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## BOOK REVIEW

**Zhangxian Pan (2005). *Linguistic and Cultural Identities in Chinese Varieties of English*. Beijing: Peking University Press. 280 pp. ISBN 7-301-10261-5.**

**reviewed by Jeffrey Gil (Flinders University)**

This book focuses on how English is changing, and developing new forms and functions, through its interaction with China and the Chinese people, or what Pan calls Chinese Varieties of English (CVE). This is an important area of study because despite the explosion of research into new varieties of English since the late 1970s and the current push to learn English in China, CVE has received relatively little scholarly attention. On the one hand, this is because it is not an institutionalised variety and therefore there is debate as to whether it should be treated in the same way as, say, Indian English, and on the other hand, because native varieties are the target in China's English language teaching, emphasising the Chineseness of English is often seen as counter productive to learning the language (p. 5). Pan says that CVE is:

in its broadest sense English spoken or used by speakers with a Chinese linguistic and cultural background around the world. It has the Chinese linguistic and cultural identities. It can reach the aim of communication and can be accepted by English speakers with other linguistic and cultural backgrounds (p. 6).

And the Chinese identities in CVE refer to:

the Chineseness of English or the Chinese linguistic and cultural characteristics transferred and transcreated into English by native Chinese speakers around the world. It also means the Chinese face or voice in English (pp. 6-7).

In its eight chapters, the book seeks to answer three questions about CVE: (i) What are the Chinese characteristics or features of CVE as a foreign language variety? (ii) What factors have contributed to the formation of these linguistic and cultural features of CVE? How are the factors related to each other? (iii) What can be inferred as to possible universals of language variation in non-native context? [sic] (p. 7).

Chapter 2 describes how English attained its current position in the world and reviews research into World Englishes and CVE. Here, and throughout the book in general, there is only brief mention of the 'critical' view of English as a global

language. For example, the section Major World Englishes Issues does not discuss the potential negative consequences of the spread of English or its potential threat to other languages, both of which have received at least as much attention as standards, globalisation and localisation and the description of non-native varieties of English which Pan discusses (pp. 32-48).

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical framework for the study of CVE. However, in some cases the discussion of concepts and theories in the field is not clearly linked to the book's guiding questions, for example sections 3.3.1 Variety, language and dialect (pp. 54-60), 3.3.3 Labov's study of social class vs. sociolinguistic variables (pp. 64-67) and 3.3.4 Milroy's social network vs. social variables (pp. 67-71). More serious is the lack of discussion of the framework used for analysing CVE. Pan proposes a "three-dimensional contextual network" (p. 78) made up of a temporal dimension, a spatial dimension and a functional dimension but this framework is not explicitly set out or described in detail in this chapter. Instead, Pan discusses some general concepts about language, society and context and directs the reader to a section in Chapter 7 where the framework is discussed at length. It should be noted that the framework is described very briefly in the Abstract (pp. i-ii), yet it is still very strange that the main discussion of the book's central theoretical and analytical tool occurs only *after* it has been used to analyse CVE. Another concern is that Pan groups all Chinese speakers of English together, regardless of their backgrounds and location. She actually says all Chinese "have the same social and cultural backgrounds" (p. 64), a very broad statement that ignores the diversity of the Chinese people both within and outside of China.

Chapter 4 views CVE from the temporal, or socio-historical, perspective. It begins by tracing the place of English in China from its first arrival in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, through to the late Qing period, the Republican period, the early decades of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and finally the post-1978 reform oriented PRC then examines various English language publications from each period to show that each has its own form or expression of Chineseness in English. The main conclusion which can be drawn is that the extent of Chineseness in English varies according to the purposes of learning English, the emphasis of the syllabus and who the learners are (pp.101-103). Although we can clearly see the influence of China and the Chinese people on English, some important recent events, such as the refusal of some Chinese intellectuals to take English language tests required for promotion (*People's Daily Online*, 12/04/2004) and the banning of instruction exclusively in English in Shanghai kindergartens (*China Daily*, 16/03/2004), are left out. These would certainly seem to constitute an emerging socio-historical period that could well influence the place of English in China and therefore the characteristics of CVE.

Chapter 5 covers the spatial dimension of CVE by looking at the ways in which Chinese speakers of English change the language through linguistic and cultural transfer from Chinese. The focus here is on lexical and grammatical features, leaving out phonological and discourse features, although some of what is covered under grammar could be called discourse. It is not clear why these two aspects of language are ignored, considering they have been discussed in other studies of CVE. In all, the material presented here shows how knowledge of Chinese culture and context are necessary for understanding CVE and how it displays Chinese identity through "the users' choice or selection of some particular linguistic items" (p. 138). Pan's analysis of grammatical features also shows sensitivity to genre, setting/context and participants, which is unfortunately lacking in some studies. However, there seems to be some disunity, perhaps even contradiction, with Chapter 4. There, Pan

argued that each period has its own different Chinese identity and type of CVE yet here she freely uses examples from all periods to support her arguments without any comment or attempt to differentiate them.

Chapter 6 looks at CVE from the functional dimension, that is when and where English is used in China, according to Kachru's model of instrumental, interpersonal, regulative and imaginative functions. This gives a reasonable overview of English in China but there are some errors. To begin with, only education belongs to the instrumental function whereas the media, foreign trade, tourism, science and technology, translation and international communication properly belong to the interpersonal function (pp. 183-184). Furthermore, no concrete examples of the use of English in trade, tourism, science, academia, politics, diplomacy or culture are given (pp. 186-187), and the data presented for the interpersonal function does not match what is meant by interpersonal function in Kachru's model. The chapter then focuses on the imaginative function, namely contact literature, or creative writing in English by Chinese writers. Through an examination of the linguistic and literary features of several well-known works, such as Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* and Da Chen's *Colours of the Mountain*, Pan argues that such writers use the Chinese language and culture as resources for creativity and struggle for balance between their Chinese and English identities (p. 193), making for one of the most interesting parts of the book.

Chapter 7 then returns to general issues in the study of World Englishes and attempts to relate the discussion of CVE to them. It presents a framework for the study of World Englishes, suggests some universals of non-native varieties and critiques the commonly used three circles model of English. Pan's three-dimensional framework is well explained and could prove to be of use to others in the field but, again, this section would have been much more useful if presented earlier. The discussion of universal features of non-native varieties of English shows that CVE has commonalities with other non-native varieties and should be treated as such but, oddly, the phonological features of CVE which were not discussed in Chapter 5 are covered in this section. In terms of the three circles model of World Englishes, Pan makes the interesting proposal that English should be seen along a continuum, in which its classification as English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is in a "dynamic state" (p. 248) and subject to change.

Chapter 8 concludes that there is such a thing as CVE, with its own unique features, although it is not yet as established as other varieties. Pan then goes on to predict that CVE will continue to develop as native English speakers become more accepting of non-native varieties and the Chinese become more confident about their own variety of the language (p. 249). Finally, she makes four suggestions for further studies which will certainly produce fruitful research if pursued, namely: (i) use of corpus data for studying CVE (ii) use of oral data for studying CVE (iii) attitudes towards CVE and (iv) the implications of CVE for China's English language teaching (p. 253).

Despite its shortcomings, *Linguistic and Cultural Identities in Chinese Varieties of English* is a worthy attempt to deal with the significant issue of the English language in China and place it within the broader context of the study of World Englishes. It brings together a large amount of research, both primary and secondary, and presents much useful information on the use, status, form and function of English in China. Provided it is used judiciously, it should be of interest to scholars and general readers alike.

The two newspapers articles referred to in this review are:  
*China Daily*. 16/03/2004. “English-Only Teaching Not Allowed for Kids”.  
*People’s Daily Online*. 12/04/2004. “Chinese Intellectuals Rebel Against Foreign Language Tests”.