

Discussing the Trends of Maintaining or the Signs of Challenging Native Speakerism in A Local Context

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Abstract

China has a long history of English education, and English learning has an irreplaceable position in education. In the process of English teaching, Chinese learners' language ideology is also affected. By analyzing the status of English in the three Chinese development stages, this paper argued that the Chinese government has always defined English as a communication medium and reflected this attitude in education. But, Chinese learners' attitudes towards English are obviously different from China, and learners define native speakerism as the standard of English learning. Then, With the continuous development of China, learners' attitude towards native speakerism is gradually the same as that of the country. However, the standard of native speakerism still exists, because education needs a stable and correct foundation. Native speakerism is challenged in Chinese second language education, but will not be replaced.

Keywords

English learning; Second language; Native speakerism.

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization and internationalization, English has become an international language. Especially in economics, multilingual communication has become central to the globalized new economy (Heller, 2010). Based on capitalist expansion or globalization, communication across linguistic differences is required. English, as the official language of capitalist countries - American and British, has become a means by which work is accomplished. Compared with other languages, English has repressive development. As Seargeant (2008) believes, English is different from any other language in the history of the world, and it has been so extensively spread in the global population. At the same time, British and American English have gained authoritative status. Until recently, the standard of British and American English were still regarded as the only acceptable pedagogical model for ELT (English language teaching) in the world (He and LI, 2019; He and Zhang, 2010). This concept emphasizes the authority and standard of British and American English, thus Native speakerism is formed that the so-called 'native speakers' are the best English models and teachers (Holliday, 2006). Based on this background, this paper discusses the trends of native speakerism in the Chinese context and analyzes the change of native speakerism' status according to the language policy about education and learners' attitude in the three development stages of English in China. This paper argues that the Chinese government does not affirm the importance of native speakerism, but in the development process of English, learners have great concern and recognition of native speakerism. However, with the change of China's international status and language policy, Chinese learners have gradually abandoned their insistence on native speakerism. The influence of native speakerism in China is gradually weakening. Meanwhile, CHELF challenges native speakerism' status in China.

2. The First Stage: The Chinese Government and Individuals Do Not Attach Importance to Native Speakerism

The Chinese government is relatively indifferent to the entry of English into China. It is better to say that English caters to China than that China accepts English. In modern times, English entered China because of trade (Wang, 2012). The Chinese government did not allow Chinese to teach English, and Chinese is difficult. In order to meet the needs of communication, Chinese people have to learn English. Chinese passively chose to learn English, so their desire is not high. Thus, this period appeared a kind of English model to meet the needs of Chinese people - Pidgin English (Pride and Liu, 1988). The emergence of this language model is to facilitate Chinese learning. Both its language structure and its teaching method are very different from the language model advocated by native speakerism. It simplifies many pragmatic forms to achieve the purpose of communication quickly. For example, many grammars in pidgin English do not meet the standards, and many pronunciations are based on similar tones in Chinese. However, it still lived in China for a long time. This shows that the Chinese government and people have little interest in learning English. If the Chinese government permits teaching Chinese, the use of English may be delayed. And Chinese people obviously do not care about whether it is standard English. Therefore, when English has just entered China, China regards English more as a way of trade communication that must be adopted, and the Chinese may ignore its correct structure and rules. In other words, the Chinese government and people do not attach importance to English. Native speakerism was not clearly mentioned at this stage.

3. The Second Stage: The Chinese Government Attaches Importance to English But Not Native Speakerism, While Individuals Attach Importance to English and Emphasize Native Speakerism

The Chinese government has realized the importance of English for China's global development, thus strengthening English education. However, it emphasizes the communication function of English as a medium and does not advocate the ideology of native speakerism. After the reform and opening up, the Chinese government realized the importance of English in national development. It is re-recognized as an important tool for communication and cooperation with other parts of the world (Hu, 2005). The Chinese government emphasizes that English education plays a prominent role in the modernization process in the education policy. China needs to use English as a tool to obtain science and technology worldwide to meet the needs of national development. But education reform emphasizes pragmatism (Hu, 2005). English education is mainly in the elite, the Chinese government priority is education efficiency. In the case of relatively scarce English education resources, China's centralized and rapid training of English-proficient talents is needed for national modernization. Therefore, English teaching in China is divided into two categories, English for English majors and English for non-English majors (Wang, 2012). There are many categories of English education in China, such as business English. By subdividing specialties into different fields, China focuses on training professionals to meet the needs of national development and international exchanges. This shows that the Chinese government's attitude to English education is to cultivate talents who are proficient in English in order to achieve foreign trade and learning without communication barriers, so native speakerism is not the purpose of Chinese English education. China's emphasis on English education does not mean emphasis on native speakerism. First, the above mentioned, China concentrated education resources for elite training. But English teaching in China was weak (Hu, 2005). Many English teachers recruited by the Ministry of Education only know a little English. These people were sent to the crash courses and then admitted into the teaching force. These people have great deficiencies in pedagogy and professional ability. This shows that in the early

stage of English education in China, the Chinese government had only two requirements for English teaching: rapid and expansion. English teaching under this requirement is difficult to meet the ns concept for English standards. Second, the Chinese government has subjectively avoided the ideology contained in English. As the carrier of culture, English has the ideology of western capitalist countries. China has avoided the cultural nature of English when formulating language policies. On the one hand, English is regarded as the carrier of 'international class struggle' and 'revolutionary diplomacy' (CTMRI, 2001). This blatant evolutionary language and political information were eliminated when China revised its syllabus. China regards building a modern socialist country as the focus of its English teaching. As far as possible to avoid the cultural value of English to society. On the other hand, China's constitutional policy does not give any type or variant English a clear privileged status (Pan,2011). All English variants are summarized as 'the language of English-speaking countries'. Therefore, native speakerism is not specially treated by the Chinese government. The Chinese government believes that English learning is to obtain 'correct, natural, appropriate, fluent pronunciation and intonation (Pan,2011), without any country' s language model norms. This is contrary to the core view of native speakerism. In conclusion, China has gradually attached importance to English education, but the purpose of education is to cater to economic development and reform and opening up. English is the second foreign language in China, so it is not as important as colonial countries or countries with English as the first language. A series of educational policies have also been developed to facilitate exchanges in the international economy and trade.

However, from a personal perspective, Chinese learners have a high enthusiasm for native speakerism, so it is popular among learners. With the development of English in China, pidgin English has been resented (Bolton, 2003). People think that the correct English should be English of native speakers. Based on communication, people began to pursue the appropriateness of vocabulary use and the idiomatic accent. Therefore, when evaluating their English, Chinese people would imitate and learn from native English speakers. Many people think that learning English should take native speakers as the benchmark (Wei, 2016). Many scholars have conducted a series of surveys and found that Chinese learners are keen to be infinitely close to the level of native English speakers. Almost all students learn English based on standardized native language norms (Wen, 2012). Learners have two opposite attitudes towards NSE and the Chinese habit. Learners think NSE accent is considered as 'very good', 'true', or 'professional', etc (Li, 2009). On the contrary, learners reject the use of Chinese speakers' usages and have a strong belief that native English should be maintained (Wang, 2015). This concept is a great emphasis on native speakerism. In fact, as mentioned above, the Chinese government does not advocate NSE norms, but the Chinese English test is designed based on it. The standard of NSE plays an important role in evaluating a person's English level. This leads Chinese learners to attach importance to the standardized native speaker norms, even if they know that the purpose of tests is to improve learners' English proficiency, such as CET (Wang, 2012). They are still difficult to give up the pursuit of NSE. Moreover, Standard English is still used in high education English teaching in China (Kuo, 2006). For teaching, the standardized model is a complete and convenient starting point. Therefore, both the test standard and the teaching standard adopt NSE, which gives learners a clear hint, so that they have great enthusiasm for native speakerism.

4. The Third Stage: The Chinese Government Inhibits the Development of Native Speakerism and Advocates CHELF, and Individuals Have Also Changed Their Emphasis on Native Speakerism

The Chinese government has put forward a series of reforms in education policy to curb the development of native speakerism. With the increase of China's foreign exchange and the development of education, more and more people speak English in China. At the same time, China has gradually gained more voice in the international community, so that the communication between China and many non-English speaking countries has increased, so China's language policy tends to multilingual communication. For example, many countries involved in the Belt and Road policy are not English-speaking countries. English serves as a lingua franca between Chinese people and other L1 speakers today. In this communication of language background, it is even less important whether English tends to be native. At the same time, this way of communication provides a possibility for China to considering Chinese speakers' English in the globalization (Wang, 2016). For example, many Chinese direct translations are accepted by English-speaking countries, such as long time no see. This reflects that CHELF gradually occupies a certain position in the ELF context. Then, the setting of education also reduces the emphasis on English. In basic education, China's reform of exams - the Secondary School Entrance Examination and College Entrance Examination, the proportion of English exams decreased, while improving the proportion of Chinese exams. This shows that China has reduced the influence of English on learners while improving the status of Chinese (Zhou, 2016). The decline in the importance of English has led Chinese learners to stop pursuing native speakerism. In higher education, there are signs of ELF in the classroom. The syllabus tends more and more toward communicative language teaching (Hu, 2005). And English began to become a medium for learners to learn another professional knowledge. In this educational environment, learners shift their attention from language learning to content learning, which imperceptibly reduces their attention to English and thus reduces their attention to native speakerism. In addition, because of China's policy, China has strengthened the cultivation of multilingual talents, many universities have opened Minor language majors. This measure also reduces the importance of English. In conclusion, the Chinese government has relaxed its attitude towards NESs' English by promoting CHELF and multilingualism to reduce learners' time and energy input into English. Native speakerism has gradually lost its special place in China

With the change of English's status and role in China, the language ideology of Chinese people has also changed. Chinese learners are paying less attention to NESs' English and no longer focus on native speakerism. Although the linguistic features of China English cannot be avoided, learners have begun to accept China English as a legitimate and localized product. Some research shows that students' attitude transformation is reflected in: First, students still use standard English as a reference to learn English, but they would not try to achieve this effect in the actual communication process (He and Li, 2009). They no longer pursue the use of authentic vocabulary or standard pronunciation. They chose Chinese English. It is also believed that CHELF can still be used when communicating with people from non-native English-speaking countries. Second, compared with the pursuit of standard English, learners believe that Chinese English should be recognized and respected, and it should not be corrected where it is different from standard English (Wei, 2016). These surveys show that under the influence of Chinese language policy, Chinese learners' attitudes towards ns are gradually relaxed. They begin to focus on the communicative function of English and are willing to accept and use CHELF in China.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing the attitudes of the Chinese government and learners towards native speakerism in the three stages, this paper expounds on the trend that native speakerism' status in China has gradually decreased. For the protection of national ideology and culture, the Chinese government' s attitude towards English is a tool to help China' s economic development. In the specific practice process, China' s language policy orientation makes native speakerism have room for development. However, China has timely adjusted relevant policies to localize English teaching and purpose, and gradually shifted NES to CHELF. Based on ensuring national culture and ideology, China has also developed the use of English, making English more suitable for the Chinese context. At the same time, the attitude of Chinese learners is also changing. There is also the impact of Chinese policy. Learners from the beginning of the lack of language awareness should pursue NES, and then gradually tolerance, acceptance of CHELF produced in China. This shows that native English has gradually lost its sanctification in China. However, the standard of NES still exists, because education needs a stable and correct basis, which cannot be provided by varieties of English. In short, native speakerism is challenged in Chinese context, but would not be replaced.

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