Native-speakerism in English Language Teaching

Native-speakerism in English Language Teaching:

The Current Situation in China

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CE	College English
CET-4	College English Test - Band 4
CLT	Communicative language teaching
DHA	Discourse-historical approach
EFL	English as a foreign language
EIL	English as an international language
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
GA	General American
L1	First language
MGT	Matched-guise test
MoE	Ministry of Education
NESTs	Native English speaker teachers
NNESTs	Nonnative English speaker teachers
NNS	Nonnative speaker
NNSs	Nonnative speakers
NS	Native speaker
NSs	Native speakers
RP	Received pronunciation
SAOFEA	State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs
StE	Standard English
TBLT	Task-based language teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as a foreign language
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
WE	World Englishes

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: NATIVE-SPEAKERISM, ELT AND ATTITUDES

1.1 Native-speakerism in ELT: An overview

In the realm of English language teaching (ELT), there has long been a pervasive, deep-rooted belief in support of native English speaker teachers (NESTs), a concept for which the term 'native-speakerism' was coined by Holliday (2005, 20106). Specifically, NESTs are thought to be the best teachers based on the conception that they "represent a 'Western culture' from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday 2005, 6). Although the Hollidayian term refers primarily to the idealization of NESTs, it simultaneously encapsulates the esteem in which native speaker (NS) English is held as well as teaching approaches or methods developed from the English-speaking West or Inner Circle countries (Kachru 1985).[1] For Kumaravadivelu (2012, 15), the pro-nativeness ideology also manifests itself in the idolization of "textbooks published by Western publishing houses, research agenda set by Centre-based scholars, professional journals edited and published from Centre countries [and many other Inner Circle artefacts]". This observation gives rise to the need to reconsider the semantic range of native-speakerism as originally purported by Holliday (2005, 2006). In contrast to previous research that concentrates on the "self" versus "other" dichotomy between NESTs and nonnative English speaker teachers (NNESTs), in this book we aim to offer a comprehensive study of native-speakerism in ELT by incorporating other dichotomic issues of "nativeness" versus "nonnativeness". In particular, we take into account those that appertain to language standard, cultural orientations and

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[1] In this book postcolonialist terminologies, such as Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle English, culture and teaching methodology, Centre, Periphery, Self and Other, are adopted as conceptual tools only.

teaching approaches, as they, alongside the "self" versus "other" dichotomy on teachers, constitute four major concerns of everyday ELT practice.

From a sociocultural and historical-political perspective, native-speakerism is often viewed as a chauvinistic ideology stemming from Inner Circle countries (Holliday 2005, 2006; Kabel 2009; Kubota and Lin 2009). The historical-present political, economic and cultural hegemony of these countries, in tandem with the modernistic apolitical empirical-cum-positivistic research paradigm in applied linguistics and ELT (Holliday and Aboshiha 2009), obscures the chauvinistic essence of this ideology, which, to some extent, explains its wide acceptance among ELT stakeholders of Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Holliday 2005, 2006). As a corollary, native-speakerism has developed into a "domesticated, think-as-usual professional routine" (Holliday 2015, 20) or a naturalized "bedrock of transnational ELT" (Leung 2005, 128), allowing its culturist, ethnocentric and (neo)racist assumptions as well as the concomitant (self-)discriminatory ELT practices to be further legitimatized. For instance, NESTs, as a rule, tend to be prioritized over NNESTs in teacher recruitment practices and are granted greater respect in the workplace (Doan 2016; Govardhan, Nayar and Sheorey 1999; Ruecker and Ives 2015; Selvi 2010). Inner Circle English, particularly Anglo-American English, tends to be upheld as the default pedagogical model and learning target, despite the development of the English language into a global language featuring creativity, fluidity and transgression (e.g., Bolton 2008; Kachru 1992a, 1992b; Kachru and Nelson 2006; Matsuda 2006). ELT curriculum materials are mostly edited in reference to Inner Circle culture, leaving Outer and Expanding Circle cultures in the margins (Baker 2009; Byram 1988; McKay 2000, 2009). Similarly, teaching approaches or methods developed in Inner Circle countries are often promoted as being the most advanced, with scant, if any, attention paid to their possible incompatibility with the social and educational cultures of Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Bax 2003; Kumaravadivelu 2006, 2008; Phan 2008, 2014). This is particularly true of the communicative language teaching approach (CLT), which, as an umbrella term, refers to the communication-oriented, task-based and learner-centred teaching approach (Littlewood 2014). Clearly, all possible aspects of ELT practice deny the linguistic, cultural and epistemic heritages of Outer and Expanding Circle countries, legitimizing conversely the "epistemological racism" (Kubota 2002) of the English-speaking West.

Despite the pervasiveness of native-speakerism in ELT practices around the globe, there has been an observable rise in three interconnected

strands of discursive tension. The first strand comprises a plethora of critical studies, particularly those conducted since the early 1990s to probe the inherent discrimination and inequalities present in ELT from the perspective of geo- and cultural-politics. For instance, Phillipson's linguistic imperialism thesis uncovers the imperialist nature of the "native speaker (NS) fallacy" (Phillipson 1992, 185).[2] The treatise of Pennycook (1998) on the English language and the discourse of colonialism illuminates the relics of the "self" versus "other" ideology in current ELT theories. Kumaravadivelu's (2003a) post-method argument challenges the epistemological hegemony of Inner Circle teaching methodology. The second strand derives from studies conducted on the glocalization of the English language and its implications for ELT practices (Alsagoff et al. 2012; Kirkpatrick 2007a, 2009; Rajagopalan 2004; Sharifian 2009, 2013). These studies all explored the dynamics and fluidity of the English language in the current multilingual and multicultural world, debunking the long-standing myth of its ownership (Widdowson 1994, 1998) and marking a break from the traditional native-speakerist ELT paradigm (Kumaravadivelu 2012, 2016; Saraceni 2009, 2010, 2015). The third strand is represented in the institutional and scholarly efforts of the NNESTs Movement launched in the late 1990s (Braine 1999, 2010; Canagarajah 1999a; Kamhi-Stein 2004, 2016; Liu 1999). In this, the ideological essence of the NS construct was elucidated and declared to be nothing but "a figment of linguist's imagination" (Paikeday 1985, quoted in Moussu and Llurda 2008, 315) or at most a myth "created by those who would like to accept the distinction between native speakers and nonnative speakers" (Kramsch 1997, 363). What is particularly noteworthy is the criticism of the entrenched "unprofessional favoritism" (Medgyes 2001) for NESTs, particularly Anglo-American Caucasian teachers as well as discriminatory practices against NNESTs in the job market (e.g., Mahboob et al. 2004; Selvi 2010) and in workplaces (e.g., Kubota and Lin 2006; Methitham 2012).

Discursive struggles against native-speakerism in ELT have been ongoing for about a quarter of a century. During this period, a great number of studies have been conducted to investigate the attitudes of key ELT stakeholders—students, teachers and ELT program administrators (hereafter referred to as administrators)—towards English language teachers from different first language (L1) backgrounds, variegated and

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[2] In this book, the term 'native speaker' (NS) as defined by Phillipson (1992) refers to native English speaker. Sometimes it refers to its surface meaning, i.e., native speaker of any language. Regardless of to whom it refers, NS, as well as its nonnative counterpart (NNS), serves as a conceptual tool here.

diverse English language varieties, disparate cultural orientations of ELT, and teaching approaches rooted in diverse sociocultural contexts. As indicated by most of the attitudinal studies guided by the NESTs versus NNESTs dichotomy, NESTs enjoyed strong support among the participants (e.g., Butler 2007; Lasagabaster and Sierra 2002). However, the majority of the participants in other studies expressed positive attitudes towards both NESTs and NNESTs (e.g., Ma 2012; Moussu 2002, 2006, 2010). Take English language varieties for example: Inner Circle English is generally upheld as Standard English (StE) and therefore the pedagogical norm and learning target, though a certain percentage of the students and teachers partaking in studies displayed an awareness of the current glocalization of English (e.g., Chan 2017). In terms of cultural orientation in ELT practices, many studies revealed that teaching and learning materials edited in reference to Inner Circle culture, particularly Anglo-American culture, are deemed normative (e.g., Önalan 2005; Rafieyan et al. 2013), whereas others indicated that Outer and Expanding Circle culture is expected to be incorporated as a supplement (e.g., Bayyurt 2006). As for teaching methodology, CLT is, in general, thought of as the "gold standard" or superior to the teacher-centred teaching approach (e.g., Karim 2004; Savignon and Wang 2003). By contrast, most of the participants in a considerable proportion of those studies expressed reservations about the classroom application of CLT, and contended that CLT fails to align with the education conventions of Outer and Expanding Circle countries (e.g., Chowdhury and Phan 2008; Rahimi and Naderi 2014).

In these studies, one can observe an interesting and complex mentality among ELT stakeholders, which suggests the persistence or tenacity of native-speakerism in ELT practices, albeit the emerging critical standpoints. This is probably because of the deep-rootedness of the native-speakerist ideology. Further efforts, both scholarly and institutional, are therefore needed to disinvent this chauvinistic ideology for the construction of a more ethical and equitable ELT profession.

Taken in sum, these studies seem to have three major limitations in methodology, which probably accounts for their failure in presenting the panorama of ideological effects of native-speakerism on ELT stakeholders. Firstly, each of them focuses narrowly on one or two dimensions of ELT practice. None has taken as a research focus the four crucial dimensions of ELT (English language teacher, English language standard, cultural orientation and teaching approach) simultaneously. Secondly, all of them tend to take only one or two categories of ELT stakeholders as research subjects, without also incorporating students, teachers and administrators.

Thirdly, most of them are descriptive in design, with insufficient attention given to the sociocultural and historical-political context of global ELT and their respective research setting.

As a significant member of the global ELT community, English as a foreign language (EFL) education in mainland China (China hereafter) has fallen into the native-speakerist paradigm for the majority of its history. This will be discussed further in Chapter 2. In light of the current discursive struggles against native-speakerism, a question arises—namely, what perception Chinese ELT[3] stakeholders have of this chauvinistic ideology, and whether it continues to serve as the "regime of truth" (Foucault 1984) across the terrain of EFL education in China. Out of the relevant studies, most are descriptive in design and regretfully concentrate on investigating the attitudes of Chinese EFL teachers and students towards different English language varieties (e.g., He 2015; Hu 2004, 2005; Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002). Only a very small number of studies have probed native-speakerism in other respects of ELT practice, and this seems particularly true of the studies based on the NESTs versus NNESTs dichotomy (e.g., He and Miller 2011; Jin 2005). This research lacuna in the literature, alongside the current considerable scale of ELT in China (Wei and Su 2012) makes it desirable to explore further native-speakerism within the sociocultural and historical-political context of China, with a focus on the viewpoints of multiple categories of Chinese ELT stakeholders regarding various aspects of ELT practice. Here it is also worthwhile to point out the mixed, paradoxical findings of those studies. As noted implicitly earlier, the chauvinistic ideology of native-speakerism which penetrated almost every dimension of ELT practice is (re)produced, enacted and reinforced by the historical-present Centre-Periphery power relations. The study of this book, therefore, adopts the theoretical lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (e.g., Fairclough 1995; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Wodak and Meyer 2009) for analysis with the methodological guideline of the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 2009).

1.2 The objectives of this book

The overarching goal of this book is to examine the mentality of Chinese ELT stakeholders in order to discover whether, and if so, to what extent, EFL education in China is still affected by native-speakerism. The Hollidayian term is here redefined as a pro-nativeness ideology in every

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[3] In this book, the two terms, EFL education and ELT are used interchangeably.

dimension of ELT practice. In particular, we took the decision not to exclude StE, ELT cultural orientation and teaching methodology, placing the conflict between "nativeness" and "nonnativeness" on an equal footing with the "self" versus "other" dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs. This research objective is intended to provide suggestions for ELT stakeholders to cope with native-speakerism for the construction of a more equitable and ethical ELT world.

In addition, this study aims to make both theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature of native-speakerism. Methodologically, we intend to expand the research scope of existing attitudinal studies on native-speakerism. As noted in the preceding section, most previous studies take one or two types of ELT stakeholders as research subjects in order to probe their attitudes towards one or two dimensions of ELT practice. This study, in its exploration of the representation and reproduction of native-speakerism in China's ELT practices, seeks the viewpoints of three types of ELT stakeholders—students, teachers and administrators—on four interwoven dimensions of ELT practice, namely, teachers from different L1 backgrounds, English language varieties, cultural orientations and teaching methodologies. This methodological distinctiveness aside, possible (in)congruities in attitude among these three stakeholder groups is also a topic to be discussed in this study.

In the practice of data analysis, we rely upon both attitudinal studies and CDA studies as the theoretical framework for the achievement of rich, reliable and valid research findings. Attitudinal studies that often take questionnaires, sometimes alongside interviews, as a research instrument are capable of surveying a large sample of the target population and, therefore, guarantee the quantity and diversity of data. This is helpful when countering the criticism levelled at many CDA studies that they comprise "short fragments of data" (Stubbs 1997, 7) usually "presented as representative" (Breeze 2011, 504). Attitudinal studies are frequently undertaken to ascertain the general attitudinal tendency concerning issues in debate among the target population. At the same time, CDA studies, despite the oft-criticized representativeness of their data, do examine the issues in question with reference to the dynamics of discourse, ideology and power underpinning attitudes or beliefs. The integration of these two research parameters allows us to present relatively comprehensively and fruitfully the attitudinal state of ELT stakeholders about native-speakerism and unveil concomitant sociocultural and historical-political factors. Notably, increasing numbers of CDA studies nowadays draw on both quantitative and qualitative data for reliability and validity of analytical

results (e.g., Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 1993). Finally, this study is theoretically significant in that it will supply momentum for the emerging critical research orientation within the context of EFL education in China, where research usually adopts the positivistic approach to seek the most effective teaching/learning methods, whilst ignoring the inherent political and ideological factors (Pan 2015, 7).

1.3 Research methods

This book adopts the mixed methods approach, which typically involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Bryman 2006; Creswell et al. 2003; Denzin 2012). The principal merit of this approach rests with its ability to capitalize on the respective strengths of the traditionally dichotomized quantitative and qualitative methods for arriving at a comprehensive and profound understanding of the issues in question that neither method, by itself, can bring about (Bryman 2012, 628; see also Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). This approach is also in tune with the triangulatory methodology proposed by DHA (discussed further in Chapter 3). It is important to make clear that this study focuses on EFL education for Chinese non-English-major students only.

1.3.1 Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires—one for students (Appendix A) and another for teachers (Appendix B)—were designed[4] based on pilot studies, initial piloting and final piloting (Dörnyei 2007; see also Mackey and Gass 2005). Since this study aims to explore the ideological landscape of EFL education in China concerning native-speakerism by investigating the related attitudes of Chinese ELT stakeholders, it required a large pool of participants. A questionnaire survey was therefore adopted because it is a time-saving and cost-efficient means of collecting data from a large population sample (Bryman 2012; Dörnyei 2007), and inter alia, reliable or valid data on account of their anonymity (Muijs 2004; Richards and Lockhart 1994). Additionally, it has the potential to tap into the respondents' subconscious and reveal attitudes which they may not have

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[4] The two questionnaires were designed in Chinese initially. When the final versions were determined, we translated them into English for potential use with participants from related language backgrounds in the future. A professional translator was hired to check the equivalence of the two versions. The same process was carried out in relation to the interview question items.

been aware they held (Bryman 2008, quoted in Dörnyei and Taguchi 2009, 6).

The questionnaire for students is composed of three sections: cognitive attitude, learning orientation and demographic information. The first section was intended to solicit the general perceptions of students on ELT in relation to native-speakerism. It consists of 21 five-point Likert scale statements, which fall into five multi-item scales concerning issues to do with English language varieties (Items 1-4), English language norms (Items 5-8), teaching approaches (Items 9-12), cultural orientations of ELT (Items 13-16) and English language teachers (Items 17-21). The second section comprises five multi-choice questions, aimed at locating the students' learning orientations or behavioural tendencies in scenarios when faced with choices relating to different categories of teachers, English language varieties, accents, textbooks and teaching approaches. In addition to indicating preferences, they are asked to state reasons. The third section consists of six items targeted at collecting the demographic information of the participants.

The questionnaire for teachers is composed of four sections. With the exception of the first section that focuses on teachers' everyday teaching practices[5], the other three parts mirror those of the questionnaire for students. Specifically, the second section consists of 16 five-point Likert scale statements designed for soliciting teachers' general viewpoints on the four aspects of ELT, including English language standard (Items 11, 12, 13 and 17), English language teachers (Items 14, 16, 18 and 26), cultural orientations of ELT (Items 15, 22, 24 and 25) and teaching approaches (Items 19, 20, 21, 23). The third section comprises five multiple-choice questions, which are similar to those posed to the students but aimed at finding out teachers' views on teaching practices. The fourth section is intended to gather demographic information on the teachers.

1.3.2 Interviews

In order to compensate for the potential inability of the questionnaire surveys to elicit profound responses from the participants (Bleistein 2013, 57) to the issue(s) in question, interviews were required, as these were deemed conducive to participants elaborating on their opinions (Dörnyei

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[5] The design of the first section of the questionnaire for teachers was intended to collect data for measuring whether teachers' everyday teaching practices accord with their expressed viewpoints on native-speakerism. Findings from the data collected through this section are not reported in this book, but will be presented in future papers or publications.

2007, 136; see also Strauss and Corbin 2015). Based on pilot studies, three sets of interview questions were formulated for students, teachers and administers so as to explore their perceptions on native-speakerism, particularly their justifications for the attitudes they expressed, and exploring their awareness of the inequalities in ELT (re)produced by this chauvinistic ideology. In total there were 10 interview questions for the students, 13 for the teachers and 15 for the administrators (see Appendices C, D and E). It is noted that most of these items are extensions of the questionnaire items.

1.3.3 Data collection and methods of data analysis

Questionnaire surveys were administered to 850 non-English-major undergraduate students and 68 College English teachers in November 2014. Of these participants, 26 students and 14 teachers attended follow-up interviews. Interviews were conducted with eight EFL program directors in May 2015. The teachers and administrators participated in oral interviews whilst the students attended written interviews (Sandvil et al. 1993, 325), namely, answering in written form a list of questions.

    All of the participants are Chinese and are drawn from six universities in China. They were sampled in line with the purposive sampling principle, alongside convenient and snowball-sampling strategies (Bryman 2012, 202) in order to ensure maximum variation of the participants (Maxwell 1997, 2005) in respect of gender, disciplinary or academic background, among other characteristics. Of the six universities, one is a "Project 211" university and can be said to be representative of many of China's most prestigious universities[6]. The five others represent to a significant degree many second-level universities in China judged in accordance with recent annual national university rankings. These universities differ in academic specialism, ranging from science and engineering, teacher education to economics. All of these factors contribute to the representativeness of the participants.

    In analysing data collected from the Likert scale items of the questionnaires, the mean, percentage and frequency of each multi-item scale were calculated to assess the attitudinal tendency of the students and teachers on native-speakerism that the scale intends to explore. Following

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[6] In 1995, the Chinese government initiated a project of building 100 world-known universities in the 21st century. Altogether, 112 universities were selected as members of this project and are known as Project 211 universities. The term "211 Project" has lost its prestige somewhat since the initiation of a new top university construction project launched by the Chinese government in 2017.

descriptive analysis of the data regarding each scale, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted on the mean difference between the two participant groups. The effect size in reference to Cohen's d was calculated to assess the magnitude of the difference[7]. With regard to the data collected through the multiple-choice questions, the frequency and percentage were calculated to assess the learning or teaching propensity of the students and teachers. Inter-group comparisons in percentage were also conducted to judge which group were (more) inclined to fall into the pro-nativeness mentality.

In addition to statistical analysis, the three-dimensional framework—content, linguistic strategy and linguistic form—proposed by DHA for text analysis was observed in dissecting the qualitative data. The search for the content of the texts were placed in a priori position. In doing so, reference was made to discursive strategies, i.e., nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization and modification (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 93-94). Attention was also attached to linguistic forms that represent the topics and discursive strategies (Wodak and Fairclough 2010, 255). The three analytical steps moved recursively, referencing at the same time the sociocultural and historical-political context surrounding ELT in China. Concrete operations can be exemplified by analysis of the following excerpt:

> NESTs have received *Western education philosophies* since babyhood. In general, they are open-minded and active; they encourage students to challenge teachers, challenge authority; they believe that every student has his shining points and do not assess students according to their exam scores. *They have more merit* … I've visited several American universities. Even the layout of desks and chairs in classroom is *different* from that of China. They emphasize freedom and critical thinking. NESTs from that kind of context are *inevitably better* than our Chinese [EFL] teachers. (A-3[8]; emphasis added)

In this excerpt, A-3 made a comparison between NESTs and Chinese EFL teachers in respect of pedagogical capability. We thereby categorized it into the thematic cohort, i.e., pedagogical capability of NESTs versus

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[7] Cohen proposes 0.2, 0.5 and 0.8 as the numeric representation of small, medium and large effects respectively.
[8] Codes, such as SI-1, TI-2 and A-3, stand for the students, teachers and administrators attending the interviews while those such as S-1 and T-2 represent the students and teachers participating in the questionnaire surveys. The number refers to the sequence in which data was processed from the participants. This applies throughout the text.

NNESTs (see Section 4.2.2). S/he portrayed NESTs as teachers with professional merits (predication), such as being "open-minded and active" (linguistic form), which are asserted to stem from their social and educational experiences, namely, "having received Western education philosophies since babyhood" (argumentation). She moves on to illustrate her belief in the superiority of Western education by reference to her personal experiences—a common strategy for a person to legitimize his/her standpoint (Reyes 2011)—of visiting several American universities, highlighting "the layout of desks and chairs in classroom" (argumentation). From her arguments, it can be concluded that the reasons she stated for endorsing NESTs are aligned with the perspective that specific sociocultural and education experiences cultivate specific habitus (Bourdieu 1984) (perspectivization). Furthermore, the unmodified predicates in her remarks, such as "they are", demonstrate the firmness of her belief that NESTs are superior to Chinese EFL teachers (modification). The firmness is further displayed by the paralleled speech, "they are … they encourage … they believe …" (rhetorical device) as well as the words with absolute meanings, such as "inevitably" (linguistic form). In analysing the semantic meaning of the text, we moved between this text and the "order of discourse" (Foucault 1984) in ELT that advocates the NS fallacy (Phillipson 1992, 185). The ideology underlying her rhetoric appears to resonate with the native-speakerist purport that NESTs are superior pedagogically because they are from a Western culture from which springs the best ELT methodology (Holliday 2005, 6). In addition, we evaluated her belief from a historical perspective in reference to the pro-nativeness tradition in ELT within the context of China and beyond, as well as the historical hegemony of Inner Circle countries, concluding that this standpoint is the product of imbalanced power relations between China and the English-speaking West. As with this excerpt, the other texts were dissected in accordance with this three-dimensional framework, as is evident from the analysis of the excerpts presented in Chapters 4 to 7.

1.4 The organization of the book

This book consists of eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents a comparatively macro sociocultural and historical-political context of this study. To this end, it delineates the history of ELT in China in reference to the dynamics of Sino-Western power relations, the expansion of ELT and the concomitant policies or regulations issued by the Chinese government. In particular, it outlines the diachronic-synchronic ideological terrain of ELT in China.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the theoretical and methodological framework for this study. Specifically, it elaborates on the theoretical lens of CDA and the methodological framework of its sub-branch, DHA. In addition, it justifies why CDA, particularly the DHA approach, is able to provide an appropriate and effective guideline for this study.

From Chapter 4 onwards, the book presents and discusses the findings on the viewpoints of three groups of ELT stakeholders—students, teachers and administrators—on four interconnected themes or dimensions of ELT practices in relation to native-speakerism. Particular attention is paid to inter-group attitudinal (dis)similarities.

Chapter 4 focuses on the aforementioned stakeholders' attitudes towards English language teachers from different L1 backgrounds. It analyses their opinions on the professional competence of NESTs vis-à-vis NNESTs, the criteria for recruiting foreign teachers of English, the ideal teachers from whom they expect (their students) to learn English, as well as their awareness of workplace inequalities between NESTs and local Chinese EFL teachers. Chapter 5 concentrates on their perceptions on the relative status of different English language varieties, the ideal variety they expect (their students) to acquire and their consciousness of the linguistic discrimination or inequalities in ELT produced by the promotion of Inner Circle English. Chapter 6 dissects their opinions on the relationship between Inner Circle culture and English language teaching as well as on whose/which culture should serve as the learning ideal. It also analyses their cognizance of the discrimination or bias against Chinese culture brought about by the strong emphasis on Inner Circle culture in China's EFL education. Chapter 7 explores their views about the merits of CLT vis-à-vis the traditional teacher-centred teaching approach in China as well as the application of CLT to classroom instruction. It also examines their perceptions on whether the promotion of CLT entails discrimination against or suppression over the conventional education culture in China. The findings presented in each chapter are discussed in reference to the sociocultural and historical-political context surrounding ELT in China.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions of this study. It summarizes its major findings, restating that EFL education in China is still seriously affected by native-speakerism. It then goes on to discuss the suggestions of this study for building up an inclusive and democratic ELT world as well as its implications for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

EFL EDUCATION IN CHINA:
A HISTORICAL-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Introduction

In addition to introducing the concept of native-speakerism and the impact it exerts on ELT practices, in the preceding chapter we delineated the discursive struggles against this influence, as well as outlining the studies of perceptions of ELT stakeholders on this ideology and native-speakerism-related ELT practices, all of which provide a macro context for this empirical study. It is essential to stress at this juncture that, albeit an established ideology in global ELT, native-speakerism often "manifests itself in different ways in different cultural contexts" (Houghton and Rivers 2013, 5). One of the reasons for this resides in the fact that ELT is "configured within government policies and institutional structures within particular countries" (Holliday 2005, 8).

The focus of this chapter, then, is on EFL education in China in relation to native-speakerism through history, aiming to provide a comparatively macro social, historical and political context for this study. Observed against the backdrop of sociocultural and historical-political changes, the interactions with global politics as well as the expansion of ELT there, ELT in China can be divided roughly into three historical periods. The first is the era prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the period in which ELT emerged and developed in China; the second is the period from 1949 to 1999, when ELT in China first experienced fluctuations and then great renaissance. The unprecedented expansion of ELT witnessed in China since 2000, in addition to the frequent renewal of ELT policies or regulations, makes ELT practices in this third period worthy of special attention. The information on EFL education in these three periods is presented in Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively. The chapter concludes in Section 2.5 with a summary of the prominent ideological features of ELT practices in China.

2.2 Prior to 1949

ELT in China prior to 1949 can be further sub-divided into two phases: the emerging phase in the second half of the Qing Dynasty or Manchu Empire (1644-1911), and the development stage during the Republic of China (1911-1949).

Early in the emerging phase, ELT was conducted as a private undertaking in the area of Guangzhou, a city in South China close to Hong Kong, and emerged due to business reasons (Bolton 2002, 2008). Most Chinese people, particularly those with upper social positions, refused to learn English, upholding China as the centre of the world, civilized and advanced, whilst disparaging foreigners as barbarians "who had little to offer, either culturally or materially" (Evans 2006, 45). After China's defeat in the Second Anglo-Chinese War (1860), learning foreign languages started to be accepted by the upper classes, resulting in the establishment of a few state-run foreign language education programs. However, superiority was still accorded to Chinese language and culture, as is represented explicitly in the principle underpinning those programs, namely, "Chinese Learning for fundamentals, Western Learning for practice" or "learning and using English [and other foreign languages] for science and technology, while retaining a strong feeling of Chinese identity" (Jin and Cortazzi 2002, 54). Notwithstanding that, the belief in the superiority of Chinese language and culture was almost shattered by China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894).

When the Republic of China was established in 1911, it was by virtue of the objective of nation construction that the Chinese government started to advocate learning the political and economic systems as well as the social culture of the West, particularly the United States. This, in turn, further propelled the development of EFL education in China. For instance, the national curriculum syllabus for secondary schools issued in 1922 stipulated that the number of English language class hours at senior high schools had to be the same as for Chinese language courses (Chen 2011, 80). At many mission and private schools and universities, EFL textbooks were imported from the English-speaking West, with StE as the learning and teaching reference. In the meantime, "direct method", a teaching method in support of monolingualism (Richards and Rodgers 2001), was followed to replace the conventional "Grammar-Translation method" (Chen 2011, 125). Nevertheless, most state-run schools and universities still adhered to the Grammar-Translation method, partly because it is aligned with the traditional Chinese-language-teaching mode; both emphasize detailed textual analysis.

Three ideological domains can be observed from ELT in China prior to 1949, all of which represent the dynamics of Sino-Western politics. The first one denotes an attitudinal change, namely, the shift in the overarching attitude of Chinese society towards the English language and its concomitant culture from despising rejection to wide acceptance. The second represents an instrumental mentality, with the assumption of English as a language of progress and the gatekeeper to modernization. English was then upheld "as a tool similar to mathematics or physics and without any potential cultural implications" (Pan 2015, 66). The third feature is that EFL education in China started to follow or imitate the Inner Circle ELT model, linguistically and methodologically, for example, by adopting StE as the reference frame for teaching/learning practice and taking "direct method" as a pedagogical means.

2.3 From 1949 to 1999

EFL education, as a "barometer of modernization" (Ross 1992) in China, experienced a series of fluctuations in China in the three decades or so after 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded (Cortazzi and Jin 1996, 64). As with the historical period which preceded it, it was, to a greater or lesser extent, regulated by Sino-Western relations. In the 1950s, due to the conflict in political ideology between China and the English-speaking West as well as China's intimate relations with the former Soviet Russia, English was switched to Russian as the foreign language of first choice at schools of different levels in China. This was also facilitated by the anti-Western sentiment in China fostered by the economic blockade imposed on China by the United States. It seemed unpatriotic to learn English, which was viewed then as an imperialist language, in contrast to the strong support of it as a language of progress and modernization in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China (Pan 2015, 68). The political conflicts with Soviet Russia in the late 1950s and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and many third-world countries contributed to restoring in China the primary status of the English language. However, the revival did not last long before being seriously affected by the so-called "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976). Early in this period, EFL education was almost suspended across China, and even when it was later restored, it was highly politicized by Chairman Mao's statements that were usually adopted as the teaching and learning content, excluding totally Inner Circle culture.

After the termination of the so-called "Cultural Revolution", China started to adopt and implement the Open and Reform policy in 1978,

which stimulated the great renaissance of ELT in China. In the same year, the foreign language education conference held by the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) resolved to restore English as a compulsory course at secondary and tertiary education sectors. English was then stipulated as a required subject in the national university entrance examination, termed as Gaokao in China. In 1982, the MoE further enforced the status of English as the foreign language of first choice in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning by issuing relevant national English syllabi.

Alongside the promotion of the English language, its gatekeeping role was constantly reinforced in different social sectors in China. According to He (2001, quoted in Cheng 2008, 17), "English skills are tested for all those seeking promotion in governmental, educational, scientific research, medical, financial, business and other government-supported institutions". To meet these demands, a great number of out-of-school English language programs were set up. EFL education at state-run schools was also entrenched in the instrumental mentality as if English were merely an instrument, ideologically free or neutral. This mindset is represented explicitly in national English syllabi. For instance,

> "Foreign language is an important tool for learning cultural and scientific knowledge; for acquiring information in different fields from around the world; and for developing international communication" (1986 National English syllabus for secondary education; translated by Adamson and Morris 1997, 16).

The first two decades following the implementation of the Open and Reform policy in 1978 also witnessed EFL education reforms. Rather than being treated as a subject of foreign language with a focus on grammar learning, English had started to become the medium of communication; Anglo-American culture, in contrast to its previous designation as a source of spiritual pollution in the late 1970s, had come to be regarded as the pedagogical reference and learning target (Pan 2015, 70). In the meantime, the grammar-translation and the Audio-Visual methods were gradually replaced by communication-oriented teaching approaches introduced from Inner Circle countries, such as CLT in the mid-1980s and its updated version, the approach of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT; Littlewood 2014, 350) in the early 1990s. Textbooks were, in turn, required to provide "authentic" English and Inner Circle culture in the name of helping students to develop the communicative competence necessary to deal with communication issues in real life situations. Inner Circle ELT materials, such as the video program *American Album* for English language learning and teaching by Macmillan Education, were

even imported and promoted widely in China. All of these practices have contributed to reproducing and reinforcing the hegemonic status of Inner Circle teaching methodology, language and culture.

The renaissance of ELT, however, started to be challenged by the discourse of "English as a threat" to Chinese language and culture in the second half of the 1990s (Pan and Seargeant 2012). This can be seen as a response to the vast expansion of ELT and the degradation of Chinese students' literacy in their mother tongue and national culture (Zhou 2007). However, this challenge seems insignificant if compared to the instrumentalism pervasive in China, resulting in the unabated expansion of ELT and promotion of Inner Circle culture in this educational realm.

2.4 After 2000

Since 2000, China has been engaged in ever-increasing international exchanges in politics, commerce, science, technology and culture, such as joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, hosting the Olympic Games in 2008 and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010 as well as implementing the "One Belt and One Road Initiative"[9] since 2013. It is also in this period that China has become the second largest economy in the globe. In the meantime, globalization has rendered English a truly international language. Within this context, EFL education in China has undergone an unprecedented expansion, changing itself completely from an elite business into a truly grass-roots one.

Currently, English is stipulated in China as a compulsory course for students from the third grade onwards at primary schools. As early as 2004, about 70 percent of state-run primary schools in urban areas and 30 percent in rural regions had fulfilled this requirement (Bao 2004, quoted in McKay 2012a, 346). In economically developed regions, the English-medium instruction for non-language subjects is offered at primary and secondary schools (Hu 2009, 47). A great number of kindergartens there even provide English language programs to meet the

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[9] This is an initiative proposed in 2013 by the Chinese government for economic cooperation between China and the countries located in South-Eastern Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. In ancient times, Chinese merchants exported products made in China, such as silk, chinaware and tea, to those countries or regions and brought back local products there. The trade was conducted along two routes—by land and by sea—termed in China as the "The Silk Road". This modern initiative is named "One Road and One Belt". Currently, many countries that are not located along the ancient Silk Road have also participated in this economic cooperation activity.

demand of many parents, who expect their children to acquire this linguistic capital as early as possible. At institutes of higher learning, English has been raised to a new height. For example, there is a regulation at most of the state-run universities that non-English-major undergraduates should attend a College English (CE) program and pass College English Test -Band 4 (CET-4)[10] before they are entitled to apply for a Bachelor's degree. Beyond colleges or universities, CET-4 scores are often taken as "an indispensable, educational credential for employment of college graduates" (Guo and Sun 2014, 290). For postgraduate students, English is also established as a compulsory course. All of these practices have reinforced the superior status of the English language in China and enlarged the population of its learners. According to a recent estimate, the number of English language learners and users in China has reached about 390 million (Bolton and Graddol 2012; see also Wei and Su 2012), a figure almost equivalent to that of all native English speakers around the world (Seargeant 2012).

Alongside the increasing expansion of EFL education in China, the Chinese MoE has constantly renewed its ELT policies or regulations, particularly national English syllabi, to regulate teaching and learning practices. In terms of those curriculum syllabi, there are three outstanding characteristics. Firstly, the syllabi accentuate the "four skills" upheld traditionally as the four icons in ELT (Holliday 2005, 42), namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing, and provide, in reference to NS norms, exact criteria on English language competence in these four areas that learners are expected to achieve. For example, *College English Course Requirement* (MoE 2007) declares that "the objective of CE education is to help students develop a comprehensive competence in using English, particularly listening and speaking abilities, so that students can communicate effectively in English in their future study, work and social interactions" (MoE 2007, 2, translation by author). With regard to the most successful learners, this syllabus provides that they should "be able to understand TV programs of English-speaking countries, grasp main ideas and catch the gist, and understand personnel from English-speaking countries when they speak at norm speed" (ibid. 7, translation by author). In *English Curriculum Standard at Compulsory Education Stage* (MoE

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[10] College English (CE) is a two-year program or course offered exclusively to non-English-major undergraduate students in China. CET-4 is a national standardized English examination for those students. As a nationwide test since 1987, it is aimed at improving the quality of CE education. However, the results of this test have been widely adopted as a gatekeeper in China for those students in both academic and vocational terms.

2011), linguistic competence in English is also accorded an accurate description. As for reading competence, the most successful learners are anticipated to "be able to read unabridged English novels" (ibid. 11, translation by author).

Secondly, these syllabi advocate cultivating students' intercultural competence. For instance, *English Curriculum Standard at Compulsory Education Stage* (ibid. 2011) states that students should develop an intercultural awareness and the ability to conduct intercultural communications by experiencing different cultures, in addition to improving their linguistic competence in English. *College English Course Requirement* (MoE 2007) also emphasizes the necessity of cultivating intercultural awareness in students, which is asserted to be conducive to "social development and international communication" (ibid. 1, translated by Hu and McKay 2012, 349). The same viewpoint is reiterated in the latest version of the national CE syllabus, i.e., *College English Teaching Guidelines* (MoE 2017), as is evident in the excerpt presented below.

> Language is the vehicle of culture and the component of culture. Through learning and mastering English as an instrument of communication, students can, in addition to learning and exchanging advanced scientific technology or disciplinary information, understand foreign societies and cultures, deepen their understandings of different cultures and awareness of the Sino-foreign (dis)similarities in culture, and cultivate their competence of intercultural communication (5, translation by author).

The emphasis on cultivating students' intercultural competence can be viewed as a response to China's aspiration to participate fully in the current globalization process. It also resonates with the recent political motive underpinning EFL education in China. Namely, English should serve as a medium through which to transmit Chinese culture or tell the story of China to the world (see Wen 2012a), which is propagated as a mission by the Chinese government based on self-awareness of and self-confidence in Chinese culture borne out of China's escalating economic status in the current world. The emphasis on Chinese culture is also represented in the proposal presented by a few economically prosperous areas in China, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu province in 2013 to transfer the weight from English to Chinese in Gaokao, the standardized national university entrance examination (Pan 2015, 74). In spite of these multicultural and nationalist objectives, Chinese culture continues to be undervalued in everyday ELT practice, with the acquisition of Inner Circle culture still espoused as the ultimate goal. As stated in the 2011 English curriculum standard for compulsory education,

the culture to teach/learn refers to "the target culture countries' history and geography, local people's features, natural conditions and social customs, living habits, behaviour norms, arts and literature as well as values and ideology" (MoE 2011, translated by Gong and Holliday 2013, 45). This cultural orientation is also represented in EFL education research. For example, 95 percent of the journal articles published in China from 2005 to 2010 uphold the cultivation of students' competence in intercultural communication as a means of introducing them to the culture of Inner Circle countries (Gong 2011, quoted in Gong and Holliday 2013, 51).

Thirdly, these syllabi propose or even require the adoption of the pedagogical approaches or teaching methods from Inner Circle countries, with insufficient attention attached to their compatibility with the traditional "culture of learning" (Cortazzi and Jin 1999) in China. For instance, *English Curriculum Standard at Compulsory Education Stage* (MoE 2001, 2011) provides the implementation of CLT and its proposed independent, individualized and learner-centred teaching and learning strategies, regardless of their limited success in classroom application. Such demand is also articulated in the syllabi for CE education. As stated in *College English Course Requirement* (MoE 2007),

> Colleges and universities should make full use of modern information technology and adopt a computer- and classroom-based English teaching model in order to improve the in-class teaching mode dominated solely by teacher-centred instruction. The new model should depend on modern information technology, particularly the support of Web technique, to make English teaching and learning free from temporal and spatial constraints and to develop it along the line of individualized and independent study (5, translation by author).

The College English Teaching Guidelines (MoE 2017) specifies more explicitly that CE classes should adopt task-based, project-based, collaborative or exploratory approaches to place students at the centre of classroom instruction, stimulate their learning initiative and enhance their communicative competence in English.

The pro-nativeness ideology as manifested in these national English syllabi also reverberates in the policies or regulations attached to the employment of foreign teachers of English, who have a wide presence in China, reaching 150,000 even in 2006 (Jeon and Lee 2006). According to *Work Permit Service Guidance for Foreign Experts to Work in China*, a regulation issued by the Chinese State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAOFEA) on September 30th, 2015,