Language attitudes and linguistic features in the 'China English' debate[1]

DEYUAN HE* and DAVID C. S. LI**

ABSTRACT: In this paper we shall first try to define the term 'China English' (with our own definition of this term deliberated in the 'Discussion' section) as a performance variety in the larger conceptualization of World Englishes. Following that, we will adduce some linguistic features of 'China English' from the relevant literature at four levels (phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse pragmatics) and discuss the arguments in favor of developing localized pedagogic models in Expanding Circle countries such as China. Then we will report on the findings of our research project: college teachers' and students' perceptions of the ideal pedagogic model of college English in mainland China – 'China English' as opposed to a native-speaker-based standard. Our findings suggest that the preferred teaching model of college English in mainland Chinese classrooms is a standard variety of English (e.g. 'General American' or 'Received Pronunciation') supplemented with salient, well-codified, and properly implemented features of 'China English'. The research design and overall findings will be discussed in light of a systematic comparison and contrast with those in a similar survey conducted with mainland Chinese university students.

INTRODUCTION

In the debate surrounding the emergence of new varieties of English worldwide, it has been observed that mainland China has the largest English-learning population in the world (e.g. Bolton 2003; Crystal 2008: 5; Jenkins 2003; Jiang 2002: 5). At the same time, with every passing day an ever-increasing number of Chinese speakers of English are added to the multi-million community of Chinese-English bilinguals in the mainland (Deterding 2006: 175, 195). As a consequence, it seems inevitable that this tremendous number of people learning and speaking English will naturally lead to a distinctive Chinese variety of English, 'China English'. Indeed, it has been projected that 'China English' may soon have more speakers than in the UK and USA combined; when that happens, 'China English' may exert considerable influence on the further development of the English language. 'At that time, native speakers may even become irrelevant [...] and Chinese English will truly be in the forefront of the development of the language' (Deterding 2006: 195). In this connection, we believe a number of fundamental issues need to be addressed before research on 'China English' can proceed meaningfully and in a more focused manner:

1. What is 'China English'?
2. What are some of the salient linguistic features of 'China English'?
3. Could it be envisaged that 'China English' be introduced in mainland China as an alternative pedagogic model alongside native-speaker-based varieties of English, if not used in their stead?

*Department of English, City University of Hong Kong, 83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong (SAR). Email: deyuanhe2@student.cityu.edu.hk
**Department of English, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, N.T., Hong Kong (SAR). Email: dcsli@ied.edu.hk

We will first clarify the first two research questions in the literature review section before presenting our findings, which will be compared with those of Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 276–8) in the Discussion section.

'CHINA ENGLISH': TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

First of all, it is our belief that a proper name should be given to the variety of English being learnt and used in mainland China. Up to now, several terms have been used to refer to the English spoken or written by mainland Chinese: 'Chinglish' (e.g. Niu and Wolff 2003: 9–10; Zhuang 2000: 7); 'Chinese English' (e.g. Huang 1988: 47; Wang and Ma 2002: 56); 'Sinicized English' (e.g. Cheng 1992: 162); and 'China English' (e.g. Ge 1980: 2; Jiang and Du 2003: 27). The course of a localized variety of English would be difficult to advance without a sound and informed name for that variety. As Confucius argued more than two 2,000 years ago, 'Without a legitimate name, then without authority to the words' (Míng bù zhèng, zé yán bù shùn. 名不正，则言不顺). This is why we find it necessary to first discuss the legitimacy of, and the rationale behind, selecting the most preferred name from the ones competing for ascendancy.

There is some evidence suggesting that 'Chinglish' is a term loaded with social stigma, and so it is unwelcome in China as a blend of Chinese and English (Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002: 269–71). Likewise, 'Chinese English' and 'Sinicized English' are regarded as ' "bad English", "beginner's English" or, at most, an interlanguage which needs to be improved' (Jiang 2002: 6). In addition, given the general consensus among Chinese scholars (e.g. Chen and Hu 2006: 44; Ge 1980: 2; Jiang and Du 2003: 27) that the emerging variety of English in China is more appropriately called Zhōngguó Yīngyū (中国英语), we believe 'China English' is a more suitable term than 'Chinese English' (compare: 'Chinese experts' and 'China experts'). This is consonant with Mufwene's (1994) suggestion, that it is better to label an institutionalized variety of English with a pre-modifying adjective (e.g. Indian English, Philippine English, American English), whereas a pre-modifying noun would be more appropriate for a performance variety like 'China English' (cf. B. Kachru 1985; Mufwene 1994). By an institutionalized variety of English, Kachru refers to one which has official status and is used both intranationally as well as internationally. A performance variety of English, on the other hand, tends to be used for international communication purposes, especially at the political, economic, cultural, and scientific levels. Since English in China is used essentially for communication with non-Chinese speakers (except learners' interlanguage in classroom interactions, cf. M. Chen and Hu 2006: 45), it is clearly a performance variety. This is why, like many other researchers (e.g. Hu 2005: 27–38; Jiang 2002: 4–23; Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002: 269–79), we prefer using the term 'China English', which was first put forward by Ge (1980: 2). It is unfortunate that this concept was ignored by Chinese scholars in the following decade.

The term 'China English' has been used by different Chinese scholars with slightly different meanings (Jia and Xiang 1997: 11; Jin 2002: 72; W. Li 1993: 19; Wang 1991: 3; Xie 1995: 7–11). Wang (1991: 3) was the first scholar who defined 'China English' as 'the English used by the Chinese People in China, being based on Standard English and having Chinese characteristics'. W. Li (1993: 19) redefined 'China English' as a variety with 'normative English' as its core, but with Chinese characteristics at the levels of lexis, syntax and discourse; it is free from cross-linguistic influence from the Chinese language, and is employed to express content ideas specific to Chinese culture by means

of transliteration, borrowing and semantic transfer. According to Xie (1995: 7–11), 'China English' is an interference variety of English used by Chinese people in the intercultural communications on the basis of 'normative English', whereas Jia and Xiang's (1997: 11) use of the term refers to a variety of English which is used by the Chinese NSs with 'normative English' as its core but which unavoidably manifests Chinese characteristics or helps transmit Chinese culture. Similarly, Jin (2002: 72) defined 'China English' as a variety of English which has the international 'normative English' as its core and which facilitates the transmission of Chinese-specific cultures, linguistic expressions, ideologies, and traditions in international settings by means of transliteration, borrowing and semantic transfer (for more details, see Jiang 2002: 6–7; He 2007: 29–39). The above definitions are infelicitous in one way or another; in the Discussion section, we will put forward our own definition of 'China English'.

'CHINA ENGLISH': SOME SALIENT LINGUISTIC FEATURES

Several scholars (e.g. Deterding 2006: 179–94; Du and Jiang 2001: 38–40; Hung 2005; Jia and Xiang 1997: 11; Jiang 1995; Jiang and Du 2003: 28–33; Wei and Fei 2003: 43–6) have discussed several salient linguistic features of 'China English'. Their observations are essentially centered on four levels: phonology, lexis, syntax and discoursepragmatics.

Phonology

Some researchers argue that Standard English may be pronounced with any accent, native or non-native (e.g. Crystal 1999: 10–11; Trudgill and Hannah 1994; Widdowson 1994). However, accepting pluricentric variations does not rule out the existence of a certain Phonological Standard (e.g. dental fricative /θ/, as in the word _theory_, might be pronounced as /f/, /s/, or /t/, but not as /r/ or other consonants), which is what makes the Englishes spoken by speakers from different L1 backgrounds intelligible to each other. Further, as has been observed, the standards of English pronunciation and intonation are dynamic, and probably best seen as a continuum from minimum to maximum acceptability (Hung 1992; 2004; Jiang 2002: 11).

With Kirkpatrick (2007b: 146), we think it is not yet possible for us 'to claim any distinctive phonological features that are common to all speakers' of 'China English', but we believe one cannot deny the fact that the following phonological features of 'China English' (among others) are on the horizon (Deterding 2006: 179–94; Hung 2005): replacement of /θ/ with [s] and /ð/ with [d], insertion of final [ə], general lack of voiced fricatives, certain types of diphthong simplification, avoidance of weak forms for function words, and a tendency to pronounce multisyllabic words or word groups with syllable-timing, etc.

Lexis

There is general consensus among scholars and researchers of 'China English' that 'the defining feature of "China English" is its unique lexicon, words that are native to China or have meanings peculiar to China' (Jiang 2002: 13), including lexical borrowing and innovations in 'China English' (cf. Bolton 2003; Gao 2001; J. Yang 2005: 428–31). Besides, many western scholars (e.g. Bliss 1966; Cannon 1988; Mawson 1975; Serjeantson 1935; Urdang and Abate 1983) also state that it is an objective reality that there exist Chinese

borrowings in English. According to Cui (2006), there are no fewer than 3,561 word entries of Chinese origin as found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* online (2006).

However, there are no standardized forms for loan translations. *Jīngshén wénmíng,* for instance, has been translated into English in at least 16 different ways (e.g. 'spiritual civilization', 'cultural and ideological progress', 'moral civilization') depending on the bilingual dictionary. One consequence of this is that readers often get confused and cannot be sure which one to choose. In general, China-specific words and expressions are rendered into English through one of two means: transliteration and loan translation.

(a) Transliteration: For example, *Putonghua, Renminbi (RMB), yamen* ('the office of officials in imperial China'), *dazibao* ('big-character poster, commonly used during the Cultural Revolution), *falungong, fengshui* (geomancy), *lama, maotai*, etc.

(b) Loan translation or calque: Some lexical items of 'China English' are formed by translating them word for word or literally into English, for example: 'the Spring Festival', 'Four Modernizations', 'One China policy', 'the Great Cultural Revolution', 'paper tiger', 'iron rice bowl', 'three representatives', 'Eight-legged Essay', 'Beijing opera', 'beggar chicken', 'dragon well tea', 'snakehead'.

Syntax

Many scholars (e.g. Cao 2000: 121–2; Jia and Xiang 1997: 11; Jin 2001: 58–60; 2002: 73–6; Li and Wang 2002: 35–6; Pinkham 2000; Yang and Yan 2002: 87) argue that 'China English' has its own syntactic characteristics, which may be summarized in four points:

(a) Idioms made up of four morpho-syllables. Large quantities of idioms in Chinese are made up of four Chinese morpho-syllables (characters) and are steeped in culture-specific meanings, for instance: 'effort halved, result doubled' (*shì bàn gōng bèi*;事半功倍).

(b) Parallel structure. This rhetorical structure is frequently used in Chinese to express words of wisdom, so it is commonly used in 'China English', for example: 'a fall into the pit, a gain in your wit' (*chī yī qiàn, zhǎng yī zhì*;吃一堑，长一智).

(c) Topicalization of adjuncts. In 'China English', modifiers such as adverbials or adverbial clauses are generally placed in front of the main verb(s) of a sentence. Some scholars (e.g. Lu 1983; Zhou and Feng 1987: 118–24) even argue that the syntactic switch to the sentence- or utterance-initial position of Standard English resulted from the influence of Chinese languages. Therefore, it might be argued that sentences like *This morning I bought a book* and *Before I left the office, I had finished the work* should be regarded as well-formed 'China English' sentences so long as communication with speakers of English from other L1 backgrounds is not adversely affected.

(d) The Null Subject parameter. This refers to a linguistic parameter that has different settings in English and Chinese, in that a subject is required in an English sentence while it is optional in Chinese, hence the linguistic characterization of Chinese as a 'pro-drop' language (Yip 1995). For instance, it is quite common for 'China English' users to write sentences like *Very glad to write to you again* and *Miss*

you a lot in a letter or an email in English, arguably due in part to cross-linguistic influence from their mother tongue.

Discourse pragmatics

In Asian contexts, contact with English has on one hand resulted in Englishization of the local languages and on the other, in nativization of English (B. Kachru 2005; Y. Kachru 1995; Scollon and Scollon 1991). Therefore, 'China English' also exhibits certain unique discourse features owing to cross-linguistic influence from Chinese. For example, it has been argued (e.g. Samovar and Porter 2004; Scollon and Scollon 1991; Tyler and Davies 1990; Young 1982; 1994) that texts in English or Western cultures are often structured in a deductive manner, in which the main topic typically comes at the beginning with supporting material postponed, whereas Chinese or Asian texts are generally structured inductively. In other words, the most significant point tends to be delayed until a considerable amount of background information has been presented.

There has been an increasing attention to the description of the written model of 'China English' in the past decade, especially in mainland China focusing on college students' writing patterns (e.g. Cai 1998; H. Chen 1996; Y. Chen 1998; N. Wang 2000; Yang and Wen 1994; Zhuang 2000). Based on Hoey's (1983) and Kaplan's (1966) research, Wang and Li (1993: 63–4) investigated the English writings of different levels of students in their own university and found that, whereas the three commonly used English patterns of discourse (i.e., General-Particular Pattern, Problem-Solution Pattern and Matching Pattern) can all be observed in Chinese college students' writing, the first pattern (which is the most commonly used one in English discourse) is not commonly used, while their main pattern is clearly Problem-Solution.

In sum, there is some evidence that 'China English' is gradually emerging, following its natural path of development, although it will be quite impossible to list all the linguistic features of 'China English' exhaustively at the moment for several reasons, such as insufficient research (e.g. the features of 'China English' at the discourse-pragmatic level concerning professional English writing). Therefore, more research is needed to identify salient linguistic features of 'China English' as found in the popular usage patterns of the majority of speakers and writers of 'China English', in both formal and informal contexts of social interaction.

'CHINA ENGLISH': TOWARDS A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

Until recently, 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. Within this framework, the question of which variety of English (especially native vs. non-native models) should be selected as the pedagogic model in Outer and Expanding Circle countries then arises, which has been a subject of debate for nearly two decades (e.g. Bamgboṣe 1998; 2001; Davies 1999; B. Kachru 1992; Seidlhofer 1999; Starks and Paltridge 1996; Widdowson 1997).

Cook (1999: 185) argues 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'. By contrast, we stand a better chance of convincing EFL/ESL students that 'they are successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers' if we can 'acknowledge that L2 users have strengths and rights of their own' rather than concentrating primarily on the native-speaker (NS) norms (Cook 1999: 204). Besides, since the 1980s several studies (e.g. Jenkins 2002; B. Kachru 1993; Kirkpatrick 2006; D. Li 2006; Seidlhofer 2001; Sridhar and Sridhar 1986) have questioned the claim that the goal of learning and teaching English in non-native settings is to aim toward a native variety of English.

In addition, Medgyes (1992: 342) argues that 'non-native speakers can never achieve a native speaker's competence' but a near-native one, for all their efforts, and Chinese learners of English are no exception. Smith (2005: 58–61) even argues that English is unpronounceable, irregular, too complex, and often ambiguous for non-native learners. The increasingly nativized and acculturated English in China inevitably shows Chinese characteristics to some extent, given the fact that Chinese and English are typologically very different languages in terms of phonology, lexis, grammar and discourse pragmatics (e.g. Chinese is a syllable-timed language whereas English is a stress-timed language: Hung 2002a; Kirkpatrick 2006: 73–4).

In view of the tremendous differences between Chinese and English, the insistence on a NS-based model will inevitably disadvantage the learners since the chosen pedagogic model is unattainable by them (Honna and Takeshita 2000). In addition, this has the undesirable effect of reducing local non-native English-speaking teachers' (LETs: see Carless 2006: 328) sense of self-confidence because they are required to teach a model which they themselves do not speak (Medgyes 1994). However, it is suggested that well-trained LETs who speak Chinese will be more intelligible to learners who speak the same mother tongue compared with native English-speaking teachers (NETs) (Kirkpatrick 2006: 73–4). All these factors make us doubt both the possibility and necessity for Chinese English speakers to speak English like a NS, with no traces of influence from their native language, Chinese. It was against this background that this study was carried out, with a view to exploring the possibility of incorporating salient, well-attested linguistic and sociolinguistic features of 'China English' into the college-level English curriculum in mainland China.

THE STUDY

How do non-English majors and teachers of college English in mainland China view 'China English'? What is their perception of a teaching model of (the) College English (course) characterized by salient features of 'China English', either selectively or exclusively? This study reports findings of a survey conducted with members of these target groups. It draws on three research instruments: questionnaire survey, matched-guise technique, and group 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 998 valid questionnaires were collected (795 students, 97 per cent; 189 teachers, 90 per cent). One-tenth of the participants (N = 103) were interviewed (82 students and 21 teachers). To make our participants

Table 1. Distribution of participants by university and region (N=984)

Name of the university	Location of the university	Academic status of the university	No. of participants
Nanjing University of Technology	Jiangsu province, eastern China	Second-tier university	243
Wuhan University	Hubei province, central China	Key university	260
Sichuan Normal University	Sichuan province, western China	Second-tier university	251
Capital Normal University	Beijing, northern China	Second-tier university	230

maximally representative of their respective groups, only non-English majors and teachers of college English at different academic levels and geographical regions were selected. 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 importantly, since non-English majors constitute the absolute majority of potential English-speaking and using population in China, we believe the choice of pedagogic model of English should be geared towards the needs of this largest group. A breakdown of the subjects according to universities and regions may be found in Table 1.

With regard to all of the three instruments, various factors were taken into consideration when selecting participants:

- Student participants: age, gender distribution, disciplines and years of study
- Teacher participants: academic qualifications and ranks

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

Specifically, all the 795 student participants are homogeneous mainland Chinese, aged from 17 to 25 ($\bar{x} = 20.6$). Among them, 51.7 per cent (411) are male and 48.3 per cent (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 per cent) were freshmen, 251 (31.6 per cent) sophomores, 77 (9.7 per cent) juniors, and 123 (15.5 per cent) seniors. The student participants were rather representative of non-English majors studying in mainland Chinese universities. An overview of the year of study, discipline area, and gender distribution of the student participants may be found in Table 2.

As for the 189 teacher participants, 77 (40.7 per cent) are male and 112 (59.3 per cent) female. Their age ranged from 22 to 65 ($\bar{x} = 34.4$), and they had five months to 42 years of English teaching experience ($\bar{x} = 10.6$). In terms of the highest academic qualification attained, three (1.6 per cent) of them held a doctorate degree, 150 (79.4 per cent) a master's degree, and 36 (19 per cent) a bachelor's degree. Their academic ranking also varied considerably, with two (1.1 per cent) being professors, 69 (36.5 per cent) associate professors, 73 (38.6 per cent) lecturers, and 45 (23.8 per cent) teaching assistants. Up to 113 (59.8 per cent) of them taught non-English majors only, while 76 (40.2 per cent) taught both English majors and non-English majors. Table 3 gives an overview of the gender distribution, academic qualification and ranking of all the 189 teacher participants.

Table 2. 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

Table 3. Gender, academic qualification, and ranking of the teacher participants

	Doctor		Master		Bachelor		Prof		Associate prof		Lecturer		TA* A		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

*Teaching assistant.

Methodology

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: 319). Specifically, questionnaire survey data are cross-validated with data obtained from interviews and the experiment using the matched-guise technique (MGT).

The questionnaire survey consists of 25 items in the form of a 5-point scale (except the first three items answering with 'yes/no': see the next section for more details); the primary objective is to tap into participants' perceptions of 'China English', their preferred teaching model of college English, and the desirability of incorporating salient features of 'China English' into the existing teaching model of College English in China.

In the matched-guise 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 native-like 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 taperecording. Prior to implementation, for quality assurance the 'native-like' accent had been played to seven professors (four NETs and three LETs), of whom five were convinced that the accent sounded sufficiently native-like. The respondents were instructed to give their ratings of 'the two speakers' on a response sheet with regard to 16 traits. Like the questionnaire survey, the rating was based on a 5-point Likert scale[2]. In this way, the elicited responses are considered stereotyped reactions toward the language (or the different accents/dialects/varieties of a language) and its speakers, rather than toward the voices as such (see also Edwards 1994; Wikipedia 2007).

In addition to these quantitative data, 103 informants were interviewed either individually (18 of 21 teachers) or in small groups (82 student participants and three 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 first author and a separate rater (a PhD student from mainland China majoring in English education). 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 (Kvale 1996).

Results

Questionnaire survey. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, respectively 44.7 per cent, 51.9 per cent, and 84.2 per cent of all the respondents (N = 984) have heard of the three terms 'world Englishes, 'China English', and 'Chinese English'. Among them, 71.3 per cent did not agree that 'Chinese English' and 'China English' are the same. Approximately 60.5 per cent and 56.5 per cent of all the respondents argued respectively that China would or should have its own variety of English. However, neither of the two proposed names ('China English' and 'Chinese English') as a designated term for the future variety of English in China won support from over 50 per cent of all the participants. What is more, about 86.5 per cent of all the participants believed that the variety of English in China is bound to be influenced by the Chinese language, and 67.8 per cent thought that China's variety of English should have its own linguistic features at the levels of phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse pragmatics. Besides, more than half (56.7 per cent) of the 984 participants supported the statement that only the English variety in China can adequately express the content ideas specific to Chinese culture. It can be concluded that the definition proposed earlier in this article is basically acceptable to teachers and learners of college English in China.

Table 4. Frequencies and means for items 1–3

Items	Frequency (%)		Mean (0–1)
	No (0)	Yes (1)	
1. I have heard of World Englishes.	55.1*	44.7	.45**
2. I have heard of 'China English'.	47.9	51.9	.52
3. I have heard of 'Chinese English'.	15.3	84.2	.85

∗The percentage has been rounded off to 1 digit after the decimal point.
∗∗The mean has been rounded off to 2 digits after the decimal point.

Of all the questionnaire respondents, about 75.4 per cent considered that British English and American English are the major varieties of English used in their textbooks. Consequently, when speaking English, up to 81.9 per cent preferred to sound like a NS, whereas only 25.3 per cent wanted to be identified clearly as Chinese. Moreover, most of the participants (79.6 per cent) believed that the non-native English speakers (NNSs) can also speak 'Standard English' (*biāozhǔn yīngyǔ*). Besides, although most of the participants (87.3 per cent) were not satisfied with their (or their students') English learning effectiveness, only 20.3 per cent of them agreed that the adoption of 'Standard English' as the pedagogic model was one reason for their (or their students') less than satisfactory learning effectiveness. All this suggests that teachers and learners of college English alike are generally in favor of adopting 'Standard English' (most probably British or American English) as the pedagogic model for college English in China.

However, about 62.6 per cent of the questionnaire respondents advocated incorporating the select features of 'China English' into the existing teaching model, though only 26.6 per cent of them believed that it could replace the present pedagogic model. In addition, 61.4 per cent of the questionnaire respondents agreed that college students should be taught select features of 'China English' and other varieties of English besides 'Standard English'. These results seemed to suggest that it is possible and necessary to incorporate

Table 5. Frequencies and means for items 4–25

Items	1* (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Means (1–5)
4. British English and American English are the major varieties of English used in our textbooks.	3.7**	6.1	14.6	29.2	46.2	4.08***
5. I am satisfied with my (students') English learning effectiveness.	21.7	32.5	33.1	11.3	1.2	2.38
6. One reason for my (students') low learning effectiveness is the adoption of British English or American English as the teaching model.	23.6	26.3	19.5	11.0	6.8	2.44
7. We should adopt a native-speaker model of English (e.g., British or American English) for teaching and learning.	7.3	12.9	20.7	29.4	29.5	3.61
8. When I speak English, I want to sound like a native speaker.	3.5	3.2	11.5	20.9	61.0	4.33
9. When I speak English, I want to be identified clearly as Chinese.	30.2	23.0	21.4	13.8	11.5	2.53
10. In international communication, intelligibility with accent is acceptable for oral English.	3.8	5.8	14.6	38.5	37.3	4.00
11. The non-native speakers can also speak Standard English.	2.6	4.0	13.6	31.1	48.5	4.19
12. Most Chinese need English to communicate mainly with native English speakers.	12.0	19.8	22.1	27.0	19.0	3.21
13. Most Chinese need English to communicate mainly with other non-native English speakers.	8.3	13.0	24.5	33.1	20.8	3.45
14. There are many standard Englishes.	7.3	12.1	25.3	32.9	21.8	3.50
15. There will be a variety of English in China one day.	13.5	10.3	15.8	31.3	29.2	3.52
16. Like "Indian English" or "Singaporean English", China should have its own variety of English.	15.7	10.8	17.0	28.6	27.9	3.42
17. If there will be a variety of English in China like "Indian English" or "Singaporean English", it should be called 'China English'.	25.5	15.2	14.5	17.2	27.5	3.06
18. If there will be a variety of English in China like "Indian English" or "Singaporean English", it should be called 'Chinese English'.	21.1	17.4	14.0	20.8	26.6	3.14
19. 'Chinese English' and 'China English' are the same.	40.0	31.3	16.1	7.1	5.4	2.06
20. The variety of English in China is bound to be influenced by the Chinese language.	2.5	2.6	8.3	39.3	47.2	4.26
21. The variety of English in China should have its own linguistic features at the levels of phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse-pragmatics.	8.1	7.0	17.0	33.3	34.5	3.79
22. Only the variety of English in China can express content ideas specific to Chinese culture adequately.	11.0	12.5	19.7	27.8	28.9	3.51
23. Well-defined features of the variety of English in China should be incorporated into the existing teaching model.	6.3	9.6	21.5	37.1	25.5	3.66

Table 5. Continued

Items	1*(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)	Means (1–5)
24. The variety of English in China can replace the existing teaching model.	16.8	27.7	28.8	18.2	8.4	2.74
25. Students should learn the characteristics of 'China English' and other varieties of English in addition to American and British English in college English.	7.3	10.9	20.4	35.7	25.7	3.62

*1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: no opinion or don't know; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree.
**The percentage has been rounded off to the one digit after the decimal point.
***The mean has been rounded off to two digits after the decimal point.

Table 6. Means and differences of 'China English' vis-à-vis 'Standard English' with regard to the 16 traits

Traits		Means	
		'China English' / 'Standard English'	Difference
Positive	1. Friendly	2.94/**3.31**	−.37**
	2. Intelligent	2.83/**3.17**	−.34**
	3. Educated	2.88/**3.18**	−.30**
	5. Competent	2.80/**3.39**	−.59**
	6. Industrious	2.93/**3.08**	−.15*
	7. Sincere	2.99/**3.15**	−.16*
	9. Approachable	2.78/**3.16**	−.38**
	10. Considerate	2.85/**3.00**	−.15*
	11. Trustworthy	2.92/**3.11**	−.19*
	12. Wealthy	2.77/**3.06**	−.29**
	13. Trendy	2.72/**3.20**	−.48**
	15. Powerful	2.75/**3.34**	−.59**
	16. Confident	2.79/**3.64**	−.85**
	14. Patient	**3.13**/3.04	.09
Negative	4. Arrogant	**3.01**/2.61	.40**
	8. Aggressive	**3.04**/2.66	.38**

*p< .05; **p< .01.

select features of 'China English' into the existing pedagogic model based on 'Standard English'.

Matched-guise experiment.   On the whole, the findings of the matched-guise experiment as shown in Table 6 are largely consistent with the findings of the questionnaire survey reported above. It can be seen that MANOVA revealed significant differences between the ratings of 'China English' and 'Standard English' with regard to the means of 15 out of the 16 traits. To be more exact, 'Standard English' was given significantly higher ratings than 'China English' on nearly all the positive traits except one ('patient': no significant difference). Nonetheless, 'Standard English' was given markedly lower ratings than the latter on the two negative traits ('arrogant' and 'aggressive'). Such results suggest

that the participants tend to be more affirmative towards speakers of 'Standard English' compared with speakers of 'China English'.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the subjects in the matched-guise experiment are far from being negative toward 'China English', since their means on all 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 English' (3.04; see Table 6 for details). These results suggest that the subjects' attitudes toward 'China English' are not so negative. This is compatible with the questionnaire survey finding 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, although 78.6 per cent (81) of all the interviewees (103) expressed a clear preference for American (as opposed to British) English as the teaching model for college English in China (see Examples 1 and 2 below), the rest of the interviewees argued that it was unnecessary for them (or their students) to aim toward 'Standard English' as long as they could communicate successfully with others in English (e.g. Example 3). Moreover, some of the interviewees who preferred 'Standard English' as the teaching model also supported the incorporation of salient 'China English' features into the current pedagogic model of college English in China for several reasons. Three of the most frequently mentioned reasons are:

(a) cross-linguistic influence from Chinese is inevitable (e.g., Example 4);
(b) only 'China English' can fully deliver some content ideas specific to Chinese culture (e.g., Example 5); and
(c) compared with 'Standard English', 'China English' would be easier for Chinese EFL learners to acquire (see Examples 3 and 5 for details).

Interviewer: If you can choose the pedagogic model for teaching of college English in China, which one(s) would you choose: 'China English', standard British/American English, or the Lingua Franca English (zuòwěi gòngtóngyǔ de yīngyǔ)*? Why?*

TFBL:[3]: I will choose the one that can ensure better communication. My intuition tells me it will be 'Standard English' although we might not be able to attain it. It should be acceptable if students cannot arrive at this target, as long as they can communicate in English. In other words, I don't mind whether my students' English is standard or not for the purpose of communication. (Example 1)

SFA1K: [I choose] Standard English, preferably American English, since 'China English' is something that we will naturally arrive at when we are approaching Standard English, we do not need to consider it as a pedagogic target. Besides, 'China English' is still on the way of development; it has not been well codified. (Example 2)

SME4: I will choose 'China English' since it might be easier for Chinese learners, provided that 'China English' is well codified and promoted. (Example 3)

Interviewer: Then can 'China English' be introduced as part of the pedagogic model together with British English and American English?

SMA1: Yes, it can. Since we are learning English in China, our English is certainly subject to the influences of our native language, Chinese. (Example 4)

TMDP: I think the answer should be 'yes', because our students might find 'China English' easier to acquire than 'Standard English'. Besides, there are times when only 'China English' can be used to adequately express the content ideas specific to Chinese culture. (Example 5)

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, to advance the course of world Englishes in the context of China, we believe it is absolutely crucial for us to select the proper term. And, after reviewing the relevant literature on this issue, in line with Kachru (1985: 11–30), we argue that, being a performance variety of English, 'China English' (with a noun as premodifier) is more suitable than 'Chinese English' (with an adjective as pre-modifier).

In our view, 'China English' is most appropriately defined as a performance variety of English which has the standard Englishes as its core but is colored with characteristic features of Chinese phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse pragmatics, and which is particularly suited for expressing content ideas specific to Chinese culture through such means as transliteration and loan translation (see 'Lexis' above). This definition is arguably more accurate compared with earlier ones, in that (a) 'China English' is not confined to users in China; nor is it just based on 'Standard English' (cf. R. Wang 1991 3); (b) the term 'normative English' (*guī fàn yīng yǔ*, 规范英语') is imprecise and unnecessary vis-à-vis other well-accepted terms such as 'standard Englishes' (cf. Jia and Xiang 1997: 11; Jin 2002: 72; W. Li 1993: 19; Xie 1995: 7–11); (c) being a new variety of English, it is only natural that 'China English' is characterized with cross-linguistic influences from the Chinese language (cf. W. Li 1993: 19–20) since 'the learners' acquisition of a second language is influenced, either negatively or positively, by their mother tongue, and by the linguistic environment' (Hung 2004: 39; cf. Gass and Selinker 2001). Strong evidence may be found from the observation that, in speech, Cantonese learners of English in Hong Kong tend to substitute either /t/ or /f/ and /d/ or /f/ for the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, respectively, largely because there are no such sounds in their first language (Chan and Li 2000; Hung 2000; 2002b; 2002c); and (d) our definition emphasizes the fact that 'China English' should be seen as a performance variety (see the section on 'Terminological problems' for more details).

In terms of methodological design, the scope of investigation, and the quality of results obtained, we think our findings are more valid and reliable than those in Kirkpatrick and Xu's (2002: 269–79) study. For triangulation purposes, we adopted three different research methods – questionnaire survey, matched-guise technique, and focused (group) interviews – to collect data from nearly 1,000 non-English majors and their English teachers in four universities (one key university and three second-tier universities) located in different geographical regions (see 'Participants' for the reasons for excluding English majors).

Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 276–8) conducted a questionnaire survey to 'ascertain a sample of Chinese university students' attitudes to standards and varieties of both Chinese and English' (p. 276). All 171 participants in their study came from the same key university in Beijing, of which 88 were English majors, 83 engineering majors, and 64 female students. A detailed comparison of the participants' profile in these two surveys may be found in Table 7 (see also 'Participants' above).

Of all the questions in Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 276–7) and this survey, six are somewhat similar. And it can be seen that the participants in both studies held similar opinions except for the last one (see Table 8), in that they generally did not want to be identified as Chinese while speaking English (with 60.8 and 53.2 per cent of the participants opposing the idea respectively). Besides, most of them agreed that 'the non-native speakers can also speak Standard English (75.9 and 79.6 per cent supporting respectively) and that

Table 7. Demographic information relating to the participants in two questionnaire surveys

		Students							Teachers			Total
		KU	SU	EM	NM	Female	Male	Total	TNM	Both	Total	
Kirkpatrick	N	171	/	88	83	64	107	171	/	/	/	171
and Xu (2002)	%	100	/	51.5	48.5	37.4	62.6		/	/		
Present study	N	209	586	/	795	384	411	795	113	76	189	984
	%	26.3	73.7	/	100	48.3	51.7		59.8	40.2		

KU: Key university, SU: Second-tier university; EM: English majors, NM: Non-English majors. TNM: Teachers of non-English majors, Both: teachers of both English and non-English majors.

Table 8. Comparison between participants' opinions toward six questionnaire items in Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) and the present study

Items	Disagree (%)		Neutral (%)		Agree (%)	
	K*	P	K	P	K	P
9. When I speak English, I want to be identified clearly as Chinese.	60.8**	53.2	21.7	21.4	17.5	25.3
11. The non-native speakers can also speak Standard English.	15.2	6.6	12.3	13.6	75.5	79.6
12. Most Chinese need English to communicate mainly with native English speakers.	/	31.8	/	22.1	64.3	46.0
13. Most Chinese need English to communicate mainly with other non-native English speakers.	/	21.3	/	24.5	59.1	53.9
14. There are many standard Englishes.	24.0	19.4	22.8	25.3	53.2	54.7
15. There will be a variety of English in China one day.***	45.6	23.8	26.3	15.8	28.1	60.5

*K: Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002); P: Present study.
**The percentage has been rounded off to one digit after the decimal point.
***The wording in Kirkpatrick and Xu's study was "One day there will be a variety of English called Chinese English".

'there are many standard Englishes (53.2 and 54.7 per cent). However, concerning one of the purposes for Chinese to learn English, slightly more respondents in Kirkpatrick and Xu's (2002: 276) study believed that it is for communicating with NSs rather than with NNSs (64.3 vs. 59.1 per cent), while the opposite trend is true in this study (59.3 vs. 46.0 per cent). The most notable difference between the findings of these two studies lies in their respondents' view toward the issue of whether there will be a variety of English in China in future. According to Kirkpatrick and Xu, the possibility is basically negative (45.6 per cent), whereas close to two-thirds of the participants (60.5 per cent) in the present study regard such a development as possible. One possible explanation for this may have been due to the fact that in this study, Kirkpatrick and Xu's (2002: 277) original wording 'Chinese English' ('One day there will be a variety of English called Chinese English) was changed ('There will be a variety of English in China one day'; see also Table 8). The more negative perception in Kirkpatrick and Xu's study is perhaps not surprising given that the term 'Chinese English' tends to be dispreferred in China (Jiang 2002). The findings in both survey studies point toward a trend whereby college students (and most probably their

English teachers too) in China are becoming increasingly aware of and tolerant toward 'China English'.

Kirkpatrick (2006: 72) argues that 'unfortunately the real consumers, the learners and the teachers, are seldom consulted about which model of English to learn and teach'. This study is such an attempt to consult the real consumers. Consonant with Kirkpatrick and Xu's (2002) findings, in this study the majority of student participants (56.9 per cent) and teachers of college English (67.2 per cent) in China prefer an exonormative, NS-based model of English as the teaching model.

At the same time, nearly half the participants (46.7 per cent) do not mind (their students) speaking English with a Chinese accent despite their general preference for NS-based English norms. We believe that, rather than being incompatible with each other, these two views could be interpreted as a preference, or even wish, for the existing NS-based teaching model to be supplemented by salient features of 'China English' (see also He 2007: 187). While a Chinese accent is inevitable for the absolute majority of mainland Chinese learners of English, it would certainly make college teachers and students feel more at ease while using English with one another if their local accent is given full recognition as being equally legitimate as NS-based accents (D. Li 2007: 15–16). The potential gains are tremendous. First, instead of feeling embarrassed, Chinese learners would be much more willing to speak up openly in public, thereby reverting the trend of Chinese college graduates being 'dumb' (cf. 啞巴英語, *yǎbā jīngyǔ*, literally 'dumb English') when it comes to expressing themselves in English. Secondly, thousands of local Chinese teachers of English would feel greatly empowered, for full, institutional recognition of their Chinese-accented English would make them owners of an indigenized variety of English that they are able and proud to teach (and thus will probably enjoy teaching). When this happens, it would be a clear reversal of the current situation where most if not all Chinese teachers of English feel embarrassed for not being able to teach a NS-based model of English, and suffer from a 'second-class teacher' syndrome (Kirkpatrick 2007a).

CONCLUSION

The main goal for Chinese people in learning English remains unchanged from how Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 277) set it out seven years ago: not so much for 'intraethnic communication' as for communication with NNSs from other L1 backgrounds – a trend which is becoming more and more evident as NSs of English are outnumbered by NNSs of English by an ever-widening margin, notably in Asia (Crystal 2003; Dalby 2001; Graddol 1997; 2006: 15; Jenkins 2003: 2–4). In this paper, we first established the definition (with our own definition of 'China English' deliberated in the Discussion section), then discussed the status and linguistic features of 'China English' based on a review of a sizable body of literature in Chinese (e.g. Ge 1980: 2; Jia and Xiang 1997: 11; Wang and Li 1993: 63–4), showing an increasing awareness of 'China English' being a legitimate alternative to NS-based pedagogic models of English. We then briefly reviewed the arguments regarding the more desirable pedagogic model of English in Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Kachru 1992), with special reference to mainland China.

After that, we reported on the findings of the present study, in which empirical data were obtained from non-English majors and teachers of college English at four different mainland Chinese universities with the help of three separate research methods: questionnaire survey, matched-guise technique, and (group or individual) interview. The findings

are largely similar to those obtained by Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 276–8), in that, while participants tend to favor a NS-based model of English as the pedagogic model, many feel that linguistic features of 'China English' (including accent) cannot be avoided in the English-learning process and, as such, ought to be seen as a legitimate part of the local English curriculum. There is thus some indication that the attitudes of mainland Chinese learners and teachers of English seem to be shifting toward accepting 'China English' as a legitimate, indigenized variety.

The above findings lead us to believe that learners and users of 'China English' stand to gain if salient linguistic features of 'China English' are seen not as a source of embarrassment, but a resource of empowerment, for recognizing the legitimacy of 'China English' on a par with NS-based pedagogic models would help promote a stronger sense of ownership among users of English in mainland China. The challenge, however, is for researchers in 'China English' to (a) identify and select salient linguistic features of 'China English' which are widely represented and attested in different regions of China, (b) go through a rigorous procedure of codification, and (c) convince the national education authorities that the ideal teaching model of English in China should be one based on NS-based norms and standards, but which is supplemented judiciously with select features (or variants) of 'China English'.

The stakes are very high, given that multi-millions of learners of English are likely to be affected. There is therefore an urgent need for more concerted efforts in basic research on the salient linguistic features of 'China English', with a view to exploring the likelihood of incorporating them into the college English curriculum in mainland China. These efforts are of great significance, especially when considering the prospect of 'China English' depicted by Deterding (2006: 195), as cited at the beginning of this paper.

NOTES

1. In their article in *World Englishes*, Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002: 277) said: 'It will be interesting to repeat this study with a comparable cohort of students in future, perhaps in five years' time.' This study is a response to their call for more research in this area. We are grateful to George Yan and Candace Zhang for their precious comments on our earlier draft, and for the valuable comments from the reviewers and *WE* editors. We are responsible for all remaining inadequacies of this paper.
2. 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*.
3. The 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 will be added to the end of the code, e.g. SME4 refers to a male year 4 engineering major from a second-tier university, and SFA1K refers to a female year 1 arts major from the key university.

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(Received 17 March 2008.)