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The English language used by the Chinese:

a new variety of English?

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1. Introduction

China is a country with a population over 1.3 billion, plausibly heading to 1.4 billion in the following years. According to the statistics given by the Xinhua New Agency, the biggest and most influential media organization in China, approximately 300 to 400 million Chinese nationals are currently learning English or have studied English, a quarter of the country's population. Although the English proficiency level varies significantly among those learners, it is worth pointing out that this number surpasses the total population of the United States, the most populous native English speaking country in the world. It is well known that certain linguistic characteristics can be found in the English language spoken or written by the Chinese. These characteristics are usually considered as ungrammatical or incorrect by the norms of Standard English (SE). One can often find some sentence structures such as:

(1) I think I can't

wǒ xiǎng wǒ bù néng
我想我不能

SE: I don't think I can.

(2) I'm watching a book.

wǒ zhèng zài kàn yì běn shū。
我正在看一本书。

SE: I'm reading a book.

(3) I tomorrow meet him.

wǒ míngtiānjiàn tā。
我明天见他。

SE: I'll meet him tomorrow.

Some famous examples such as: *long time no see* 好久不见 (with controversial origin) and *no can do* 不能做 are now considered as American English idioms. Others with semantic and pragmatic complexities such as: *you can you up* 你能你上 (which means "if you cannot do it then do not even criticize it." It is used against people who criticize others' work, especially when the criticizer is not that much better.) It is now included in the Urban Dictionary, a popular online dictionary of slang words and

phrases in the United States.

The English language used by the Chinese should be considered valuable to the English speaking community, considering the fact, as noticed above, that there are more Chinese studying English in China than U.S. Americans who speak English. Eaves (2011:64) notes that with so many learners there, it stands to reason that a variety of English peculiar to China would eventually develop, and there is much evidence to suggest that it has already begun.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the unique linguistic features that make the Chinese use English in a particular style, and hopefully through this paper, other English speakers, native or non-native, will gain a better understanding of the English language that is used by the Chinese.

2. Chinese Pidgin English, Chinglish, Chinese English and China English

In this section, the umbrella term of the ‘English language that is used by the Chinese’ will be defined, as complicated as it may be to give a simple name for it. Wei and Fei (2003) indicate three stages in the English language used by the Chinese: the first stage is Chinese Pidgin English, the second stage is Chinglish and the third stage is from Chinese English to China English.

2.1 Chinese Pidgin English

According to history books, the first direct contact between Britain and China occurred on June 27, 1637 when Captain John Wendell arrived in Macao. During the 17th century, the British established trades in South China; as a result, Chinese Pidgin English was invented as a way of communicating between the British and the Chinese (mainly Cantonese speakers). Certain expressions such as *long time no see* and *no can do* are considered as contributions of Chinese Pidgin English to modern English. Chinese Pidgin English spread across East China after the Opium Wars during the mid 19th century (the First Opium War was fought between the United Kingdom and the Qing dynasty from 1839 to 1842; the Second Opium War, was a war set against the Qing dynasty by the British Empire and the Second French Empire from 1856 to 1860).

According to McArthur (2002), “Chinese Pidgin English began to decline in the late 19th century as Standard English began to be taught in the country's education system.”

2.2 Chinglish

Chinglish is commonly known as an interlanguage variety of English, a mixture of English with Chinese. Sometimes it is simplified as speaking English and Chinese at the same time; however, there is more to it than people assume. According to Eaves (2011:65), “Chinglish, then, is a nonsensical form of language, identifiable as an attempt at English, but usually produced by deficient translation devices or speakers/writers with a low skill level.” She also indicates that the occurrence of Chinglish is generally confined to written forms where mistakes of expression or translation are made. In other words, Chinglish is a result of inadequate translations conducted by English users with lower English language level, thus, leading to a low level of intelligibility. Apart from this, another definition was given by Radtke (2007) in his book *Chinglish: Found in Translation*: “Chinglish is the students’ unsuccessful attempts to understand English through a Chinese matrix.” Chinglish is a unique phenomenon that can be easily found in China, especially in public signs or in bilingual contexts. The issue of this phenomenon is that sometimes it impedes or even damages international or intercultural communications, especially in the tourism industry. Millions of tourists have already experienced and will experience this phenomenon.

From its birth, Chinglish has received many criticisms; for instance, it is regarded as broken English by many academics in China. Despite of all the controversial discussions, it thrived. The existence of Chinglish cannot be explained by one or two sentences alone. In their article “The Chinglish syndrome” Niu Qiang and Martin Wolff (2003) shed some light on the cause of this phenomenon, that is education. They pointed out that Chinglish is developing as the second national language of China. Some of the modern English expressions were derived from Chinglish, such as the one mentioned in the Introduction section: *you can you up*.

2.3 Chinese English

Wei and Fei (2003) categorize Chinese English and China English as one group; however, following Eaves' (2011:66) proposal, it is dangerous to group these two forms of English together. She believes that there are clear differences between the interlanguage spoken by the Chinese (Chinese English) and the maturing cultural variety of English (China English) that is developing. According to the definitions given, the distinction between Chinglish and Chinese English is rather vague; indeed, Hu (2004:22) suggests that there is no boundary between Chinglish and Chinese English. If Chinglish is considered as a result of inadequate translations conducted by English users with lower English language level; subsequently, what defined by Eaves (2011:66) is more applicable: "Chinese English is the product of errors made by learners as they advance in fluency level."

One of the most important features that differentiates Chinese English from Chinglish is the level of intelligibility. Eaves (2011:66) indicates that Chinese English can be easily understood by native speakers of English, whereas Chinglish cannot. She also identifies the key features of Chinese English: Chinese syntax or sentence structure with English words might be used, or at other times erroneous but intelligible uses of grammatical patterns (e.g. wrong past tenses, present progressive, etc.). The following examples of Chinese English were found in a library, for instance:

(4) *Don't forget to take your things for Don't forget your personal belongings.*

(5) *No Noising for Quiet, please.*

2.4 China English

The term "China English" has been widely accepted by linguists to refer to the English language used by the Chinese. According to the quotation used by many researchers and scholars, the origin of this term can be traced back to 1980. In Ge Chuangui's article màn tán yóu hàn yì yīng wèn tí 漫谈由汉译英问题 (which can be translated as "Random thoughts on some problems in Chinese-English translation"), he proposed the concept of 'China English'. Liu (2008:29) quotes from Ge (1980):

The English language originally is the language of English people. Other peoples who use English should follow the idiomatic and conventional ways of the English people. However, each nation has its specific culture. China English is to express Chinese phenomena and ideas.

China English was later on well defined by Li (1993). Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002:269) quote Li's definition of China English:

China English is based on a standard English, expresses Chinese culture, has Chinese characteristics in lexis, sentence structure and discourse but does not show any L1 interference.

Li's definition of China English was challenged by Xie (1995:7-11), who defines the concept as follows (taken from Liu 2008:29):

Chinese interference should be taken into account in the study of China English. The Chinese interference actually exists in the linguistic levels --- lexis, syntax and discourse when Chinese people use English to convey both Chinese and foreign things.

The center of Li's (1993) and Xie's (1995)'s argument is based on the Chinese language interference on the English language spoken by the Chinese. After comparing scholars such as Ge (1980), Li (1993), Xie (1995), Jiang (1995), Jia and Xiang (1990), Liu (2008:30) in his article "China English and its Linguistic Features" gives a modern definition of China English:

China English, with Normative English as its core, is an English variety used by Chinese people; it has the Chinese features unavoidably influenced by both the Chinese language and the way of Chinese thinking; it possesses the linguistics characteristics shown at the levels of phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse.

It is important to note that despite of the efforts many educators, scholars and linguists devoted to the idea of China English, the term itself remains unknown by many English speakers within or outside China. A questionnaire was conducted by Hu (2004) in which 1,261 Chinese students were asked to answer it: 490 English majors and 771 non-English majors. One of the results is particularly captivating, that is only 15.5% of the subjects had heard about the name before. Hu (2004) explains that the low percentage of knowing China English is because of the widespread use of Chinese English (Chinglish). It is worth mentioning that the terms Chinglish and Chinese English both tend to have negative connotations which have been demonstrated in the

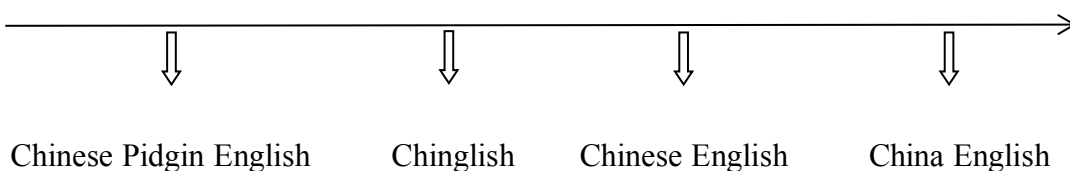
previous sections, whereas China English, as Wei and Fei (2003:44) point out that the term China English has become self-justifying as a label for an English with Chinese characteristics and culture – to be regarded as a member of the family of English in its own right.

Perhaps, one of the most notable representations of China English is what Mair (2009) calls ‘Xinhua English’. As mentioned in the Introduction section, the Xinhua News Agency is the biggest and most influential media organization in China, and it prints in eight languages: Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Russian, Portuguese, Arabic and Japanese. Besides Chinese, the English edition of the Xinhua News Agency is no doubt the most excellent newspaper in China regarding languages. Mair (2009) uses a headline as an example to demonstrate the idea of ‘Xinhua English’ which now can be called ‘China English’.

(6) *China, EU vow to deepen cooperation.*

He explains the verb *deepen* as a China English word for Standard English word *strengthen*. This headline is grammatically correct, but unusually heard by a native English speaker. He also explains that the idea of using this verb is the Xinhua English equivalent of Chinese 加强^{jiā qiáng}; thus, this is a clear illustration of what has been defined by Liu (2008:30) that China English, with Normative English as its core, is an English variety used by Chinese people; it has the Chinese features unavoidably influenced by both the Chinese language and the way of Chinese thinking.

If the developing history of the English language used by the Chinese can be summarized, a simple continuum can be drawn:



3. Linguistic features of the English language used by the Chinese

Some examples of the English language used by the Chinese have been shortly introduced in the previous sections from lexical and morphosyntactic aspects. From this

section onward, a deeper look at the linguistic features of the English language used by the Chinese will be taken. Chinese Pidgin English is, by now, extinct. Since there is no actual record that has been found regarding the usage of Chinese Pidgin English nowadays, it stands to reason that the analysis of Chinese Pidgin English falls outside the scope of this paper.

3.1 Lexical features

The lexical features, arguably, are the most distinguishable features of the English language used by the Chinese. The concept of “Nativization” was raised by Sankoff & Laberge (1972). Nativization is the process whereby a language gains native speakers. Some might consider that the English language is being ‘nativized’ by the Chinese; subsequently, Kachru (1982)’s idea thereby can be applied:

a part of the lexicon is nativized in two ways. On the one hand, native items are used in localized registers and styles in order to contextualize the language. On the other hand, English lexical items may acquire extended or restricted semantic markers.

Unlike the Germanic languages and Romance languages that share some degrees of grammar or vocabulary similarity with English, Chinese is completely different from English in every aspect. It is commonly known that a language is a verbal expression of a culture, a culture cannot stand alone without its language. Not only are English and Chinese different languages, culturally speaking, they are totally different as well. Therefore, Liu (2008:31) indicates that during the process of the nativization of English in China, the former is called “cultural words”, the latter, “semantic shift”.

3.1.1 Transliteration

In order to explain how transliteration affects the lexical features of the English language used by the Chinese, first, an explanation of Pinyin system is in order. Hanyu Pinyin, or Chinese phonetic system, or simply also known as Pinyin, was developed in the 1950s by the Chinese government. It is regarded as the official romanization system in China. Its main purpose, if not the sole purpose, is to help people to learn Chinese characters, and especially, to help people to pronounce the so-called Standard Chinese

(Mandarin).

Liu (2008:32) explains that, before the development of Pinyin, people used to employ a phonetic system called *Wade-Giles*, sometimes abbreviated *Wade* to represent Chinese words and names in English, as in the following examples:

(6) 北京^{běi jīng} (Beijing), historically known as *Peking*.

(7) 广州^{guǎngzhōu} (Guangzhou), historically known as *Canton*.

The influence of this system can still be found in words like *Tofu*, *Kung Fu*, *Chow Mei*, etc. Thanks to the Pinyin system, nowadays, the names of Chinese cities are spelled in English borrowed directly from Pinyin. Other names include terms such as *Kung Fu*, which is now systematically replaced by *Gong Fu*. Transliterated expressions can often be detected when the Chinese speak English. When referring to *tofu*, 豆腐^{dòu fǔ} is often used: *I don't like doufu*; when referring to *kung fu*, 功夫^{gōng fu} is often used: *I know gongfu*.

For most Chinese people (Standard Chinese speakers), using the transliterated expressions is more logical since they are what they should be pronounced in Chinese. A conversation between a Chinese and non-Chinese English speaker (native or non-native) can often cause confusion, especially, when the non-Chinese interlocutor knows nothing about the Chinese culture.

3.1.2 Calque

Calque, also known as loan translation, is a form of borrowing from one language to another whereby the semantic components of a given term are literally translated into their equivalents in the borrowing language (American Heritage Dictionary). Examples of English calques from Chinese are:

(8) *Running dog* 走狗^{zǒu gǒu}

Definition: A servile follower or lackey (American Heritage Dictionary). Unlike the English informal expression *lap dog*, a running dog refers to a person with no principles

who helps or flatters those in power (usually evil). In Western culture, dogs are considered as a man's best friends, whereas in Chinese culture, horses share this status. As for dogs, they are traditionally considered as something unpleasant, degrading even despicable (as cats in the medieval period). Dogs in most of idioms and proverbs in Chinese have negative connotations.

(9) *Paper tiger* 纸老虎 zhǐ lǎo hǔ

Definition: One that is seemingly dangerous and powerful but is in fact timid and weak (American Heritage Dictionary). Paper tiger is an ancient Chinese expression, translated into English by Sir John Francis David in his work *The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants* in 1836. This expression was later on used by Chairman Mao as a slogan against the U.S. government.

3.1.3 Literal translation

There are certain terms that cannot be considered as English calques, but rather, literal translations from the Chinese language, and now are generally accepted by the English speakers around the world. Noteworthy examples of such terms are *dragon boat*, *one country two system*, *special administrative region*, *autonomous region*, *spring festival*, etc. Although other literal translations are in English, their meanings remain uncertain to the English speakers outside of the Chinese cultural context.

(10) *Red envelope* 红包 hóng bāo

In Chinese culture, red envelopes are monetary gifts that are given during special occasions such as the birth of a baby, weddings, or the Spring Festival. The red color symbolizes luck, fortune and protection against evil spirits; this tradition can be traced back to Qin dynasty (221 BC - 210 BC). This kind of terms are unique to the users of the English language of Chinese background.

Chinese idioms and proverbs are key components of the Chinese language and culture; each idiom and each proverb has a historical or mythical story. It is generally agreed that in China, one way of evaluating an individual's cultivation is to observe this individual's usage of idioms and proverbs. Occasionally a misused Chinese idiom or

proverb could be seen as idiotic. Sometimes, certain Chinese expressions have their English equivalents. “Equivalents” in a sense that they serve the same purpose, such as warning, irony, humor, etc. However they are not expressed in the exact same manner.

Examples:

(11) Think before you act.

^{sān sī ér hòu xíng}
三思而后行 (which can be translated as “Think three times before you act”)

(12) Kill two birds with one stone.

^{yī shí èr niǎo} (One rock two birds) or ^{yī jiàn shuāng diāo} (One arrow two hawks)

(13) Birds of a feather flock together.

^{wù yǐ lèi jù}, ^{rén yǐ qún fēn} (which can be translated as “Things categorize together, people group together”)

As Liu (2008:31) indicates, often Chinese speakers cannot find the equivalent English expressions to convey certain things in the Chinese culture. If the Chinese cannot express themselves in English; they would not know what to do. As a result, a literal translation is used. When describing a place that is packed with people, a Chinese idiom is often used: ^{rén shān rén hǎi} (people mountain people sea) which is now included in the Urban Dictionary. This is a clear case of how English is being ‘nativized’ in China, and now being more and more accepted by the native speakers of English. When describing a person who is observant, who can predicate the future by paying attention to the smallest details, a Chinese idiom ^{yī yè zhī qiū} (one falling leaf indicates the coming of autumn) is used. This is an example which contains features of China English because it is influenced by both the Chinese language and the way of Chinese thinking that have been defined by Liu (2008:30). The dramatic and almost poetic effects carried by these two idioms cannot be conveyed by using the English language alone.

Chinese idioms and proverbs are manifestations of how rich the Chinese language is in this respect. Evidently, some English expressions used by the Chinese have been

absorbed into modern English; some are being absorbed right now, and plausibly will become a part of the English language one day.

Another aspect of literal translation was shortly introduced as the example (2) in the Introduction section: **I'm watching a book*. The reason for using the verb *watch* in this sentence is because of Chinese equivalent 看^{kàn}, which means *watch* literally. Whereas Chinese equivalent for the English verb *read* is 读^{dú}; however, 读^{dú} indicates reading aloud. Literal translation could be considered as one of the causes of Chinglish (inadequate translations) in the first place. It could also be considered as a part of Chinese English, since **I'm watching a book* can be understood by other English speakers outside of the Chinese context.

3.2 Morphosyntactic features

Chinglish, Chinese English or China English, all these three forms of English are influenced by the Chinese language (Standard Chinese or the other varieties of Chinese). When analyzing morphosyntactic features, Chinese grammar must be taken into consideration. As mentioned in the Introduction section, the English proficiency level varies significantly among the Chinese; thus, the following morphosyntactic features may or may not be seen habitually, but for the purpose of this paper, it is relevant to indicate them.

3.2.1 Tenses

It is commonly known that the Chinese language does not have any morphological markers to distinguish tenses or agreements. One of the main reasons is that the Chinese language uses Chinese characters as its written script. Unlike most of the European languages which use alphabetic writing systems, Chinese characters are logograms. One of the ways to specify grammatical tenses in a Chinese sentence is to add a temporal adjunct or an adverbial phrase. Temporal adjuncts and adverbial phrases are placed either at the beginning of a sentence or after the subject and before the predicate; they cannot be placed in any other positions because of the Chinese language grammar rules.

As a result, the English language used by the Chinese follows this pattern, whereas in English, this pattern is usually found in the cases of thematic fronting. Examples:

(14) Tomorrow, we will have lunch.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 míngtiān wǒ men qù chī fàn
 明天 我们 去吃 饭

(15) We tomorrow will have lunch.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 wǒ men míngtiān qù chī fàn
 我们 明天 去吃 饭

SE: We will have lunch tomorrow.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 * wǒ men qù chī fàn míngtiān
 * 我们 去吃 饭 明天

(16) Before sunset, you must come home!

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 rì luò zhī qián nǐ bì xū huí jiā
 日落之前 你 必须 回 家

(17) You before sunset must come home!

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 nǐ rì luò zhī qián bì xū huí jiā
 你 日落之前 必须 回 家

SE: You must come home before sunset!

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 * nǐ bì xū huí jiā rì luò zhī qián
 * 你 必须 回 家 日落之前

3.2.2 Verbal inflection/Conjugation

Following what has been seen in the previous section 3.2.1, consequently, the Chinese occasionally do not conjugate verbs when using English. However, it is important to point out that this feature usually occurs more frequently in spoken discourse than in written text; and it is more common in Chinglish or Chinese English than in the maturing cultural variety of English (China English). The basic word order in Chinese is subject-verb-object. But in certain cases, verbs can be omitted or ellipted, especially, copular verbs. Examples:

(18) You very beautiful.

↓ ↓ ↓
nǐ hěn piàoliàng
你 很 漂亮

SE: You are very beautiful.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
nǐ hěn piàoliàng
你 很 漂亮

3.2.3. Plural marking

Following the section 3.2.1, because of Chinese has no morphological markers to distinguish tenses or agreements; it has no morphological markers to indicate plural as well. In certain Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Malay, plurality is marked by classifiers. A classifier is a word or an affix that are used to count a noun. The Chinese language is abundant in classifiers; it is said that even native speakers of Chinese often make mistakes when using classifiers. As a result, Chinese influence on English plurality from time to time can be noticed. This feature is similar to 3.2.2, that is, it does not usually occur in China English; it is often found in English which is spoken by the Chinese with lower level of proficiency. The idea of classifier is indicated below:

(19) Four (classifier) lion

↓ ↓ ↓
sì tóu shī zǐ
四 头 狮子
↓ ↓ ↓
* Four head of lion

3.2.4 Articles

The articles are either used in an incorrect way (according to the standard norms), or often omitted. The main cause of this is that the Chinese language has no articles whatsoever. The usage of article in English, to the Chinese, is a completely new concept to grasp. This phenomenon tends to appear quite often, for example:

(20) She plays harp.

↓ ↓ ↓
tā huì dàn shù qín
她 会弹 竖琴

SE: She plays the harp.
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 tā huì dǎn shù qín
 她 会弹 竖琴

When referring to a specific entity which can be identified by both interlocutors, the English speaker with Chinese background might use a demonstrative pronoun *this/that* instead of the definite article *the*. This might be because of the Chinese language grammar rules. In Chinese, an identifiable entity is identified by a demonstrative pronoun. Example:

(21) Give me this/that (classifier) book.
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 gěi wǒ zhè nà běn shū
 给 我 这/那 本 书

SE: Give me the book.

3.2.5 End-weight principle and end-focus principle

The end-weight principle and the end-focus principle are factors which are on the borderline between syntax and pragmatics/discourse. For the purpose of demonstrating in a clear and coherent way (with respect to section 3.2.6), it is placed here.

The end-weight principle means that longer structures tend to occur at the end of a sentence. Cowan (2008:338) indicates that placing a long noun phrase at the end of a sentence tends to make the sentence easier to process (comprehend). Whereas the end-focus is the principle by means of which the most important information is placed at the end of a sentence, sometimes, in order to follow the end-weight principle, native speakers of English tend to use certain grammar structures such as *it-cleft*, *wh-cleft* or anticipatory *it*. Usually, native speakers of English tend to prefer the example given in (22 a). In contrast, the English speakers of Chinese background tend to follow the end-focus principle which is given in (22 b). One of the plausible reasons for this is that in Chinese, other elements (modifiers) tend to be placed at the beginning of a sentences, whereas the central (important) element tend to be placed at the end of a sentence. Another reason might be because in Chinese, using a pronoun *it* as an empty subject does not exist. As a result, the English language used by the Chinese follows the Chinese language pattern.

- (22) a. It is healthy for you to eat more vegetables.
b. For you to eat more vegetables is healthy.

3.2.6 Dummy pronoun *it*

Following what has been seen in the previous section 3.2.5, the impersonal pronoun, used without referent as the subject of an impersonal verb, does not exist in Chinese; thus, it might be replaced by other grammatical subjects. Examples:

- (23) The weather is very cold today.

SE: It is very cold today.

- (24) The sky is raining.

SE: It is raining.

- (25) The time is almost ten PM.

SE: It is almost ten PM.

3.2.7 Time sequence

Wei and Fei (2003:44) note that there is a tendency to arrange sentences according to time sequence when the Chinese use English, that is, 'first come, first served'. According to Wang and Wang (2012:72):

English sentence demonstrate an 'architecture style' in which various sub-structures cluster around the basic S-V structure just like a building with a basic structure; in contrast, Chinese sentences exhibit a 'chronicle style' in which word order tends to represent temporal sequences or logic relationships.

Cases of time sequence usually can be found in the past perfect tense with the past tense, for actions that happened before a past event. To native speakers of English, it does not matter which event is mentioned first because the tenses make them clear. However, for the Chinese, one structure (26 a) is preferred than the other (26 b).

- (26) a. My dad had gone out when I came home.

b. When I came home, my dad had gone out.

Time sequences in a longer discourse/text are often emphasized by adding temporal adjuncts; this might be connected to 3.2.1. It could be argued that the Chinese make redundant emphases on the chronicle order is because of the lacking of verbal inflections in the Chinese language. Consequently, some English speakers of Chinese background might feel obligated to emphasize the time as in (27) b. An illustration can be found in the following:

(27) a. Last weekend, I ran into an old friend of mine. We had not seen each other for a long time. I enjoyed talking to her so much that I asked her to go out on a date. We are going to the movies tonight.

b. Last weekend, I ran into an old friend of mine. **For a long time**, we had not seen each other. I enjoyed talking to her so much **that day**, **later** I asked her to go out on a date. **And tonight** we are going to the movies.

3.2.8 Simplified sentences

Wei and Fei (2003:44) indicates that simple and compound sentences tend to be more common than complex sentences. This could be seen as a sequel of the ‘chronicle style’ which has been explained in the previous section 3.2.7. It is argued that Chinese is a fairly logical language. The representations of logic in Chinese lie within its vocabulary and grammar rules. The chronicle style can be seen as one of the representations of logic. Not only did it influence the Chinese language but also the English language used by the Chinese. Examples include:

(28) Last month, I met a girl in a conference. This evening, I went out with her.

SE: This evening I went out with a girl who I met in a conference last month.

3.2.9 Transferred negation

According to Leech and Svartvik (2002:325), “transferred negation occurs after verbs like *believe*, *suppose* and *think*.” The idea of transferred negation is that native speakers of English prefer to transfer the negative (not, cannot, does not, etc.) to the first verb instead of the second. In other words, the transfer of negation moves from the second verb to the first verb; although, sentences without transferring are grammatically correct.

It is argued that the reason for this preference is for the speakers to sound less direct or critical of others or events (Objectiva Software Solutions). In Chinese, there is no equivalent rule. In fact, the grammatical rule in Chinese for placing the negative is at the second verb. As a result, the English language used by the Chinese sometimes follows this pattern, especially learners with lower proficiency level or have not exposed to native-like English environments. As an example has already given in the Introduction section:

(29) I think I can't.
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
wǒ xiǎng wǒ bù néng
我想 我 不能

SE: I don't think I can.

3.3 Pragmatic features

A deeper analysis of the pragmatic features of the English language used by the Chinese is difficult to exemplify at this stage; this is mainly why little research has been done regarding these features. However, two of most noticeable characteristics of the English used by the Chinese perhaps can be topic-prominence and grammatical polarity (affirmative and negative responses).

3.3.1 Topic-prominence

Li and Thompson (1976) distinguish topic-prominent languages, such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, from subject-prominent language, such as English and French. According to Downing (2015:208), “topic is a discourse category which corresponds to ‘what the text, or part of the text, is about’. A whole book, chapter, essay or lecture can have a topic, for instance, ‘car maintenance’ or ‘the English novel in the 20th century’.” It could be argued that the topic-prominence affects the Chinese to a great extent. When the Chinese use English, sentences often begin with a topic and are followed by a comment. Examples:

(30) **This afternoon**, I'm having a meeting.

SE: I'm having a meeting this afternoon.

(31) **This city**, is very beautiful!

SE: This is a beautiful city.

A further investigation regarding this feature was carried out in Chen's (2011) paper "The influence of Chinese Topic Prominence Construction on English Acquisition". Chen (2011) points out that not all topic prominence sentences are grammatical in English, because the Chinese learners tend to follow the topic prominence construction excessively, resulting ungrammatical sentences in English. The study concludes that the topic prominence construction is the result of an interlanguage influence. The study also indicates that Chinese learners of English are trying to gradually decrease the use of topic prominence construction, turning into more target like interlanguage with the increase of their English proficiency level.

3.3.2 Grammatical polarity (affirmative and negative responses)

This particular feature of the English language used by the Chinese is rather complex. For the sake of clarity, the examples are going to be given first.

(32) a.

Speaker A: Have you had breakfast yet?

Speaker B: No.

Speaker A: So you haven't had breakfast!

Speaker B: No.

(32) b.

Speaker A: Have you had breakfast yet?

Speaker B: No.

Speaker A: So you haven't had breakfast!

Speaker B: Yes. (I haven't had breakfast.)

Speaker A: Have you eaten anything?

Speaker B: No.

Speaker A: So you haven't eaten anything!

Speaker B: Yes. (I haven't eaten anything.)

Example (32 a) is an English conversation between two native speakers of English; whereas (32 b) is an English conversation between a native speaker of English, who is the addresser and an English speaker of Chinese background, who is the addressee.

The contrast lies in the following: the answers to some polar questions in English may be based on real-life facts. This means that if you did something, your answer is affirmative *Yes*; if you did not do anything, your answer is negative *No*. Certainly, the addressee being truthful or not must be taken into consideration. Needless to say, the analysis of truthfulness is far beyond the scope of this paper. For that reason, one must assume that the responses in example (32 a) and (32 b) were given under the condition that Speaker B was being truthful. In Chinese, the answer/response is given as a confirmation to the previous discourse; in other words, the response of the addressee is based on whether the addressee agrees with the addresser or not.

In (32 b), Speaker B definitely causes confusion. However, these responses are totally acceptable in a Chinese conversation. Progovac (1994:151-152) indicates that in Chinese, yes-no questions typically take an A-not-A form. An A-not-A form is a type of yes-no questions that offers two opposite possibilities for the answer. Some linguists suggested that the resulting response in Chinese is usually an 'echo response'. Lehnert and Stucky (1988:224,232) explain that an echo answer or echo response is a way of answering a polar question without using words for yes and no. The verb used in the question is simply echoed in the answer, negated if the answer has a negative truth-value.

Following the idea of echo response, what is important in example (32 b) is the answers in brackets: (I haven't had breakfast) and (I haven't eaten anything). Occasionally, in English or in Chinese, the addressee uses only *yes* or *no* as an answer because perhaps the addressee believes the information can be retrieved from the previous discourse, resulting in ellipsis, or simply does not wish to communicate further. This is a clear case of how the way of Chinese thinking affects the English language used by the Chinese.

4. Conclusion

This paper has tried to explore the unique linguistic features that make the Chinese use English in a particular style. First, it has showed the development of the English language used by the Chinese; second, it has taken a deeper look into certain linguistic features regarding the English language used by the Chinese. Although this paper has exemplified certain aspects regarding the linguistic features, it is worth pointing out that these features may only be stereotypes. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the English proficiency level varies significantly among the Chinese. Regarding the issue of whether the English language used by the Chinese can be considered a new variety of English, it is important to note that the English language is still being 'nativized' by the Chinese; it is still an ongoing process. When the 'nativization' process is complete, with the influence of the Chinese language, the way of Chinese thinking and the number of speaker; it stands to reason to expect that it will eventually gain its rightful place in the English-speaking world, as a unique variety of English.

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