
Native Speaker Norms and China English: From the Perspective of Learners and Teachers in China

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This article explores the question of whether the norms based on native speakers of English should be kept in English teaching in an era when English has become World Englishes. This is an issue that has been keenly debated in recent years, not least in the pages of *TESOL Quarterly*. However, *China English* in such debates has been given lesser attention, and the voices of English learners and teachers in China have not been adequately reported. This article serves as such an attempt in the context of China having the largest English-learning population in the world. The present study drew comprehensive data from 984 college students and their teachers at 4 universities in different parts of China. With three cross-validated research methods (questionnaire survey, matched-guise technique, and focused interview), this article argues that native speaker-based norms and models are the most desirable in China's English classroom at the tertiary level, but they could be supplemented by the well-codified and successfully promoted features of China English.

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Modern technology has turned the world into a small village. The Internet can carry English, the world language, to every corner of the world. However, classroom¹ teaching still remains the major means

In his article in *ELT Journal*, Timmis (2002, pp. 248–249) said that “It is possible, even likely, that if this survey were repeated in ten years’ time, the results might be quite different, with increased awareness of the issues involved.” Our study is a response, in some degree, to his call for more research in this area in China.

¹ If not specified, *classroom* in this article refers to not just university-level classrooms but classrooms as a whole.

for people to learn English as a foreign language (Horwitz, 2008). As former full-time classroom teachers of English and present researchers of English education, we are not alone in trying to identify the most appropriate norms and models for the classroom. The issues of deciding on the most appropriate pedagogic models and norms are of special significance in China for at least two reasons. First, China has the largest English-learning and -using population (it is estimated that there are 440–650 million English learners and users in China; for details, see Bolton, 2003; Crystal, 2008; He & Li, 2009; Jiang, 2002). Second and more important, this population is used to speaking China English with cross-linguistic influences from Chinese, their mother tongue (Du & Jiang, 2001; He, 2007; Hu, 2004; Jiang, 1995, 2003; Jiang & Du, 2003; Li, 2007). Because of these influences, China English is different from Standard Englishes, although it is itself based on standard forms.

For many years, the standard varieties of British and American English were accepted and promoted as the only internationally acceptable pedagogical models for English language teaching (ELT; Adamson, 2004; Bolton, 2003; Lam, 2002; Zhang, 2003). In recent years, however, this has been challenged by World Englishes scholars such as Kachru (1985, 1988, 1992b, 1993, 2005), Jenkins (1998, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; especially her theory of *lingua franca core*), Kirkpatrick (2000, 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002), and Seidlhofer (1999, 2001, 2004, 2006; Seidlhofer & Jenkins, 2003). Within this framework, the question then arises of which variety of English (i.e., native versus nonnative models) should be selected as the pedagogic model in outer-circle and expanding-circle countries (Kachru, 1985). This question has been a subject of debate for nearly two decades (e.g., Bamgbose, 1998, 2001; Davies, 1999; Kachru, 1992b; Seidlhofer, 1999; Starks & Paltridge, 1996; Widdowson, 1997). For example, Timmis (2002) echoed the frequently voiced concern that, amidst the diversity, there should be a workable model of intelligibility for international purposes. By investigating the attitudes of teachers and students toward the native speaker norms, Timmis (2002, 2005) indicated that native varieties of English are probably the best starting point for such a model, although some applied linguists argued against the predominance of native speaker models and cultures in ELT. For instance, Alptekin (2002) challenged the native speaker norms and pointed out the need for a new pedagogic model of English in the context of English as international language by arguing that

...[t]he conventional model of communicative competence, with its strict adherence to native speaker norms within the target language culture, would appear to be invalid in accounting for learning and using an international language in cross-cultural setting. A new pedagogic model is urgently needed

to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication. (p. 63)

DIVERSIFIED PEDAGOGIC MODELS

Among the prestigious scholars investigating the pedagogic models of English in the description of English as a lingua franca (ELF), Kirkpatrick's work deserves special attention here. He has conducted research on the model of English that should be used in classrooms for many years, especially in the contexts of Asia and Australia (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2000, 2002, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002; Kirkpatrick & Zhang, 1995; R. Scollon, S. Scollon, & Kirkpatrick, 2000).

Kirkpatrick (2006c) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of three different potential pedagogic models of English in East Asia and Australia: a native speaker model, a nativised model, and a lingua franca model.² He concluded that the last one is the most sensible one in the contexts where English is mainly used to communicate between nonnative speakers of English. What is more, he believed that this last model also closely approximates Kachru's (1992a) idea of a polymodel approach to English teaching, because it neither imposes rigid *correct* norms nor adheres to a single model. Nevertheless, he also pointed out that the various stakeholders³ (especially the teachers and learners) will still have to choose between the first two models, until applied linguists are able to supply the teachers and learners with adequate linguistic descriptions of lingua franca models.

Considering the development of English education in China, Kirkpatrick (2006c) argued that the nativised and lingua franca models might not be the right choice, because of China's traditional and strongly held attachments, especially those from the Chinese officials and administrators, to standards and correctness (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002; Watson, 1967). Therefore, Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) suggested that, for the time being, a native speaker model (most probably American English) is the choice of all stakeholders in China. However, it

²A native speaker model takes Standard Englishes as the norm for teaching, whereas a nativised model considers a nativised variety of English as the pedagogic model and norm (e.g., Indian English in India). The lingua franca model can be seen in the following way, as described by Graddol (2006) that "[t]he target model of English, within the ELF framework, is not a native speaker but a fluent bilingual speaker, who retains a national identity in terms of accent, and who also has the special skills required to negotiate understanding with another non-native speaker" (p. 87).

³The possible stakeholders include the education policy makers and implementers at different governmental levels, English language teachers and learners at different levels, parents of these learners, textbook publishers, examination providers, and even some leaders of the enterprises that might need their employees to be proficient in English.

should not be neglected that this suggestion is based only on a survey of students' attitudes toward varieties of English conducted at one university in Beijing. In addition, several other investigations also suggested that China English should stand alongside British English, American English, and other World Englishes, and that Chinese students do not inherently aspire to a native speaker model; instead, it is the lack of opportunity to access updated information on World Englishes that has led to the pragmatic adoption of the native speaker model (e.g., Hu, 2004, 2005; Jin, 2005). This situation resonates with Rubdy and Saraceni's (2006) argument that the choice of native speaker models to be taught in the classroom is, in many cases, "in fact not a real choice but a result of a lack of alternatives" (p. 6).

Kirkpatrick (2006c) identified five reasons why the native speaker models remain the most popular, which can be briefly summarized as follows:

- They benefit from the commercial promotion provided by the publishers and international ELT institutions alike
- they have been well codified
- they are looked upon as standard varieties of English through their codification
- they represent power, and this power works in more than one way whether it would be media, publishing and/or language teaching interests
- they have, more or less, historical authority. This, together with their codification, allows people to argue for their inherent superiority as models over more recently developed nativised varieties.

By disputing these reasons one by one, Kirkpatrick argued that the adoption of native speaker models will only be advantageous for a tiny fraction of the total number of teachers and learners. Specifically, only the native speaker teachers will benefit from these models, because they are "seen as providing the correct model, the source of the standard" (Kirkpatrick, 2006c, p. 73); and only the learners who learn English mainly for the purpose of communicating with native speakers and understanding the native speaking culture that they are interested in will benefit from choosing them as models (Kirkpatrick, 2007a). But again, it must be pointed out that the teachers and learners mentioned earlier account for just a tiny minority of the number of people who teach and learn English in China today.

Although the choice of a native speaker model is appropriate for only the minority of the English teachers and learners, this choice brings disadvantages to the great majority. First, Kirkpatrick (2007a) argued that the native speaker model is unattainable for the learners. The

reason he proposed this is that the English as a foreign language—English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learners can sound American or British only if they live in these countries for a comparatively long time or are taught completely by native-speaking English teachers, which will be impossible for most of the English learners in China. As a result, the learners' unwillingness to use the language will be unavoidable, since they will "become frustrated by setting themselves what is, in effect, an impossible target" (Cook, 2002, p. 331). Second, the choice also undermines the position of local teachers because of their being required to teach a model that they themselves are not the representatives of (Kirkpatrick, 2007a), and which will, in turn, severely reduce their sense of self-confidence and self-respect (Medgyes, 1994).

In addition to Kirkpatrick's arguments, Prodromou (1997) estimated that up to 80 percent of global communication in English takes place between nonnative speakers. Therefore, he believed that "[t]he non-native teacher's authority suffers in the native-dominated scheme of things because it is precisely in the area of the learners' culture that non-native teachers are at their best" (Prodromou, 2006, p. 52). Cook (1999) also asserted that "the prominence of the native speaker in language teaching has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful L2 user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners" (p. 185). By contrast, one stands a better chance of convincing EFL/ESL students that "they are successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers" if one can "acknowledge that L2 users have strengths and rights of their own" rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker norms (Cook, 1999, p. 204). Furthermore, ever since the 1980s a number of studies (e.g., Kachru, 1993; Kirkpatrick, 2006c; Li, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2001; K. K. Sridhar & S. N. Sridhar, 1986) have questioned the claim that the goal of learning and teaching English in nonnative settings is to aim toward a native variety of English.

Based on the above arguments, one might safely arrive at the conclusion that a native speaker model will not work well in China, and to insist completely on this model may not only be less useful but also a hindrance to teachers and learners (cf. Graddol, 2006). Because we are talking about teaching and learning English as a foreign language in China, it is conceivable that we can combine select features⁴ of China English into the native speaker model, which can be termed either as an *institutional bilingual model*, as suggested by Kirkpatrick (2006b), or as

⁴For example, lack of weak forms for function words, some China-specific words and expressions like *Putonghua* and *effort halved, result doubled* (shì bàn gōng bèi, 事半功倍), and the Chinese way of inductive structure in passage writing (i.e., the most significant point tends to be delayed until a considerable amount of background information has been presented). For more discussion of the features of China English, please refer to Deterding (2006), He and Li (2009), and Jiang (2002), among others.

Standard English plus, as proposed by Li (2006), because the great majority of China's English learners are first language (L1) Chinese speakers who develop English skills in schools taught by L1 Chinese teachers. This new model might solve the problems mentioned above. First, it is attainable and relevant to the learners. Second, local English teachers also become the role models for learners now, because they possess the linguistic background and resources of the learners' L1 and they are now teaching a language they have learnt as a foreign language. Their learning experience gives them an understanding of the potential difficulties their students might have and an empathy with their students (Medgyes, 1994). While thinking of the appropriate model(s) to follow in ELT in China, it occurred to us that it would be of great interest to investigate, against the experts' (e.g., Timmis) opinions discussed above, whether and how far English learners and their teachers want to follow a native speaker model in the field of pronunciation and grammar, their attitudes toward Standard Englishes (e.g., British or American English) and China English, and their preferred pedagogic models.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of exploring the appropriate models and norms to be followed in ELT in China's classrooms, this article reports the findings of an empirical study conducted with non-English majors and teachers of college English in China. It draws on three research instruments: questionnaire survey, matched-guise technique (MGT), and focused interview.

Participants

Altogether, 1,030 participants (820 students and 210 teachers) took part in the questionnaire survey and the matched-guise experiment. A total of 984 valid questionnaires were collected (795 students, 97%; 189 teachers, 90%). One-tenth of the participants ($N = 103$) were interviewed (82 students and 21 teachers). To make the participants maximally representative of their respective groups, varying factors like age, gender, disciplines, school year for students, academic ranks and qualifications for teachers, and geographic regions were taken into consideration when selecting these participants of non-English majors and their teachers. In addition to these factors, the interviewees were also chosen in line with their responses to some related questionnaire items. Such variation is acknowledged as an advantage that increases the validity of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). To be specific, the participants were from four universities (one key university and three

second-tier universities) located in eastern, western, northern, and central China. It is well known that China's primary and secondary education is college oriented, which means that, if the curriculum of English at tertiary level changes, so will the curriculum at lower levels. Therefore, the English education at nontertiary levels was excluded from the scope of the present research, and the focus was limited to teachers and students of non-English majors. There are two main reasons for excluding English majors in our study. First, English majors in China are expected to graduate with near-native proficiency in English. Second, perhaps more important, because non-English majors constitute the absolute majority⁵ of the potential English-speaking and English-using population in China, we believe the choice of a pedagogic model of English should be geared toward the needs of this group.

Although some of the participants speak Chinese dialects as their first language, all of them reported to speak Putonghua as their everyday language.

Specifically, all the 795 student participants are Chinese, aged from 17 to 25 years ($\bar{x} = 20.6$). Among them, 51.7% (411) are male and 48.3% (384) female. They came from four discipline areas: arts (196), law (194), business (174), and engineering (231). In terms of the year of study, 344 (43.3%) were freshmen, 251 (31.6%) sophomores, 77 (9.7%) juniors, and 123 (15.5%) seniors. The student participants were representative of non-English majors studying in China's universities. An overview of the year of study, discipline area, and gender distribution of the student participants is shown in Table 1.

As for the 189 teacher participants, 77 (40.7%) are male and 112 (59.3%) female. Their age ranged from 22 to 65 years ($\bar{x} = 34.4$), and they had 5 months to 42 years of English teaching experience ($\bar{x} = 10.6$).

TABLE 1
Year, Discipline, and Gender Distribution of Student Participants

| | Freshmen | | Sophomores | | Juniors | | Seniors | | Arts | | Law | | Business | | Engineering | | Total | |
|--------|----------|------|------------|------|---------|-----|---------|------|------|------|-----|------|----------|------|-------------|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Male | 177 | 22.3 | 114 | 14.4 | 46 | 5.8 | 74 | 9.3 | 74 | 9.3 | 100 | 12.6 | 89 | 11.2 | 155 | 19.5 | 411 | 51.7 |
| Female | 167 | 21.0 | 137 | 17.2 | 31 | 3.9 | 49 | 6.2 | 122 | 15.4 | 94 | 9.8 | 85 | 10.7 | 76 | 9.6 | 384 | 48.3 |
| Total | 344 | 43.3 | 251 | 31.6 | 77 | 9.7 | 123 | 15.5 | 196 | 24.7 | 194 | 24.4 | 174 | 21.9 | 231 | 29.1 | 795 | 100 |

⁵ Although no official numbers of the total non-English majors and English majors in China can be obtained, we can take one comprehensive key university in central China—Wuhan University—as an example. It is reported on this university's official homepage that there were 32,010 undergraduates by November 2009; among them, only 483 were English majors (Wu, 2009).

In terms of the highest academic qualification attained (all majoring in English), three (1.6%) held doctorate degrees, 150 (79.4%) master's degrees, and 36 (19%) bachelor's degrees. Their academic ranking also varied considerably, with 2 (1.1%) being professors, 69 (36.5%) associate professors, 73 (38.6%) lecturers, and 45 (23.8%) teaching assistants. Up to 113 (59.8%) taught non-English majors only, whereas 76 (40.2%) taught both English majors and non-English majors. Table 2 gives an overview of the gender distribution, academic qualification, and ranking of these teacher participants.

Methods

To optimize validity and reliability, three different instruments were employed in this research, in accordance with the general observation that "interpretations which are built upon triangulation are certain to be stronger than those which rest on the more constricted framework of a single method" (Denzin, 1997, p. 319). Specifically, questionnaire survey data are triangulated with data obtained from interviews and the experiment using the MGT.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two items adapted from Timmis (2002): Item 1 on pronunciation and Item 2 on grammar as shown later.⁶ To ensure the best comprehensibility of the questionnaire, it was translated into Chinese, the participants' L1. Therefore, prior to the pilot test with the questionnaire, back-translation, a technique regularly used for assessing translation quality, was utilized to check the item compatibility between the Chinese and English versions of the

TABLE 2
Gender, Academic Qualification, and Ranking of the Teacher Participants

| | Doc- tor | | Master | | Bache- lor | | Prof | | Associate Prof | | Lectur- er | | TA | | Total | |
|--------|-------------|-----|--------|------|---------------|------|------|-----|-------------------|------|---------------|------|----|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Male | 2 | 1.1 | 63 | 33.4 | 12 | 6.3 | 2 | 1.1 | 29 | 15.3 | 35 | 18.5 | 11 | 5.8 | 77 | 40.7 |
| Female | 1 | 0.5 | 87 | 46.0 | 24 | 12.7 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 21.2 | 38 | 20.1 | 34 | 18.0 | 112 | 59.3 |
| Total | 3 | 1.6 | 150 | 79.4 | 36 | 19.0 | 2 | 1.1 | 69 | 36.5 | 73 | 38.6 | 45 | 23.8 | 189 | 100 |

Note. TA= teaching assistant.

⁶ There are three reasons why we just focused on pronunciation and grammar as opposed to other variables of language use like collocation, idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, pragmatics, and meaningful chunks. First, the present study is only the first stage of a larger research program, so it is impossible to include everything from the start. Second, these two aspects, in many ways, seem to go to the heart of the native speaker issue (Timmis, 2002). Last but not least, these are two variables that Timmis (2002) investigated, and one purpose of our study is to compare our findings with his.

questionnaire. Checked against the criteria suggested by Low (1997), this questionnaire was shown to be valid by the pilot studies of both Timmis (2002) and the present study. In the actual course of data collection, the participants were asked to make choices first and then provide their reasons on the space below each item. The primary objective of the questionnaire is to investigate into participants' desire to incorporate salient features of China English into the existing teaching model of college English in China, which may, in turn, help to identify their preferred teaching model of college English.

Item 1

Student A: 'I can pronounce English just like a native speaker now. Sometimes people think I am a native speaker.'

Student B: 'I can pronounce English clearly now. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I still have the accent of my country.'

Please fill in the blank with A or B; I would prefer (my students) to be like Student _____.

Your reasons:

Item 2

Student C: 'I can say everything that I want to say. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I use English my own way and sometimes I say things which native speakers think are grammar mistakes.'

Student D: 'I know all the grammar rules I need so that I can say anything I want. I use these rules correctly, but sometimes English people use grammar that isn't in the grammar books and I don't want to learn this.'

Student E: 'I use all the grammar rules that native speakers use, even the informal grammar native speakers use when they speak to each other.'

Please fill in the blank with C, D or E; I would prefer (my students) to be like Student _____.

Your reasons:

The purpose of conducting the matched-guise experiment is to elicit the participants' spontaneous reactions toward Standard Englishes and China English. In the MGT experiment, the respondents first listened to one voice reading a paragraph out loud with two different accents: one in a typical China English accent, and the other in a more or less nativelike accent. However, they were told that the readings were done by two different speakers. It was the first author's voice which was projected in the tape recording. For quality assurance, prior to implementation, the *nativelike* accent had been played to seven

professors (four native-speaking English teachers and three local English teachers), of whom five were convinced that the accent sounded sufficiently nativelike. The respondents were instructed to give their ratings of “the two speakers” on a response sheet with regard to the 16 traits as shown in Table 5 in the Results section. The rating was based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = the voice does *not* match with the given trait *at all*; 2 = the voice does *not* match with the given trait *so well*; 3 = I *do not know* whether the voice matches with the given trait or not; 4 = the voice matches with the given trait *well*; and 5 = the voice matches with the given trait *very well*. In this way, the elicited responses are considered stereotypical attitudes toward the language (i.e., Standard Englishes or China English) and its speakers, rather than toward the voices as such (see also Edwards, 1994; Wikipedia, 2007).

In order to triangulate these quantitative data, 103 informants were interviewed by the first author either individually (18 of 21 teachers) or in small groups (82 student participants and 3 teachers; group size ranged from 3 to 9). To ensure that all interviewees would speak their minds in a language familiar to them, they were interviewed in Putonghua. The interview data were transcribed verbatim into Chinese before being translated into English. Both the transcriptions and translations were carefully proofread and checked independently by the authors. In the process, stylistic inconsistencies were minimized and discrepancies thoroughly discussed and resolved by agreement. This proved to be an extremely time-consuming process, but in the interest of assuring high-quality data, the resultant gain in reliability and validity made it a completely worthwhile procedure (cf. Kvale, 1996).

RESULTS

Questionnaire Survey

On Pronunciation

It can be seen from Table 3 that 55.4% (545) of the participants would prefer themselves (or if teachers, their students) to be like Student B, which suggests that more than half of them did not mind themselves (or if teachers, their students) speaking English with the accent of their mother tongue, as long as they (their students) can communicate clearly in English with others. Almost 83% (660) of the students and 43.9% (83) of the teachers provided reasons for their choices. Some of them wrote more than one reason for one or both of the two questions.

Approximately 50.1% (273) of the 545 participants who chose Student B argued that English is just a tool for communication, and

TABLE 3

Response Frequencies (in percent) for Item 1

| Item | A | | | B | | | Total Missing |
|--|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|---------------|
| | S | T | Total | S | T | Total | |
| I would prefer (my students) to be like Student A/B. | 41.6 | 56.6 | 44.5 | 58.2 | 43.4 | 55.4 | 0.1 |

Note. S = students ($N = 795$); T = teachers ($N = 189$).

therefore it is unnecessary for them (or their students) to pronounce English like a native speaker, as long as both native and nonnative speakers can understand them. In addition, many others (34.9%, 190) explained that they have a strong language identity; in other words, they want (or if teachers, their students) to be identified as Chinese while communicating with foreigners in English. The third main reason for the participants to choose Student B (18.3%, 100) is the belief that English learners' pronunciation cannot be free from the cross-linguistic influences of their mother tongue, Chinese. These results seem to suggest that it is acceptable to incorporate select features of China English into the existing pedagogic model based on Standard Englishes.

On Grammar

Table 4 tells us that 46.1% of the informants preferred Student E, which implies that nearly half of them hoped that they (or their students) could master English grammar well, including the informal grammar.

Among the 454 participants who selected Student E, 248 (54.6%) believed that speaking English like Student E can guarantee free/better/more effective communication because knowing more informal grammar can help avoid misunderstanding or embarrassment on certain occasions. In addition, 74 (16.3%) insisted that they hope that they (or their students) will learn Standard/perfect/good English if they have to learn English.

TABLE 4

Response Frequencies (in percent) for Item 2

| Item | C | | | D | | | E | | | Total Missing |
|--|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|---------------|
| | S | T | Total | S | T | Total | S | T | Total | |
| I would prefer (my students) to be like Student C/D/E. | 28.8 | 28.6 | 28.8 | 24.9 | 24.9 | 24.9 | 46.0 | 46.6 | 46.1 | 0.2 |

Note. S = students ($N = 795$); T = teachers ($N = 189$).

TABLE 5

Means and Differences of China English and Standard Englishes on the 16 Traits

| Traits | Means | | Difference |
|----------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | China English/Standard Englishes | | |
| Positive | 1. Friendly | 2.94/3.31 | -0.37** |
| | 2. Intelligent | 2.83/3.17 | -0.34** |
| | 3. Educated | 2.88/3.18 | -0.30** |
| | 5. Competent | 2.80/3.39 | -0.59** |
| | 6. Industrious | 2.93/3.08 | -0.15* |
| | 7. Sincere | 2.99/3.15 | -0.16* |
| | 9. Approachable | 2.78/3.16 | -0.38** |
| | 10. Considerate | 2.85/3.00 | -0.15* |
| | 11. Trustworthy | 2.92/3.11 | -0.19* |
| | 12. Wealthy | 2.77/3.06 | -0.29** |
| | 13. Trendy | 2.72/3.20 | -0.48** |
| | 15. Powerful | 2.75/3.34 | -0.59** |
| | 16. Confident | 2.79/3.64 | -0.85** |
| | 14. Patient | 3.13/3.04 | 0.09 |
| Negative | 4. Arrogant | 3.01/2.61 | 0.40** |
| | 8. Aggressive | 3.04/2.66 | 0.38** |

Note. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

MGT

On the whole, the findings of the MGT as displayed in Table 5 are found to be consistent with the findings of the questionnaire survey reported earlier. It can be seen from Table 5 that multivariate analysis of variance revealed significant differences between China English and Standard Englishes in the means on 15 of the 16 traits. To be more exact, Standard Englishes were given significantly higher ratings than China English on nearly all the positive traits except the one (i.e., patient) showing no significant differences. Nonetheless, Standard Englishes were given markedly lower ratings than the latter on the two negative traits. It may seem surprising that the speakers of China English were reported to be more *arrogant* and *aggressive* than those of Standard Englishes in our study. Nevertheless, it might be somewhat natural, because the MGT was intended to identify participants' attitudes toward different languages (or different varieties or dialects of a language). Because the respondents had formed more positive attitudes toward Standard Englishes, they might consequently rate these two negative traits higher for China English than for Standard Englishes. Such results indicate that the participants are far more in favor of Standard Englishes than of China English. However, in spite of their preference for Standard Englishes, it should also be noted that the MGT participants are far from being negative toward China English, since their means on all of the 14 positive traits of China English are above 2 and close to the

median 3, and the mean on the trait *patient* (3.13) is even higher than the median and that of Standard Englishes (3.04; see Table 5 for details). These results indicate that the subjects' attitudes toward China English are not so negative. This is compatible with the questionnaire survey results that select features of China English may be accepted as part of the teaching model in China.

Interview

The findings of this qualitative method are generally consistent with those of quantitative methods. Specifically, 87.4% (90) of the informants ($N = 103$) reported that they were not satisfied with their (or their students') English learning effectiveness (see Question 1); however, 62 (60.2%) of the interviewees did not regard the present pedagogic model as a reason for their (or their students') less-than-satisfactory learning effectiveness (see Questions 2 and 3). Therefore, it is natural that 81 (78.6%) of the 103 interviewees would insist on adopting Standard Englishes as the pedagogic model for college English in China (see Questions 4 and 5). It should not be ignored that about 21.4% (22) of the interviewees still argued that it was unnecessary for them (or their students) to adopt Standard Englishes as the target of their (or their students') English learning, as long as they could communicate freely in English with others (see Questions 4 and 5). As a result, the interviews found that the desirable pedagogic model of English for students in China should be Standard Englishes supplemented with the well-codified and promoted traits of China English (see Question 6). The following are the interview questions and some of the typical answers from the students and their teachers:

Question 1: *"Are you satisfied with your (students') English learning effectiveness?"*
Some typical answers were: "No"; "Very unsatisfied"; "Certainly not"; and "Not satisfied, especially with oral English."

Some representative answers to the other questions were:

Question 2: *"If not, what are the reasons for your dissatisfaction?"*⁷

⁷ The following factors were identified from the interviewees' responses as the most frequently mentioned reasons (arranged in decreasing order of numerical significance): learning English just as a subject for exams rather than a tool for communication; having little chance to put what they have learnt in English class into practice; learning too much about grammar and vocabulary while overlooking the importance of oral English; a lack of conducive environment and atmosphere to practice English skills, particularly speaking skills; having low intrinsic motivation for English learning; the large class size; the fear of speaking English; and having no clear purpose in English learning.

Firstly, I am not interested in English from the beginning. Besides, there is not such an environment that can cultivate my interest in English learning. Thirdly, English listening and speaking were not tested in the national university entrance examinations, thus we did not practice these skills; instead, we just learnt for exams, which made English learning very boring. Fourthly, I do not think it is very important to learn English since we will not use it much if we do not go abroad. (SFB2⁸)

We use English mainly in English class and rarely use it out of class. That is to say, we have too little chance to use it, so when we want to say something in English, usually, we cannot remember the words. (SFB2K)

Question 3: Is pedagogic model a reason for your (students') low learning effectiveness? Why or why not?

No. I seldom ask my students to arrive at a certain standard and I think few students, consciously, work for the target of Standard Englishes. (TMBL)

No, because we are always taught according to such a standard and we are trying to arrive at this target. Besides, I think I like NSs' English a lot, especially when I watch English movies. (SFL2)

Question 4: Is it necessary and practical if we go on adopting British or American English as the model for teaching of college English in China? Why or why not?

Yes. If we have to learn English, we still hope to learn Standard Englishes although it is difficult. (SME4)

Yes, because we need a standard, and 'China English' is not a well-established and promoted variety of English and it needs to be fully codified. (TFBT)

No, we do not need to attain the level of Standard Englishes as long as we can communicate in English with others. (SFA1)

Question 5: If you can choose the pedagogic model for teaching of college English in China, which one(s) would you choose: 'China English,' the standard British/American English, or the Lingua Franca English⁹? Why?

I will still choose Standard Englishes because China is different from India and Singapore where English exists as one of the official languages used by many people and thus it is possible to form their own English varieties. English teaching and use in China, however, are still at a very low level, so it is hard for China to form her own English variety. (SMA1)

[I choose] Standard Englishes, for 'China English' might hinder effective communication. Besides, a pedagogic model should be something that students can arrive at only with very hard work. The model will be

⁸The codes of the interviewees contain the following information in turn: identity (S = student, T = teacher); gender (F = female, M = male); discipline for students (B = business, L = law, E = engineering, A = arts) or academic qualification for teachers (B = bachelor, M = master, D = doctor); years for students (1 = Year 1; 2 = Year 2; 3 = Year 3; 4 = Year 4) or academic rank for teachers (T = teaching assistant, L = lecturer, A = associate professor, P = professor); and university: If the interviewee comes from the key university, the letter *K* is added to the end of the code, for example, SFB2 refers to a female Year 2 business major from a second-tier university, and TMBL refers to a male lecturer whose highest academic qualification was the bachelor's degree when interviewed.

⁹Interviewees were provided with descriptions of the models, as found in footnote 2.

meaningless if the students can easily attain the target, say, 'China English'. (TMMA)

I will choose 'China English' since it might be easier for Chinese learners. But first of all, 'China English' must be well codified and promoted. (SM147E4)

Question 6: *What would be a more desirable model of English for students in China in your opinion?*

Personally, I think it might be a better choice if we can combine Standard Englishes and 'China English' together. That is to say, we will consider Standard Englishes as the target of our teaching, but we can also accept students' Chinese way of English speaking, including their pronunciation and some phrases and expressions they use, since it is really hard for them to speak English totally free from the cross-linguistic influences of the Chinese language. Of course, their Chinese way of English speaking, or 'China English' as you said, must be well-codified and accepted internationally to some degree. One of the merits of this model lies in the fact that 'China English' might be easier for China's English learners to acquire. Besides, students will be more self-confident and relaxed when speaking English if they know they do not necessarily need to speak it as rigidly as in Standard Englishes just like American or British people, and it is ok for them to speak in a Chinese manner. (TFBL)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given the methodological design, scope of investigation, targeted participants, and quality of results obtained, the present study has reported both similar and different findings compared to the study by Timmis (2002). Four hundred questionnaire participants from 14 different countries were involved in Timmis (2002), but his 15 interviewees cannot be regarded as representative of his survey sample as a whole.

Timmis (2002) reported that 67% of his student respondents and 27% of his teacher respondents preferred (their students) to be Student A. However, 32% of the students and 39% of the teachers preferred (their students) to be Student B. The rest, 34% of teachers, chose *no preference* (this choice was not provided for Timmis' student participants, nor did we include it in our questionnaire). The percentages of the students who preferred Student A and Student B in our study were 42% and 58%, respectively, and those of the teachers were 57% and 43%, respectively. The differences between the results of these two studies (see Table 6 for a summary) suggest that, increasingly, Chinese students, as they argued in the reasons for their choices (see the examples in Results under Interview), no longer set themselves a target as high as Standard Englishes for their pronunciation, as long as they could communicate freely with others in English. Nonetheless, most of the

teachers in the present research still hoped that their students could acquire nativelike pronunciation. All in all, both Chinese students and teachers in our study expressed rather different expectations of English pronunciation from those of the participants in Timmis' study.

In addition to pronunciation, Timmis (2002) also tried to find out to what extent students wanted to conform to native-speaker grammatical norms. He found that 14%, 14%, and 68% of the students preferred to be Student C, Student D, and Student E, respectively. About 22%, 5%, and 54% of his teacher respondents preferred their students to be Student C, Student D, and Student E, in turn, and the rest of the 18% selected *no preference*, because they wanted to let their students make the decision for themselves (again, this choice was not provided for Timmis' student participants or for the participants in our study). The results of our study were quite similar to that of Timmis (2002), in that the participants showed a clear preference to native-speaker norms (see Table 7 for more details).

Chinese participants in our study displayed some differences from the participants in the Timmis (2002) study, in the preference of English pronunciation, but displayed some similarities in the preference of English grammar. In our study, the students and teachers demonstrated similar attitudes toward English grammar, whereas, in terms of pronunciation, the students displayed more willingness to accept China English than their teachers. This may be an indication that, to encourage Chinese students to communicate orally in English, acquiring native-like pronunciation should not be overemphasized; rather, some Chinese accents should be considered acceptable, as long as the students can express themselves intelligibly in English, although Standard Englishes are still regarded as the teaching model of listening and speaking. At the same time, to ensure their upward and outward mobility, the norms of reading and writing should still be based on a model of Standard Englishes. This is, in a way, similar to the Standard English plus model proposed by Li (2006).

As in Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002), our study also found gender differences in the attitudes toward China English and Standard

TABLE 6
Differences in Participants' Preference of English Pronunciation

| Item | Preference for Student A | | Preference for Student B | | No preference |
|---|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------------|
| | Student | Teacher | Student | Teacher | Teacher |
| Timmis' participants ^a | 67% | 27% | 32% | 39% | 34% |
| Participants in this study ^b | 42% | 57% | 58% | 43% | |

Note. ^a*N* = 580 (400 students and 180 teachers); ^b*N* = 984 (795 students and 189 teachers).

TABLE 7

Differences in Participants' Preference of English Grammar

| Item | Preference for Student C | | Preference for Student D | | Preference for Student E | | No preference |
|---|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------------|
| | Student | Teacher | Student | Teacher | Student | Teacher | Teacher |
| Timmis' participants ^a | 14% | 22% | 14% | 5% | 68% | 54% | 18% |
| Participants in this study ^b | 29% | 29% | 25% | 25% | 46% | 47% | |

Note. ^a*N* = 580 (400 students and 180 teachers); ^b*N* = 984 (795 students and 189 teachers).

Englishes. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) noted differences in attitudes between English majors and the others. They reported that female English majors were the most likely to seek Standard Englishes, whereas male engineers were the least likely to do so and were happy enough with China English. Although we have not surveyed English majors, it is still interesting to find that there were significantly more female student respondents who chose to be Student E (50.8%) than those choosing to be Student C (24.2%) and Student D (25%), and male students did not show notable differences among being Students C, D, and E. In contrast, there were remarkably more male students preferring to be Student B (61.3%) than Student A (38.7%), whereas no significant differences between being Students A and B could be found with females. In other words, both of these studies revealed that male participants held more positive attitudes toward China English than their female counterparts.

In sum, the findings of our study are different from some of the previous findings, because those studies either claimed that China English could and should be used as pedagogic models and norms along with Standard Englishes (e.g., Hu, 2004, 2005) or supported the native-speaker-based norms and models at present in China (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002). On the other hand, our study agreed with other previous studies (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2006b, 2006c; Li, 2006, 2007) that teaching of college English in China should still adopt Standard Englishes as the teaching model, because a native speaker model "serves as a complete and convenient starting point, particularly with its social-cultural richness" (Kuo, 2006, p. 220). In addition, China English could also be included as part of the model if it were codified and implemented systematically. However, little academic research has been done to study intensively the linguistic features of China English in the arenas of pronunciation and grammar. Therefore, it is recommended that future research in this area focus on the systematic codification of China English, to facilitate promotion of its wider educational acceptability and further incorporation of its features into the pedagogic model.

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