the development of a recognizable localized dialect. Thus the international silence on the topic should not be interpreted as a sign of prejudice on the part of the Westerners against ‘China English’. Rather, it is an index to the immaturity of ‘China English’ itself. For the acceptance and recognition of a new variety of English, like many other matters of world-wide importance, is determined by established international standards and criteria in the field, not by personal inclinations.

For a new variety of English to be recognized by the international English community, it must meet at least one of the three most cited sets of criteria proposed by Kachru (1981), Llamzon (1983), and Butler (1997, cited in Bolton, 2003) respectively.

By Kachru's (1981) criteria, a new variety of non-native English must perform all of the following functions:

*Instrumental* function implies the status given to English in the educational system, in which it functions as an instrument of learning at various stages. *Regulative* function entails the use of English in, for example, the legal system and administration. *Interpersonal* function provides a clue to how a non-native language is used as a link language for effective communication between speakers of various languages, dialects, ethnic groups, and religions, thus providing a code of communication for diverse linguistic and cultural groups ... *Imaginative/Innovative* function of English has resulted in the development of a large body of writing in English in different genres in various parts of the world ... (pp. 19-20)

Obviously, English in China performs no *Imaginative/Innovative* or *Regulative* function. No Chinese writer writes or publishes his/her English works in China while residing there and 'until recently the history of bilingual Chinese authors writing in the language has been typically limited to those who have published their works in the United States and the United Kingdom' (Zhang, 2002, p. 305). On the other hand, English is used neither in Chinese courts nor in government administration. English plays little *Interpersonal* role in Chinese society; it is not a means of intranational communication, as it is in India, among the various nationalities in China or within any one of them, although it acts as *lingua franca* among the international groups who work in China, e.g. Germans, Americans, Japanese, and French people. If two Chinese are talking in English, chances are that they are practicing their spoken English. In other words, there is no real need for them to speak English: Mandarin is the natural choice of daily communication. In its *Instrumental* function, English is gathering importance, although here, too, its use is still very limited. It is true that English is offered as a compulsory subject or course to students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade till doctoral years, but it is only 'used in a handful of elite schools and colleges as the language of instruction for some subjects' (Yang, 2006, p. 8). It is reported that '[t]he Ministry of Education has asked those Chinese universities under

its direct administration to use popular foreign (mainly English) textbooks and to conduct lectures in English' and 'expects 5-10% of the university courses to be taught in English within the next three years' (Jiang, 2003, p. 4). That looks encouraging, but even if the Ministry's expectation is fulfilled, it is a mere 5-10% of all the courses in the 75 higher institutions under its direct jurisdiction (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2008), which doesn't mean much compared with the 2334 universities and colleges in China as of 2008 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2008).

The conclusion, then, is clear: Judging by Kachru's criteria, 'China English' is not yet a new variety, since, of the four functions, it performs only a very limited proportion of the *Instrumental*, much less of *Interpersonal*, and none of the *Regulative* or *Imaginative/Innovative*.

Llamzon's (1983) criteria consist of four 'essential features':

I – Ecological Features

Ecological features, (sic) refer to the linguistic environment in which the varieties, as transplanted Englishes, are found. ...

II – Historical Features

The second feature that is common to the new varieties of English is their comparatively brief historical development from the parent variety... Strevens (1978) traces the genetic parents of new varieties of English to... British and American English varieties. This reflects the English varieties spoken by the former colonial masters of the new varieties of English. ...

III – Sociolinguistic Features

The new varieties of English are characterized essentially by their domains of use... With *domains of use*, the most important are those of the home, friendship and recreation. ...it is the home that gives rise to the native speakers of the new varieties of English. These native speakers provide the nucleus of the speech community which in turn maintains and supports its stability and continuity. ...

VI – Cultural Features

There is a growing body of literature written in the new varieties of English...

(pp. 100-105)

Here Llamzon makes no mention of the use of English in education, in law, and in administration. His *Cultural Features* is the same as Kachru's *Imaginative/Innovative* function and his *Sociolinguistic Features* roughly covers Kachru's *Interpersonal* function, although with different emphasis. However, he brings up two new items, which should be examined to see whether English in China matches them. *Ecological Features* of a new variety of English lies in an essential condition, that is, a multilingual community in which native speakers of English using their mother tongue at home form the nucleus of the speech environment. True, there are tens and thousands of native speakers of English in China, yet their number is proportionately too small and too scattered and their stay in one place too brief to exert any tangible influence on the overwhelming Chinese populations around them. Lacking such a must, English in China cannot be designated a new variety in the true sense of the term. The other phenomenon Llamzon calls our attention to is *Historical Features*. Here whatever the length of time it takes for the new variety to develop from the parent variety, the defining characteristic is the colonial connection between them, a connection which English in China does not have with any of the Inner Circle varieties. To make a long story short, English in China does not conform to any of Llamzon's four criteria.

According to Butler (1997, cited in Bolton, 2003), a new variety of World English should meet the following five criteria:

1. 'A standard and recognizable pattern of pronunciation handed down from one generation to another';
2. 'Particular words and phrases which spring up usually to express key features of the physical and social environment and which are regarded as peculiar to the variety';
3. 'A history – a sense that this variety of English is the way it is because of the history of the language community';
4. 'A literature written without apology in that variety of English'; and
5. 'Reference works – dictionaries and style guides – which show that people in

that language community look to themselves, not some outside authority, to decide what is right and wrong in terms of how they speak and write their English.’

(pp. 46-47)

By this standard, English in China meets neither of the last two criteria however we see it. It appears to be able to touch the third and the first, but on closer scrutiny we find that it falls hopelessly short. English came to China with ‘the first contact between British traders and the Chinese’ in 1637 (Bolton, 2003, p. 126), and ‘English education began officially in China in 1862’ (Li, Zhang, & Liu, 1988, p. 15), as early as EFL in Europe, which ‘was introduced into the schools in the course of the nineteenth century’ (Essen, 1997, p. 95), but the current of English in China, with interruptions sometimes as long as decades, has never been so strong and stable as to grow into a variety. In other words, there is a ‘history’, but not the ‘sense’. In terms of pronunciation, no recognizable and representative pattern has developed that can be handed down from one generation to another and applied to the whole country.

The only area where English in China seems to have something of its own is the lexical domain, e.g. expressions such as *open-door policy*, *microeconomic control system* (Cui, 2006), ‘barefoot doctor’, ‘vegetable basket project’ (Honna, 2006). But a few dozens of localized expressions alone do not make a new variety of English. If they did, a small ethnic village in Yunnan, a province in southwest China, would claim to have its own variety of English, as it, too, may have a number of ‘key features of the physical and the social environment’ that cannot be found anywhere else on the globe. Indigenized English words can contribute to the formation of a new variety only if the other more fundamental features are also present.

Other additional criteria have also been put forth. Kachru (1981), for example, proposes formal nativization in addition to functional nativization. Bolton (2003) suggests augmenting Llamzon’s checklist by ‘at least three other sets of features: *linguistic*, *attitudinal* and *political*’ (p. 46). It’s no good

examining them now. The more features we check, the less 'China English' will match them.

Some people might say, 'so what? China English may not be a developed variety now, but it will be in the future.' This brings us to the next question.

### **FANTASIES: Is 'China English' a Likely Development in Future?**

According to Hu (2005), 'China English is on its way to becoming another world variety, which will happen when it has been adequately described, codified and officially recognized' (p. 27). Similar views are voiced by others. Nothing, however, is farther from the truth. In the natural course of language development, English in China, as a foreign language in a country in the Expanding Circle (Crystal, 2003; Kachru, 1985), will not be 'officially recognized' as 'another world variety'. It is simply not moving in that direction.

It is risky to make any predictions concerning the future of China, where anything may happen. Speaking of English in China, however, I want to take a chance. In my opinion, 'China English', as a new variety that meets any one set of the criteria discussed above and is recognized by international English community, is not likely to become a reality in the foreseeable future. As we have seen, of all the standards we have just examined, English in China barely meets the easiest one, the one about localized expressions in Butler's checklist. What about the rest, which are much more fundamental and more difficult to satisfy? Take, for example, creative writing, which is required by all the three sets of criteria. According to Llamzon (1983, p. 104), 'The appearance of this body of literary works signals that the transplanted tree has finally reached maturity, and is now beginning to blossom and fruitify. It is one of the essential features of the new varieties of English, for these literary pieces help stabilize and at the same time illustrate the distinctive characteristics of these Englishes'. But writers do not appear in one day. 'In many Asian societies, including India, Singapore and the

Philippines, there is a body of creative writing in English that reaches back five decades or more' (Bolton, 2003, p. 6).

How long, then, will it take English in China to nurture its own group of writers? A few decades is simply not enough for China. As literary creation represents the highest stage of language development and signals linguistic maturity and complexity, how can it take place without the long existence of other primary conditions, such as a linguistic environment where English is daily and continuously used in such private domains as the home and friendship as well as in public spheres, e.g. in education, law, and administration? And how long does it take such a linguistic environment to evolve? How long, in short, does it take for a new variety of English to develop? When discussing the history of the new varieties of English, Llamzon (1983) calls it 'comparatively brief' in relation to the native varieties of the Inner Circle. How brief is it then?

According to Crystal (2003), South Asian English, which is spoken in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, 'is only some two hundred years old' (p. 101); In Colonial Africa, the variety in Sierra Leone boasts of a history of almost two hundred years while the youngest of them, English in Zambia, is only 80 years old (pp. 102-103); In Southeast Asia, Singapore English is approaching two hundred years whereas Filipino English is barely one hundred years old (pp. 104-105); and Caribbean English is by far the oldest of them all, reaching back to the 'early years of American settlement' (pp. 92, 96, 344).

It must be noted that these calculations take the beginning of the colonial period of each country as the starting point, as colonization usually means the rapid increase in the number of native speakers moving into the colony and the dominant use of English in administration, law and education, enforced by the colonial regime, and include not only the colonial period but also a postcolonial period of varied lengths, but formal colonization is generally preceded by a period of trade, exploration, settlement, and other sorts of contact between the locals and the incoming native speakers of English, which can be seen as the preparatory stage in the development of a new

variety of English. If we count in this pre-colonial phase, the development of a new variety may take as long as 400 years (as is the case of Caribbean English, starting from the arrival of the European settlers in the Americas) or even longer, e.g. Ireland. Graphically, the route map of a new variety of English, as is exemplified by the Outer Circle, is as follows:

pre-colonial	colonial	and	postcolonial
invasion, exploration, trade, EFL status, sporadic contact between English speakers and locals	development of native English community, official status: regulative function, instrumental function	bilingualism or multilingualism, interpersonal function, imaginative function, formal nativization	reference recognition books

Where would ‘China English’ fit in? No other place would be more suitable than the ‘pre-colonial’ stage, although it is now taking up a slight part of the ‘instrumental function’: it is being used as the medium of instruction and learning for a few subjects in a few prestigious universities in China. It has been pointed out that ‘China English’ is ‘still in its infancy’ (Yang, 2006, p. 3), a remark that may irritate the ardent exponents of ‘China English’. But such a conclusion is as close to the truth as any conclusion can be. Similarly, after a careful study of Kachru’s (1983, pp. 39-40) ‘four stages’ of the development of non-varieties of English, Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) argue that ‘China English is slowly moving towards phase two’ (p. 270), which is as good as saying that it is still in the first stage, as the feature of phase two, ‘extensive diffusion of bilingualism in English’ (Kachru, 1983, p. 40) in China, is nowhere to be seen yet.

Never will it be, probably. Because, as shown in the above table, the new varieties of English recognized so far invariably have a history of colonialism behind them, a fact acknowledged, if not loudly, by Western scholars, but unanimously and consistently ignored by supporters of ‘China English’. Just look again at the essential features prescribed by Llamzon (cited above) and imagine: One day in China, there will be about 56 million native speakers of

English, namely, 4.3% of the present population, permanently residing in China, functioning as the nucleus of a bilingual or multilingual speech community, whereas now there are only two hundred thousand (Sun, 2004), scattered all over China and migrating from one place to another, making it impossible for a stable and sizable English environment to take shape. 4.3% is the percentage in Singapore in 1953, 'but the figure is probably larger today' (Llamzon, 1983, p. 102). Imagine: Some day in China, 51% of the students will claim that they speak English at home, as their counterparts in the Philippines did back in 1972 (*ibid.*), while now 'English is yet to find its way into the average Chinese household', although a 'huge English-knowing population of 200-350 million has been estimated (Yang, 2006). Imagine: One day in China, Chinese writers will do what their counterparts in the Outer Circle countries have been doing for decades, composing fiction, drama and poetry in English and creating their own English canon, even though they are unable to do it now.

These are some of the things English in China must have completed before it can be accepted as a new variety. Are they obtainable? Yes, although it would take much longer than any of the existing new varieties, given the diversity of Chinese dialects and ethnic languages, the variety of local cultures, and the sheer magnitude of the population. But it is possible only if through nativization. Yet nativization cannot take place without colonization, which is the key link in the chain. If a country of the Expanding Circle desires its EFL to be recognized as a new variety, it has to go, as those of the Outer Circle have, through the process of colonization by Britain or America (in the case of the Philippines), whatever that means.

The point now is clear: It is not the length of time, but the nature of history, that determines and defines the development and classification of the English language. Without the overwhelming impact of colonization, English remains a foreign language in a country however long it has been used there. It is in this light that I am confident that English in China is unlikely to become a new variety, as Indian English, or any other new English, for that matter, has.

People might suggest sidestepping colonization to reach the goal of lifting

EFL in China to an ESL position and then to the status of a new variety. It is possible, for sure, although no nation in the Expanding Circle has done it yet or is willing to do it. If it is a desirable thing, why don’t countries of the European Continent, whose EFL is generally much more developed than in China, rush to embrace it?

### **FALLACIES: Is ‘China English’ Desirable?**

One of the major arguments presented by promoters of ‘China English’ is that English in China is mainly used by the Chinese to communicate among themselves and with other Asians (Hu, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002). Another is that ‘speakers of Asian languages, who have a closer cultural and sometimes linguistic affinity with each other, will have greater ease of communication relying on their own varieties rather than on an alien form’ (Hu, 2005, p. 30), or, more specifically, ‘other countries in Asia may find that China English is more useful to them, politically, economically and culturally, than other varieties, as it reflects more accurately their needs, both culturally and in business’ (Hu, 2004, p. 28). Based on these assumptions, some conclude that ‘Chinese learners should ... be learning “China English”’ (ibid., p. 26).

We will examine the assumptions by asking a few questions. First, can anyone tell the reader why Chinese people need to speak English ‘among themselves’? Language use, unless imposed, arises out of needs. English in China is a foreign language and, as such, it ‘is not used for communication needs internal to a community’ (Truchot, 1997, p. 65). In other words, in China, ‘the use of English is clearly determined by international purposes’ (ibid.), e.g. diplomacy, doing business or carrying out academic exchanges with the outside, research or study abroad, employment in joint ventures or international companies, immigration, etc. In short, we learn English chiefly to communicate with English speakers of other countries, not to talk among ourselves.

Second, is there any evidence that ‘Asians will have a greater ease of communication relying on their own varieties rather than on an alien form’ (Hu, 2005, p. 30)? When a Cantonese and a Shanghailander start a conversation, will they communicate better by speaking Putonghua, albeit with an accent, or by sticking to their own dialects? The answer to these questions is obvious. By analogy, when, say, a Japanese meets an Iranian, which will ensure the ‘greater ease of communication’, each speaking his own variety of English or both speaking Standard English (by which I mean British or American English), even if it may be only near-native? I often hear friends or colleagues complain of the opaqueness of Indian English. And an Indian scientist may very well complain that his Chinese visitor’s English is hard to understand. The point is that, ‘China English’, just like any other Englishes in Asia, cannot serve as a regional medium of communication as effectively as Standard English, the ‘alien form’.

Third, would ‘China English’ work well outside Asia? Probably not, as evidence shows that ‘it may cause misunderstanding when used with Anglo native speakers’ (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002, p. 274). That suggests that when speaking to people from the Inner Circle, Standard English is a more useful means of communication. ‘China English’, as can be seen, will function as an unnecessary means of intranational communication, but fail to perform where it is needed most: in regional and international communication. Standard English, however, can do all these things well.

It is clear, then, that the suggestion of teaching ‘China English’ to Chinese learners is highly questionable. If we make them learn ‘China English’ as a compulsory subject, we would have to teach them Standard English as well, because the former has no practical use and the latter is what they really need. This would mean pedagogical chaos, a huge waste of resources, and a decline in students’ English proficiency. But if we teach them Standard English from the start, we needn’t bother about ‘China English’ at all. The necessity of teaching ‘China English’, therefore, is ruled out.

Proponents of ‘China English’, however, do not see it this way. For some, the indigenization of English in China is the only desirable development,

whatever the cost; anything less seems to be a betrayal. One fervent exponent, for instance, not only looks forward to the day when ‘Chinese people take pride in what will have become their second national language’ (Hu, 2005, p. 38; cf. Niu & Wolff, 2003b, p. 35), but also draws a parallel between ‘China English’ and Hiberno-English (Hu, 2004, p. 29) and has the following shocking comment to make:

Interestingly, although English is spoken as the first language in Ireland by 98% of the population, Irish still remains, along with English, one of the two national languages. There is no reason why China English should not also find its way from the Expanding to the Inner Circle in the course of time. It took Ireland only half a century to do so. (ibid.)

I do not think she means what she says. A few things in this quotation must be discussed here. First of all, English, constitutionally at least, is neither the first language nor a national language in Ireland, as Hu claims it is. According to the *Constitution of Ireland*,

1. Irish language as the national language is the first official language.
2. The English language is recognized as a second official language. (Article 8)

Secondly, English in Ireland has needed much longer than ‘only half a century’ to develop into what it is today. A little knowledge of history will throw light on the evolution of Hiberno-English. ‘Ireland was the first of the overseas English-speaking colonies, and there has been some 800 years of continuous contact between the two nations’ (Crystal, 2003, p. 336). Specifically, ‘the history of English involvement in Gaelic-speaking Ireland dates from 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the country was invaded by Anglo-Norman knights, and English rule was imposed by Henry II’ (ibid.). From the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, British colonialists imposed English on Ireland and relegated Irish ‘beyond the pale’ (Phillipson, 2000, p. 19), which means reducing it to the status of a barbarous language. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, English became the dominant language and ‘Gaelic was avoided in the home and became a reason for

punishment if children were heard to use it in schools' (Crystal, 2003, p. 336). As a result, Gaelic, the native language of the Irish people, is now verging on extinction, and barely maintains its status as the national language through government action. Does Hu (quoted above) really think this is an 'interesting' result? Does she still want to suggest that China follow the example of Ireland so that English would be made our 'second national language', spoken by 98% of the Chinese people, whereas the Chinese language will be used by a mere 2 percent in the rural areas?

Thirdly, it should be seen from the above analysis that there is no parallel to be drawn, historically or categorically, between 'China English' and Hiberno-English, as it is assumed (Hu, 2004, p. 29) there is. Ireland by nature is not a country of the Inner Circle, where, according to Kachru, English is 'the primary language' (1985, p. 12) or 'used primarily as a native language' (1981, p. 15). It belongs to the Outer Circle, where English is nativized as a second language. English in China, however, exists in the Expanding Circle, maintaining the status of a foreign language. Truchot (1997) rightly points out that the main difference between the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle 'is qualitative'. Indeed, the same is true between the Outer Circle and the Inner Circle. As a result, mobility between any two of them would involve change of kind, not just of degree.

Fourthly, even if we treat Hiberno-English as an Inner Circle variety, as some (Crystal, 2003; Hu, 2004) do, it has got there from the Outer Circle, not from the Expanding Circle, where 'China English' belongs. If 'China English' is to enter the Inner Circle, it must cross two qualitative borders, namely, from a foreign language to an indigenized second language to a national language. It is like a foreigner seeking to become a member of, say, Britain's House of Lords without becoming a British citizen first. Even if he chose to do it by going through all stages one by one, he would have lost his former identity – his nationality, language, and culture – by the time he reached there. This is what would happen if 'China English' really moved from the Expanding Circle to the Inner Circle, as Hu (*ibid.*) suggests. Advocates of 'China English' may argue that English in China can develop

into a new variety without undergoing colonization and without marginalizing Chinese language and culture. In other words, let us do it ourselves and do it well by avoiding bad effects. Well and good. Whoever does it, the process must be the same, if a new variety of English is the goal. Nativization, both of forms and functions, is indispensable. We shall start by inviting millions of native speakers of English to settle in our cities, so that they can form authentic English centers for and interact with the much larger surrounding Chinese communities. Secondly, we will make English, along with Mandarin, an official language and use it in the legal system, civil service, parliament, primary, secondary and tertiary education, the armed forces, the media, and tourism.

Those are the things that the Outer Circle countries, where English has been recognized as new varieties, have been engaged in. We have to do them because we want to ensure that our people use and are exposed to English as much as possible. School subjects in both primary and secondary schools will be taught in English, just as they are in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe (Crystal, 2003). University education will no longer be offered in Chinese and is only available through the medium of English, as is the case in Singapore (Phillipson, 2000, p. 29). People must speak English when they have to deal with civil servants, have legal matters settled, see the doctor, go shopping, etc., or they may fail to get things done. They read English newspapers and magazines and watch English TV programs everyday. They frequently speak to the native speakers of English in the neighborhood. Then some of them start to speak English at home. If this goes on long enough, writers will try their hand at writing in English, and localized patterns of pronunciation and syntax as well as lexical features will emerge and stabilize and become distinctive and recognizable. Now English in China has transformed into 'China English', a nativized variety that stands on its own.

Wait a minute. What about Chinese? Let's try to imagine what will have happened to Chinese. Nominally, Chinese is still the national language, but it is losing ground to English on all fronts. At schools of all levels, Chinese is only spoken in Chinese language classes, not in other classes, which are all

offered in English. In both public and private domains, English is preferred over Chinese. In high society, those who speak Chinese are ridiculed as ‘uncivilized’ and ‘rustic’. In some rural areas, uneducated people still use Chinese, but they are agonized and humiliated when the children come from school and complain of the lack of English atmosphere at home. This is not false alarm. History indicates that ‘[t]he advance of English ... has invariably been at the expense of other languages’ (Phillipson, 2000, p. 17). How about Chinese culture? With language gone, how could culture remain? In what is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Whorf says, ‘We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that holds through our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language’ (cited in Brown, 1980). Now that we, as a nation, have turned to English, we have to subscribe to its way of thinking and give up our way of ‘cutting nature up’. Thus writers writing in Chinese find themselves shunned by both publishers and readers. All traditional Chinese drama, including Peking Opera, has become a thing of the past. Traditional Chinese medicine is thoroughly done away with.

At this point, with the overall Anglicization or Americanization of Chinese society, we have done by ourselves what the British once did in India, that is, in T. B. Macaulay’s words, to cultivate ‘a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect’ (‘Minute’, 1835), a strategy which was to be applied to the other colonies of the British Empire (cf. Phillipson, 2000). Now our people, middle and upper classes in particular, have shaped themselves, by self-colonization, into a class of persons, Chinese in blood and color, English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. Is there still a nation called ‘Chinese’? Definitely not. A nation is characterized by its language and culture. When language and culture are gone, so is the nation. We’ve turned ourselves into ‘banana people’, that is, ‘yellow on the outside, but white on the inside’, on our own land. I believe that the advocates of ‘China English’ do not wish to see such a consequence.

## CONCLUSION

I shall now come down to the bottom line. By Kachru's (1985) taxonomy of three concentric circles, English in China belongs to the Expanding Circle, where English functions primarily as a foreign language. To my knowledge, no government in this circle is interested in making English its official language or aiming at nativizing it in its language policy, even though English there may be assuming some of the functions of a second language, as is the case in 'Belgium and Switzerland where it tends to be used for intranational communication as well' (Truchot, 1997, p. 65) or in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, where there is a risk of what Tom McArthur (2003, p. 58) terms 'the Scotlandization of northern Europe'. The reason is that officialization and nativization of English entail the marginalization and detriment of the native language(s) and culture(s), a step that former colonialists were not reluctant to take, but a risk too big for any responsible national government to venture on its own initiative.

While people in the West are alert that '[b]y 2050, the "let them learn English" attitude typical in the US and Britain may have become "let them learn Mandarin",' and that 'English will cease to be the single world language and will have to share the stage with Chinese, or revert to being a merely regional linguistic power' (Smith, 2005, p. 62), how come that some Chinese teachers of English so passionately propose to change EFL in China to ESL or even ENL? Do they 'not yet realize the reality that the emerging China has the immediate clout to demand that those desiring to do business in China or with China should learn Mandarin, rather than expect 1.3 billion Chinese to learn English?' (Niu & Wolff, 2003, p. 11) In the final analysis, "If China is to maintain its national sovereignty, must it not also maintain the use of Mandarin as its vehicle of international communication with the rest of the world?" (ibid.) Tom McArthur (2005) calls the proposal of a European English 'eccentricity' (p. 63). I would give a different epithet to all the enthusiasm for 'China English': absurdity.

As a teacher of English, I love the language and its treasure of great canons.

I will, as I have been doing, teach my students Standard English as I know it and encourage them to master the language so that they can enjoy and learn from Western cultural heritage and help revive and enhance Chinese civilization while retaining their own identity by learning and using Chinese well, because ‘national identity is tied directly to the preservation of the native language’ (Niu & Wolff, 2003, p. 11). The EFL cause in China will continue to prosper, but that has nothing to do with ‘China English’ as a nativized variety, which, as I have tried to prove, is unreal, unattainable, and undesirable.

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