

ELF in Chinese High School ELT

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Abstract: With the global spread of English, English has become a global language used by people around the world. English also plays an important role in China, and there are a growing number of students in China are learning English. Because of the impact of globalization, most Chinese learners of English will not only use English with native speakers but also with other non-native speakers. However, the cultural content and the varieties of English in the Chinese curriculum may not be multiple and varied enough, which is likely to fail to meet Chinese English students' needs of intercultural and international communication in real life. This essay will focus on two studies concerning ELF (English as a lingua franca) in curriculum in the Chinese high school context and based on the relevant research, to discuss the pedagogical implications for Chinese high school ELT.

Keywords: ELF; Chinese High School ELT; Chinese textbooks; Pedagogical implications

1. Introduction

English as a global language is becoming increasingly important in China as it plays an important role in the internationalization of China, and compared to other countries in the world, China has the largest population learning English (Jiang, 2002). Since the late 1970s when English became a major subject extensively taught in Chinese schools, the exclusive English norms in ELT have been the native norms (Wang, 2013). However, because of the impact of globalization and the close relationship between China and the whole world, most Chinese learners of English will not only use English with native speakers but also with other non-native speakers (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002). In other words, English learners in China may be prospective ELF users. Therefore, according to Wang & Fang (2018), it is necessary to move away from teaching and learning native norms to ELF in Chinese ELT. In order to implement the change, the current pedagogical practices should be revisited to find out how to incorporate ELF elements into ELT. This is the reason why many researchers (Xiong & Qian, 2012; Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2012; Xu, 2013) have conducted studies concerning ELF in curriculum in the Chinese high school context. This paper will examine two of these relevant studies and the pedagogical implications for Chinese high school ELT.

2. Relevant Research

A number of scholars, for example, Zu & Kong (2009) and Xu (2013), have conducted research concerning ELF elements in English textbooks used in Chinese high schools, and their research results present that although there is a tendency to incorporate different cultures and varieties of English into ELT materials, focus has been laid on target culture and native English norms. Two main research will be discussed in this part in depth. The first one is conducted by Aliakbari & Jamalvandi (2012) to investigate the place of target culture (British or American culture), source culture (Chinese culture) and other cultures in ELT textbooks. The findings show that the most references were made to the target culture, and the source culture were less represented. The Non-English-speaking countries and Cross-national instances were the least represented groups (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2012). From the research it can be found that current ELT textbooks may fail to extend students' knowledge of diverse cultures and meet their needs of communication in various cultural contexts since no balanced opportunity was created for Cross-national instances and other cultures to appear. However, it should be mentioned that there are limitations in this textbooks study as it only analyzes the series of textbooks called 'New Senior English for China', which is just one series among a

variety of others employed in Chinese high schools (Xu, 2013).

Another research is conducted by Xiong & Qian (2012), which aims to explore the ideologies of English constructed in a Chinese high school English textbook through analyzing three issues concerning language ideologies, including the selective representation of English, shallow linguistic explanations and grammatical prescriptivism. According to the findings, the textbook shows an ideological position that English is only owned by Britain, and that compared to other non-native norms, the native speaker norms are the central and more appropriate ones (Xiong & Qian, 2012). In other words, the textbook tends to describe English as a grammatically uniform foreign language that only belongs to Britain. Students are likely to be influenced by the ideologies in the textbook and only recognize the native English norms, since, textbooks are the most essential source for Chinese students to be exposed to English and can influence how they view the language (Hu, 2002). As a result, they may be unable to comprehend and use ELF and this can have a negative impact on international communication of them. However, the results of this research may not be generalizable since only one unit in the textbook series called 'Advance with English' is analyzed, which means that the data size is limited and cannot represent the whole textbook series.

3. Pedagogical implications

Based on the relevant research of Aliabari & Jamalvandi (2012), the English textbooks called 'New Senior English for China' used in some Chinese high schools seem to make the most references to the target culture while other cultures may be underrepresented. As a result, students cannot have a deep understanding of different cultures. However, according to Sowden (2012), English is now used as a lingua franca by people from different cultural backgrounds and in different cultural contexts. It means that English has become a multicultural language influenced by diverse cultures. Besides, because of the inseparability of culture and language, it is difficult to learn language without understanding the cultural context in which it is used (Kramsch, 1993). Therefore, according to Galloway & Rose (2015, p. 206), it is necessary to "emphasize respect for diverse cultures and identities" in Chinese high school ELT. In this context, it means that creating balanced opportunities for the target culture, source culture and the cultures of other non-native speakers to appear in the English textbooks and exposing students to these diverse cultures, thereby helping them develop intercultural literacy and preparing them for intercultural communication (Backer, 2012).

About another relevant research conducted by Xiong & Qian (2012), although the results of the research may not be generalizable enough, it cannot be denied that the English textbooks in some Chinese high schools called 'Advance with English' have a tendency to guide students to believe that English only belongs to Britain, and convince students of the appropriacy of the native norms. In other words, the textbooks tend to direct students to regard native norms as standard and native speakers as their only role models of learning English. However, according to Cogo (2012), English has spread to the whole world and belongs to all who use it as a first or second language. Therefore, it is necessary to "raise awareness of Global Englishes" in Chinese high school ELT to help students realize the global spread of and use of English, and that besides native speakers, successful ELF users can also be their role models to learn from (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 205).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, because the English textbooks focusing on native norms as well as target cultures may fail to prepare Chinese high school students for international communication in ELF contexts, it is necessary to make some changes in teaching materials and teacher education.

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