

Analysis and comparison of Hong Kong English and Mainland China English with Kachru's three circles model

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Abstract

English's spread worldwide has led to its development as a pluricentric language with varying standards, depicted by Braj Kachru's three concentric-circle model. Examining the differences between English usage in Hong Kong and Mainland China categorized under Outer and Expanding Circles respectively is the focus of this paper. Due to its colonial past, Hong Kong utilizes English as an official co-language for governance affairs such as law or business transactions; however, it possesses distinctive phonological, grammatical patterns influenced majorly by Cantonese. On the other hand, Mainland China sees English mainly in terms of international trade & communication requirements while prioritizing functional skills rather than native-like fluency through educational policies instead. Furthermore, the historical background variances along with socio-linguistic status reflected distinctly across linguistic characteristics highlight implications concerning tailored curricula that maintain regional identities alongside global competencies essential for both regions' education programs alike.



Full Text Article



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Introduction

The rapid spread of English, at the global level, penetrated the English language into sociolinguistics contexts, which led to its establishment as a pluricentric language having various standards. It is such a phenomenon that is encapsulated in Braj Kachru's three concentric-circle model of the spread of English, which he classifies into three concentric circles: the Inner, Outer, and Expanding. Each presents different native and non-native

functionality of English. Inner circle countries are those among which English is a mother tongue and the primary language of communication; such countries as the USA, UK, and Australia (Al-Mutairi 2020). In this regard, the Outer Circle comprises countries like India, Nigeria, and Singapore, for whom "English takes on an important role because of historic reasons like colonization, rather than being the mother tongue but used in administration, educational work, and other official domains.

The Expanding Circle, including countries such as China, Russia, and Brazil, where English is viewed as an influential foreign language and is principally employed in international communication and part of formal education (Proshina and Nelson 2020). Kachru's model is relevant for analyzing and comparing English usage in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Hong Kong, in the Outer Circle, uses English due to colonial history and in governance, law, and business. Mainland China, in the Expanding Circle, primarily uses English for foreign education and international relations. These differences shape English's roles, attitudes, and proficiencies in each region, influencing policy and teaching methods (Ansaldo 2010).

Historical Background and Development of English in Hong Kong and Mainland China

During the British colonial period, Hong Kong became exposed to English, and the status later changed a great deal. It has prevailed under many years as a British colony, and today is considered an official language in part by governments, laws, businesses, and education. After the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, it became a Special Administrative Region where English is considered the second language, used along with Cantonese, and increasingly Mandarin (Gil and Adamson 2011). This way, its birth and the development of Hong Kong English have been due to the changes in socio-historical and, more importantly, political factors, especially in the post-colonial era, when the real big and strong impact lay. The use of English has expanded from a colonial language into the very key part of global business and international relationships (Fang 2017). It is no wonder that it remains an important language for both this and education.

English came to China in the late 19th century, but its widespread use in the country's education system literally came after the "Open Door Policy" of 1978, which ushered in the reform era and further opened to foreign direct investment and international trade. There have been a number of changes in the teaching of English during the British colonization and independence era. At present, it occupies an important place among the subjects of primary and secondary education since it has acquired significant importance as a second language in business and technology (Zhang 2013). English was introduced in the Mainland in a way that underscored its utility for access to Western technology and knowledge. Such a utilitarian approach suggests pragmatic adoption of English to meet the goals of modernization and development.

Hong Kong colonialism directly implanted the English language into the local fiber as the prestiged language connected with governance and high social status. This historical context

strongly gives a mould to the present context of sociolinguistics, where English exists as a symbol of social status and stands in the forefront as a bridge to international connectivities. Globalization has further cemented and added reinforcement to the role of English in Hong Kong and the Mainland(Poon 2006). Through a complex relationship with economic and cultural globalization, English was promoted even more. The mainland China views English as very important for international trade and communication. This has consequently affected their integration into policies and practices of education. The National English Curriculum, therefore, highlights an elevation in the level of capability of citizens to speak English to the standards required by the international community. The English language, in both regions, is at the core of education policies that aim to give it a large role in seeking access to the global opportunities that their curriculums are working to improve by improved proficiency in English as a key to international engagement. This is particularly visible in Mainland China, where there has been an insistent thrust toward enhancing English language teaching, to improve the overall quality of English among the population—evident from the wide adoption of the language in school curricula from primary levels onward.

Differences of Phonological, Grammatical, and Lexical Features between HKE and MCE

The Hong Kong English (HKE) possesses some phonological, grammatical, and lexical features that are evidently distinct from other English varieties. Phonologically, speakers of HKE most frequently show phonological influences by Cantonese, which is the L1 of the majority. These include non-rhoticity, where 'r' is not pronounced, glottal stops, and simplification of consonant clusters that might affect the clarity of word endings in case final positions with 't', 'k', and 't' sounds. HKE features include verb omission, present tense verbs are used for events occurring in the past, and many general simplifications of structures, at times giving rise to ambiguity(Hansen Edwards 2015). For example, "I come here yesterday" instead of "I came here yesterday". Lexically, HKE is replete with loanwords from Cantonese, coupled with indigenous terms that have blossomed up from within the unique historical and cultural background of Hong Kong. Some of these may include "yum cha" (more directly transliterated in Mandarin as "to drink tea")—"to go out for tea and dim sum," "wet market" and "cha siu bao".

Hong Kong situates in the Kachru's "Outer Circle," with unique historical, cultural, and linguistic composition. The countries are those whose English is defined as being historical and institutionally used; to most speakers, however, it remains foreign. English in Hong Kong developed with the British colonial administration and has since adapted to serving far more local functions than formerly, from colonial imposition to a sine qua non tool for use in governance, business, and education(Hansen Edwards 2015). The reason to put Hong Kong in the Outer Circle in Kachru's model is its colonial history, equating to this role the place still played by English as a language for administration and law, tertiary education, and international business. Although English is not an indigenous language to Hong Kong, it is old and stable; it has had the time to evolve its norms and standards, closely associated with

but more and more independent from British English. This is not only the posturing representative of a globalized use of English but also how English, in turn, has been molded by and is shaping the socio-political and economic landscapes of Hong Kong (Ansaldo 2010). In Mainland China, English is an important foreign language and has even been integrated into their educational system, from means of handling international business to worldwide communication. Chinese EFL learners exhibit different pronunciation patterns resulting from phonological influence in their first dialect, which in turn influences them with great accuracy in the production of tones, consonants, and particular vowels. This influence of Chinese in English manifests itself in grammar, with inclinations to omit articles and prepositions misused (Coniam 2014). Mainland China English (MCE) is a repository of words of great cultural import, such as "eight-legged essay" or "four modernizations," without direct counterparts in any other variety of English. The sociolinguistic status of English in China is indeed a very complex one. It is highly valued for academic and professional success, symbolizing modernity, and international connectivity (Gil and Adamson 2011). However, a greatly contested debate in the impacts of English on the traditions of the Chinese language and cultural systems sees it as more of a threat according to the opposition while others see it as more of a tool for engaging the world.

In Kachru's Three Circles Model, Mainland China is part of the "Expanding Circle," which signifies that English is primarily utilized for international communication rather than as a native or institutional language. This model highlights the role of English in education and communication, serving as a bridge connecting China to the global community, rather than fulfilling significant local functions.

Comparative Analysis of English in Hong Kong and Mainland China: Linguistic Features, Sociolinguistic Status, and Cultural Impacts

The phonological and grammatical features produced in HKE or MCE show the different track or use but are unique due to its influence from its native Chinese language. HKE, therefore, follows the non-rhoticity and locally anchored lexical items of the Cantonese languages, while MCE has borrowed to a limited extent from Mandarin and other regional dialects. Its pronunciation is subjected to way more regional variation, its vocabulary way more localized, but in general, rather than localizes with a significant amount of Chinese influence.

What's more, the position of the counterpart in Hong Kong, English, has a substantially different position from where the counterpart in Mainland China is positioned (Fang, 2017). English is one of the very important among other languages, used with an equal status in the legal, educational, and business sectors, and it has official status under Britain in colonial history in Hong Kong. This strengthens its official status, one of the main aspects during every daily professional and academic communicational activity. On the other side, English is mostly treated as a foreign language in Mainland China and it has major usage in only the terms of international business and education, but it has no official status. This is used most probably in the context of education, but not in that of communication. In Hong Kong,

English is commonly viewed as a prestigious language, representing successful professional accomplishment and wide international contacts.

The historical and cultural paths of Hong Kong and Mainland China have left great influence in terms of the role and perception of English. Long exposure of the English language, starting from British colonialism, is truly integrated with the society. Thus, the education system of Hong Kong had a firm foundation built to keep the level of English proficiency high among its populace, who mostly become bilingual starting from the early childhood stage. The re-emphasis and re-introduction of the English language to Mainland China, in line with the economic reforms of the 1980s, spelled the advent of its journey as an indispensable tool toward modernization and international engagement. Generally, the approach to learning the English language in China is more utilitarian, as there is emphasis on reading and writing more than speaking.

In other words, the quality of English education is regarded to vary substantially in Mainland China (Gil and Adamson, 2011). The differences, where a comparative study between Hong Kong English and Mainland China English, with respect to historical, educational, and cultural relations, is carried out, are many. The value of English in the world is recognized in both places, but the manner of cultural integration, language policy implementations mirroring different historical and social contexts, hinder acceptance in full by the two regions. "With further developments of these two regions, it is to be seen how the impact of English seems to have to yield to new cultural, economic, and international influences and thereby impact its future development in these two top economies of Asia.

Implications for English Language Education in Hong Kong and Mainland China

The dominant tradition valorizes English language education in Hong Kong at high standards of proficiency, with native-like pronunciation and use of lexical items required as outcomes of such educational. Such emphasis may tend to overshadow the localized features of Hong Kong English (HKE) and may compromise local linguistic identity, if not getting diluted. On the contrary, educational policies within the mainland of China point to the emphasis on English as a vital lane toward worldwide communication and economic development; hence, functional English skills, as an international *lingua franca*, be developed catering to the communicative needs of the Expanding Circle, rather than to imitate native speaker norms. First, the phonological pedagogy of Hong Kong has always been directed toward enabling students to achieve native pronunciation.

However, a shift toward raising the consciousness of students to be able to appreciate and respect the salient phonological features of Hong Kong English (HKE) may afford some insight into their language and language variety. For Mainland China, training in phonology that emphasizes intelligibly clear communication in international contexts may serve more use than the frustrating chasing after a native speaker model of pronouncing (Li, Ting et al., 2022). English in the system of education sets the pace and mark. Positive reinforcement of the value

placed on localized forms of English can further help build their confidence and motivate the learners to be more vigorous in using the language.

Furthermore, language teaching technology has the following distinct advantages: for example, in Hong Kong, digital resources bring about exposure to various English accents and dialects, thus preparing the mind to come across the features of Hong Kong English (HKE). In Mainland China, the application of technological tools in practical acquisition for effective English usage can span a variety of usage situations that are experienced worldwide. Last but not least, the effectiveness of the designed English programs in lifting the proficiency levels, both in the region, requires admitting that Hong Kong English (HKE) and Mainland China English (MCE) should be specifically considered in terms of their unique linguistic features. Educators in Hong Kong are, therefore, at liberty of designing any type of curriculum containing the features of HKE that can only further strengthen linguistic identity and even ownership.

The strategies in Mainland China will improve learners' skills for international communication, mirroring the societal role of English there. The key to success lies in adjusting to linguistic evolutions. By incorporating Hong Kong English into its curriculum, Hong Kong could enhance students' confidence and communication abilities. These approaches strive to cultivate global competencies that cater to local demands while encouraging the appreciation of diverse English varieties worldwide (Zhang, 2013).

Conclusion

In Kachru's Three Circles Model, Hong Kong English (HKE) and Mainland China English (MCE) occupy distinct spheres: HKE in the Outer Circle and MCE in the Expanding Circle. HKE's features are deeply influenced by Cantonese, reflecting its colonial legacy and bilingual environment. It holds a co-official status, serving crucial roles in business and legal contexts, indicative of a sociolinguistic landscape where English supports both identity and utility. Conversely, MCE, characterized by its Mandarin influence and variability in pronunciation, underscores its role as a foreign language aimed at educational and international business utility, typical of the Expanding Circle's orientation towards English as a tool for external communication.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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