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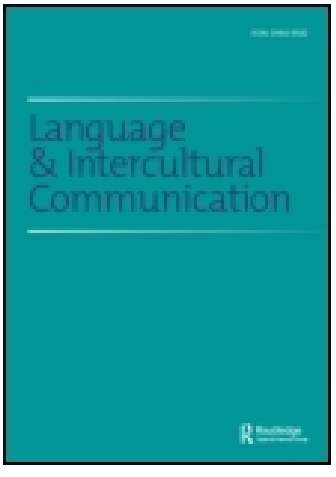

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Faithful imitator, legitimate speaker, playful creator and dialogical communicator: shift in English learners' identity prototypes

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Faithful imitator, legitimate speaker, playful creator and dialogical communicator: shift in English learners' identity prototypes

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This paper attempts to conceptualize identity prototypes regarding model L2 learners/users of English over the past 50 years, as embedded in research discourses. For a long time, the ideal learner was a *faithful imitator* whose L2 use and cultural conduct were strictly modeled on the native speaker (NS). With postcolonial changes around the world, a *legitimate speaker* was born, claiming equal language standards and rights with NSs. Growing under the increased influence of globalization and postmodernism is a *playful creator*, who constructs unconventional hybrid language use for distinct self-expression. A Bakhtinian *dialogical communicator* is also emerging, who converses on the basis of respect and reflection. These prototypes are discussed with their respective characteristics, L2 research discourse, contexts, and constraints.

本文尝试概括过去半个世纪中英语二语认同的典型模式及其变化。理想的英语学习者很久以来都是"忠实的模仿者", 其语言使用和文化行为都严格以本族语者为模版。逐渐取代这一模式的, 是后殖民的环境下诞生的"正规的发言者", 以维护自己群体的语言标准和权利、争取与本族语者的平等地位为目标。在全球化和后现代主义影响加剧的背景下, 出现了"嬉戏的编创者", 以其标新立异的语言混杂方式表达自我。在此过程中还出现了"对话的交流者", 在巴赫金所言"对话"的意义上, 以尊重和反思为基础进行交流。文章讨论了这些演变中的模式的特征、二语研究话语、相关情境, 以及困境。

Keywords: L2 identity; faithful imitator; legitimate speaker; playful creator; dialogical communicator

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Introduction

This paper attempts to conceptualize identity prototypes regarding model L2 learners/users of English over the past 50 years, as embedded in academic discourses. This conceptualization is admittedly subjective; thus, the paper is essentially an opinion piece, but I will ground my claim in selected research literature that has struck me as representative. I will reveal a shift in the model L2 learner/user of English from *faithful imitator* to that of *legitimate speaker*, and then to *playful creator* and *dialogical communicator*. While substantial research reviews of language and identity in general (e.g. Joseph, 2004) and L2 identities in particular (e.g. Block, 2007) have been conducted, I believe conceptualizing L2 identities embedded in abundant abstract theories into a few embodied *persons* will provide a clear and useful picture of the space for alternative targets. Also, compared with existing reviews that focus primarily on L2 theories developed in the West, I will include and put some emphasis on L2 identity

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models developed in Chinese contexts. Such an expanded and embodied picture may help English learners, educators, as well as researchers make better informed choices. For each of the identity prototypes, I will discuss its general characteristics, related L2 research discourse, social and intellectual contexts, and constraints.

The faithful imitator

Characteristics

The faithful imitator models his or her L2 on the norm of native speakers (NSs) of English, particularly that of the UK or USA, and makes the utmost effort to produce L2 identical to such norms. He or she is also fully acculturated into the target cultures (C2) of NSs. Ideally such a learner uses English in a native(-like) manner, well accepts target cultural values, and lives competently and comfortably in the C2. The ideal of faithful imitation is based on the assumptions that (1) the English language is bound to the culture of the NS, however 'culture' is defined; and (2) cultures have clear-cut boundaries that will not easily dissolve. Thus, L2 learning and use is associated with integration, acculturation or socialization into the C2 community of NSs, the most ideal being the adoption of its membership. For the faithful imitator, acquiring the accuracy and appropriateness of the L2 and C2 norms is of utter importance. He or she humbly heads toward the 'nativeness' target. 'You speak like a British/American!' and 'I thought English was your mother tongue!' would be the praise one loves to hear. Individuals may vary, however, in the dimensions of linguistic skill (e.g. accents, writing styles) and cultural norms (e.g. rituals on social occasions) they care most about. Psychologically, the faithful imitator resembles a child without a distinct self, eager to identify with parents and copy their conducts.

L2 research discourse

Most theoretical models of bilingualism developed in the 1970s and 1980s entailed the faithful imitator as the ideal learner. For example, Schumann's (1978) 'acculturation theory' focused on the social and psychological proximity between L2 learners and the target language community. The more learners acculturate themselves to the target language and culture group – the more faithful they are – the better the L2 learning results. Alberto, the empirical case on which Schumann's theory was based, was a failure for not changing *faith* from his native Hispanic culture to that of the target American culture. Likewise, Lambert's (1974) 'subtractive bilingualism' and 'additive bilingualism' entailed the acquisition of a C2 identity, the difference between the two lying in the loss or maintenance of the learner's mother tongue (L1) and original culture (C1) identity. By stressing the importance of 'integrativeness', i.e. the motivational orientation to integrate into the target language community, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) motivation theory had some implication of the faithful imitator. Integrativeness is associated with successful L2 learning, and much preferred over 'instrumental motivation'.

Apart from bilingual theories of the above, general English as Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) research discourse of the latter half of the twentieth century also embraced the faithful imitator. Audiolingual (USA) and audiovisual (France/Britain) methods, which reached their peak in the 1960s, had a basis in behaviorist psychology of stimulus and response. The learners were expected to practice drills in NS linguistic patterns until the norm became internalized and automatic. The imitator here had even less agency than in the above theories of 'acculturation' and

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'motivation'; they were treated more or less as mindless parrots doing mechanical repetition. In a broad range of research, the division between 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' (NNS) was essential; it generated abundant empirical studies which measured the learning success of the latter by comparing their linguistic production with that of the former. While heading toward the NS model, learners' language was considered 'interlanguage', at a half-way point in terms of faithful imitation. Learners should target not only linguistic 'accuracy', but also communicative 'appropriateness', and watch out for 'pragmatic errors'. Good language teaching should use 'authentic' materials that provide 'genuine' NS models for imitation. Such research discourse dominated the second half of the twentieth century, and still prevails now in many contexts.

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Contexts

Without doubt, the faithful imitator model has its constant and justified practical basis, such as reducing the risk of misunderstanding by keeping to a common standard, and the economy of learning effort investment. However, the model is also related to particular social and academic contexts. Sociohistorically, the faithful imitator was particularly suited to a modern, industrialized context, with a legacy of colonialism. 'Culture' was primarily associated with the nation state, which was secluded within closed boundaries. International traveling was limited, not a common lifestyle. Large power distances existed among different nations, particularly between the UK and USA as NS countries on the one hand, and 'ESL' and 'EFL' countries on the other. The linguistic hegemony of the UK and USA was taken for granted.

In the social sciences, hierarchical social structures were perceived to be essentially given and stable; so were group boundaries. The room for individual choice of social identity, though present, was highly constrained. For example, Tajfel's (1982) theory of social identity posited the basic *social categorization* between 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'. Intergroup *social comparison* in terms of status and power is an important mechanism for *positive distinctiveness*, which motivates individual behavior. This theory exerted great influence on L2 identity theories, for example, Giles and associates' 'Intergroup Model' and 'Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory' (Giles & Johnson, 1987).

On the whole, the faithful imitator fits well in contexts where hierarchical sociocultural structures and intergroup boundaries are (perceived as) largely stable and fixed, where the individual is believed able to choose how 'good' a learner he or she wants to be according to given standards. This prototype dominated the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and remains popular at present in some English-teaching communities. The NS as target of imitation, after being scrutinized from an applied linguistic perspective, is claimed to be 'both myth and reality' (Davies, 2004, p. 431).

Constraints

The faithful imitator, if eventually successful in becoming a full member of the NS group, should be free from dilemmas and live a happy life hereafter. However, most learners never reach that goal, and even if linguistically successful, may suffer great pain when their faith in the C2 is in conflict with that in their home culture (C1). 'The issue of loss of identity' (Davies, 2004) is central to the NS belief.

Schumann's unsuccessful learning example 'Alberto', for instance, chose to be socially and psychologically distant from NSs so as to maintain his bond with Spanish-speaking C1 community members:

> He made very little effort to get to know English speaking people. In Cambridge he stuck quite close to a small group of Spanish speaking friends. He did not own a television and expressed disinterest in it because he could not understand English. On the other hand, he purchased an expressive stereo set and tape deck on which he played mostly Spanish music. (Schumann, 1978, p. 36).

The perceived split of faith or betrayal of his C1 identity lay at the root of Alberto's self-imposed distance from the L2 and the C2.

A 'successful' learning example that impressed me personally comes from Richard Rodriguez, as written in his autobiography *Hunger of Memory* (1982). The story was of a Spanish-speaking Mexican boy who immigrated to the USA with his family at an early age. He 'begins his schooling in Sacramento, California, knowing just 50 words of English and concludes his university studies in the stately quiet of the reading room of the British Museum'(back cover of book). The success was won at the price of painful separation from his family, past, and C1. Rodriguez calls himself 'a comic victim of two cultures' (Wikipedia), and takes a strong stance against bilingual education:

> Behind this screen there gleams an astonishing promise: One can become a public person while still remaining a private person. At the very same time one can be both! There need be no tension between the self in the crowd and the self apart from the crowd! Who would not want to believe such an idea? Who can be surprised that the scheme has won the support of many middle-class Americans? If the barrio or ghetto child can retain his separateness even while being publicly educated, then it is almost possible to believe that there is no private cost to be paid for public success. (Rodriguez, 1982, pp. 34–35)

In a 'foreign language' environment, learners may not suffer such poignant pain of identity loss, but nor will they necessarily enjoy a vision of success either, and so may find themselves stranded in hopelessness. A senior Chinese professor of English whom I greatly respected spent several years before retirement proof reading transcriptions of talks given by an English NS. He lamented upon retirement: 'We English teachers in China spend the whole life trying to speak and write like a native speaker, but are bound to fail in the end'.

The legitimate speaker

Characteristics

From the 1980s, the faithful imitator model in L2 learning and use became increasingly challenged by that of a legitimate speaker of the English language. The legitimate speaker criticizes the traditional dichotomy of NS vs. NNS and the preferential status ranking of the former over the latter, and claims equal rights of using the language as well as setting variety standards. In the view of the legitimate speaker, language is not exclusively owned by the 'native culture'. English has multiple varieties with respective standards and equal status. L2 users in different parts of the world have developed their own varieties with respective local standards modeled on educated users of the language; these varieties are equally standard and 'good' as native varieties such as British or American English. The legitimate speaker targets not at perfect imitation of NSs, but at effective communication and identity expression. Thus, accents of English, for example, were no

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longer seen as deficiencies, but neutral or positive markers of group identity, and of equal and distinct participants in communication.

L2 research discourse

Several new concepts regarding the position of English contributed to the rise of the legitimate speaker. A prominent one is Kachru's (1982/1992) 'world Englishes' (WE) paradigm, referring to indigenized varieties of English, especially those varieties that were developed in nations colonized by the UK or influenced by the USA. Kachru further divided WE varieties into three concentric circles. With the emergence of WE organizations and academic journals (e.g. *World Englishes*), and publication of extensive research (e.g. on China/Chinese English: Bolton, 2003; Li, 1993; Li, 2006), the existence and legitimacy of WE varieties have been widely accepted, at least within the WE field.

Concepts related to WE have emerged in the past decades, such as 'English as an International Language (EIL)', 'international English', 'global English', and 'English as Lingua Franca (ELF)'. More recently, Jenkins (2007) proposed 'ELF' to replace EIL, further stressing the role of English among NNSs, though NSs were not excluded. Jenkins (2007, p. 13) explicitly claimed that ELF as a functional variety is 'legitimate English'. While WE related indigenized English varieties with local cultures, ELF largely eliminated cultural elements and stressed the Lingua Franca function in communication. Yet in breaking the NS vs. NNS dichotomy, these theories shared a common stance.

From the 1990s, L2 identity research from a social constructivist perspective enriched the image of the legitimate speaker. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) 'cultural capital', Norton (1995, 2000) proposed 'L2 investment' to replace 'L2 learning motivation'. Later she (Norton, 2001) further borrowed from Wenger (1998) and proposed that the investment target was the L2 learner's chosen 'imagined community' (cf. Anderson, 1983/1991; Wenger, 1998) and 'imagined identity'. Norton showed how immigrant learners of English in Canada negotiated with people in their social contexts for their imagined identity as legitimate speakers, and how those people in the contexts responded. In some cases, learners chose 'non-participation' (Norton, 2001) as a protest to the contexts' failure in recognizing and legitimizing their imagined identities. In an ESL class, for instance, the teacher invited students to share information about their home country. Yet in the teacher's summary, Felicia's points about Peru were left out. When Felicia questioned this, the teacher explained that Peru was not a major country under consideration. Felicia never returned to class. It was found that Felicia identified herself as a 'wealthy Peruvian' rather than a recent immigrant. Her Peruvian identity was validated at work, but denied in the ESL class. While the same kind of nonparticipation might be explained by faithful imitator models as a learner's individual failure in C2 acculturation, Norton legitimized it and called for critical reflection on the social contexts.

More recently in the description of L2 competence, 'symbolic competence' proposed by Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) also has an empowering function for the legitimate speaker. In their definition, symbolic competence is 'the ability to shape the multilingual game in which one invests – the ability to manipulate the conventional categories and societal norms of truthfulness, legitimacy, seriousness, originality – and to reframe human thought and action' (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 667). If conventional 'communicative competence' stressed the faithful observation of NS norms, then 'symbolic competence' has emphasized the ability to manipulate and reframe existing norms.

Blommaert's (2010) 'sociolinguistics of globalization' is very much about legitimacy in the reordered social structure of globalization. With concepts such as 'sociolinguistic

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scales', 'orders of indexicality', and 'policentricity', his theory leaves room for people to move up social scales by making use of symbolic resources such as English, but much more emphasis is put on inequality, rigidity of structural hierarchy, and obstacles for grassroots people with 'truncated repertoires' to become legitimate speakers.

In China, 'Chinese cultural aphasia' in EFL education – the inability to describe and explain Chinese culture in English – has aroused much critical attention and corrective attempts in the past decade (e.g. Song & Xiao, 2009). Some empirical research and teaching projects have been carried out from the perspective of critical pedagogy, to empower learners as legitimate and creative English writers (Ye, 2012). Calls have also been made concerning the legitimacy of English publication of previously published research in authors' L1, with reframing for international readers (Wen & Gao, 2007).

Shi-xu's (2009) stance of 'reconstructing Eastern paradigms of discourse studies' is that of vehement fighting for the legitimate speaker identity, at national and transnational levels. Publishing widely in English in the field of discourse studies but often at a grand 'East vs. West' level without fine-grained discourse analysis of specific textual data, he makes repeated calls to 'undermine the global universalization of Western ideas and ideologies, and reclaim cultural identity and diversity of the underdeveloped and developing cultures' (2009, p. 32).

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Contexts

The legitimate speaker of English was born in a postcolonial era, in which the colonial power of the UK was broken in various parts of the world. Linguistic hegemony, along with other types of hegemony, was seriously challenged. Increasingly, the use of English was separated from the 'native culture' of the previous colonizers. A strong sense of autonomy was growing, including identification with local English varieties, and critical awareness of language rights. The civil rights movement which emerged in the USA in the 1960s also had a dimension of language rights, which engaged efforts from disprivileged racial, ethnic, and gender groups.

Critical strands of intellectual thinking contributed greatly to the growth of the legitimate speaker. Neo-Marxist theory, feminist theories, and critical theory all helped to shape critical awareness of power in language. For example, following French-thinker Michel Foucault, power is perceived to be omnipresent in human activity. It has a positive side when enhancing people's capacity to act, and a negative side when constraining such capacity. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu expanded Marx's theory of capital to include not only economic, but also social, cultural, and symbolic dimensions. In his view, language competence, or linguistic capital, is an embodied form of cultural capital, able to be transformed into other capital forms. Following his conceptualization of cultural capital and 'the economics of linguistic exchange' (Bourdieu, 1977), NNSs were competing with NSs for the position of 'legitimate speaker' in the linguistic market. Positioned by himself as 'constructivist structuralism' and 'structuralist constructivism' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 123), Bourdieu's theory drew attention to both social structural constraints on language use, and possibilities of symbolic negotiation from below.

Schools of critical thinking created room for reconceptualizing L2 learner/user identities. While the 'faithful imitator' does not have an independent voice, the legitimate speaker is determined to articulate him- or herself.

Constraints

The concept 'legitimate speaker' contains a paradox, i.e. the need to fight for legitimacy marks and possibly strengthens disadvantaged power positions. Also, a disparity exists between legitimacy and equality as an ideal, and discrimination and inequality as reality. Though room exists for power negotiation, all too often L2 users are subject to social structural constraints. For example, while researchers enthusiastically propose 'China English' as a legitimate variety of world English, teachers show far less interest, and students are mostly uninterested. With increased competence in differentiating English varieties, Chinese netizens recently laughed at and put shame on a China Central Television (CCTV) journalist who communicated effectively when interviewing a Zambian official, yet with a heavy Chinese accent: 'The Chinese accent of English shocked (雷翻) netizens'; 'English teachers will be made mad!'[1] The reasoning behind the strong emotion was that CCTV, the official national media, represented China's national 'face' and was thus expected to use 'standard' English pronunciation – British or American. Language users are driven by realistic principles of social comparison, and will target the most powerful varieties. There is a long way to go toward the legitimacy goal. Perhaps only when 'legitimacy' is no longer an issue, can one say it is realized.

Another potential problem of legitimate speakers is that, in their passionate fight against inequality, there is a danger of slipping into a dichotomized, essentialist view of culture. Simplistic categorization may conceal linguistic and cultural complexities, and excessive focusing on one particular social dimension of inequality (ethnic, national, religious, socioeconomic, gender, etc.) may serve to conceal inequalities in other dimensions.

The playful creator

Characteristics

The idea of L2 legitimacy was further extended by postmodernists in the new millennium, to formulate an identity that can be labeled 'the playful creator'. The playful creator lives not within a language but across languages; he or she constantly reinvents and reconstructs language or discourse by mixing different linguistic codes. Unconventional hybridization, fragmentation and juxtaposition of linguistic and cultural elements at surface level are conventionally employed, to form distinct ways of self-expression. These creators are critically playful; they can be regarded as a type of legitimate speaker in their challenge of existing standards. However, instead of claiming to be 'equal' users of the same language, they actually 'disinvent' the L2 and create their own L2 related 'creole' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Their typical way of interacting with the social environment is not serious negotiation or bitter fight, but rather indirect forms of playful or cynical self-expression. The playful creator is typically young, and his language (dis) invention is intertwined with a form of pop culture.

L2 research discourse

Alastair Pennycook has made a leading contribution to the portrayal of the playful creator. His empirical work has captured features of the transnational phenomena of hip-hop and English (Pennycook, 2007). Hip-hoppers' use of English is not imitative, but a mix with local languages in the form of 'creoles'. As an example, hip-hopper Joe Flizzow sang at a night club in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Pennycook, 2007, p. 1):

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Hip hop be connectin' Kuala Lumpur with LB
Hip hop be rockin' up towns laced wit' LV
Ain't necessary to roll in ice rimmed M3's and be blingin'
Hip hop be bringin' together emcees.

In this English rap, Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia is tied with Long Beach of the USA, which might imply the global spread of the American culture and its domination over the local cultural forms. Yet the African-American flavor in pronunciation and syntax ('Hip hop be connectin') implies resistance to the US cultural mainstream. Its juxtaposition of Louis Vuitton clothes and BMW 3 series wheel rims demonstrates identification with the contemporary global popular culture of fashion and consumption, yet at the same time it claims distance from and rejection of such cultural elements ('Ain't necessary').

With the language of hip-hop and English woven together, Pennycook argues that such language use becomes part of a localized subculture in many parts of the world: hip-hop operates as a global code, while simultaneously creating a sense of locality. Pennycook uses 'transcultural flows' to capture the movements, changes and reuses of cultural forms in disparate contexts. For him, 'there are many flows in many directions' (2007, p. 117), instead of a one-directional flow. Also, he uses 'global Englishes' to replace Kachru's 'world Englishes'. In Pennycook's critical view, WE with its concentric circles are still centered on NS varieties; the various varieties are far from 'equal'. Under global Englishes, however, language conventions are being 'disinvented' and 'reconstructed' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) by their creative (L2) users around the world.

With a stance more toward the social structuralist side, Blommaert also notes the mixed uses as norms, including those of pop songs. In his view, such hybrid language use 'becomes creative because it is measurable against normative hegemonic standards' (Blommaert, 2005, p. 106). They serve to 'disorder' and 'reorder' the conventional hierarchy of speech norms set by the society. Yet, the hegemonic forces will not easily surrender. Although with competence to manipulate symbolic sources for self expression and communication, the creators may or may not succeed in making their discourses accepted in a higher or broader social 'scale'. Thus, L2 creators in the view of Blommaert are only occasionally 'playful' compared to those of Pennycook; they are more often fighting the hard battle of legitimate speakers.

Along with 'creativity' tied with 'hybridity', concepts such as 'performativity' (Butler, 1997), 'transculturation' or 'transculturality' (Pennycook, 2007), and various '-ity' and 'trans-' affixed terminologies have become popular, replacing the more structuralist '-ism' concepts such as 'bilingualism'. The multiplication of new terminology creation shows the postmodernist attempts and eagerness to disform and reform ideologies in the entire field, which interestingly parallel the hip-hoppers' language or discourse (dis)invention.

In Chinese contexts, a number of collections included images of the playful creator. Doreen Wu's (2008) collection examined various discourses in 'Cultural China' (mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Singapore, and Chinese diasporas in other parts of the world), with a 'glocalization' perspective. Her own serial studies on advertisements in Hong Kong and mainland China have maintained a focus on hybridity and creativity. Yet, the discourses she researched on were mostly quite formal and carefully designed, and often with a dimension of historical change, which were different from playful improvisations of the hip-hoppers. Tian and Cao's (2012) collection, on the other hand, had quite a broad concern over discourse and 'reinvention of identities' in mainland China. The discourses examined ranged from hybridized shop signs, the

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localized English teaching genre of 'Crazy English', and Chinese political discourse in English translation. In the same discourse book series, Ding and Shen's (2013) collection focused on 'marginal discourses' such as rock and roll, Internet talk, and movies with homosexual themes.

Contexts

The playful creator grows up in an era of increased globalization. The rapid development of new media technology facilitates world-wide linguistic and cultural flows, though disparity exists among socioeconomic classes. The Internet has become indispensable for an increasingly large number of people. According to *New Weekly* (2013), China had 538,000,000 netizens by 2012. International traveling is becoming common, even a lifestyle for some. In 2011, the number of international visitors entering China was 54,120,000; the number of Chinese tourists traveling abroad was 70,250,000. The World Tourism Organization predicts that by 2020, the annual number of Chinese tourists going abroad will reach 100 million. Consumerism and cosmopolitanism are cherished, accompanied with policentricity of power. Geographic boundaries are no longer important. Languages and cultures are being deterritorialized, acquiring global mobility. 'Never say what you want to say in a (conventionally) "good" manner' (有话就不好好说) has become a spirit of the era for the young. When word games saturate genres such as advertisements, Twitter, TV series, and titles of articles and posts in an L1 other than English, code mixing from English has become a common source for playful creation.

Intellectually, poststructuralist, postmodernist, and social constructivist/constructionist theories have gained great influence. Unified stable structures are no longer in favor in social theories. Anderson (1983/1991) views nations as 'imagined communities', subjectively constructed. Giddens's (1984) structuration theory breaks the dichotomy of 'society' and 'individual', perceiving them as mutually structuring each other in interaction. Self-identity is an ongoing reflective narrative in search of 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1991, p. 47). Bauman (2005, p. 1) conceives 'liquid lives' of the postmodern era, where people 'act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines'. Regarding the constant tension between social structure and individual agency, there seems to be a general tendency in social science theories that more weight has been put on the latter (cf. Block, 2013).

Taken together, the late modern/postmodern era of globalization is (perceived as) essentially different from the previous ages. Hybridity, ambivalences, and fluidity have become norms of life. Individuals enjoy increased agency in identity construction, and at the same time suffer a decrease in their sense of stability and security. Such perceived and actual changes in social environments have exerted a great influence on the formation of the playful creator.

Constraints

The playful creator, while leading the direction of language change, is constrained in several ways. First, their creation is largely confined to particular 'marginal' domains of language use (e.g. recreation, informal talk), separated from major domains such as politics, economy, and education. Its influence on the mainstream of social life is restricted. Second, playful creators are mostly young people whose social power is limited, at least in 'vertical cultures' such as China. Third, while playful creations are often praised as heroic resistance against hegemony of linguistic standards, it remains to

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be further investigated how 'free' they are. Much like the legitimate speaker in general and perhaps to a greater extent, the playful creator appears to be powerful in L2 research, but may remain quite powerless in social reality.

The dialogical communicator

Characteristics

The dialogical communicator is an ideal L2 learner/user identity that I have proposed, based on Bakhtin's theory of dialogue and empirical data of intercultural communication (Gao, 2010). Following Bakhtin, human beings are by nature dialoging agents. The dialogicality for L2 learners/users can be characterized at two levels. In inter-subject communication, dialogical communicators converse – speak and listen – on the basis of mutual respect. Communication gains its end value; creative discourses and effective outcomes may turn out to be byproducts. In intra-subject communication, i.e. the dialogue between different consciousness or 'voices', the dialogical communicator has a reflective sensitivity, ready to discern, expand, deepen and reorganize various kinds of consciousness within him- or herself. These two levels of dialogicality are dialectical and mutually facilitating. Good quality self-consciousness is necessary for interpersonal communication.

The dialogical communicator has transcended various dichotomies such as listening vs. speaking, native culture vs. C2, and instrumental vs. integrative motivation. They are free from the superiority–inferiority complex. Different from the playful creator who mixes and combines selected elements from various cultures, the dialogical communicator respects the integrity and entirety of each and every culture. He or she enjoys mutual enhancement of L1/C1 on the one hand, and competence in the chosen L2 target discourse and identification with the chosen imagined community on the other.

L2 research discourse

Though the term 'dialogical communicator' was proposed recently, its characteristics such as transcendence of dichotomy appeared in my earlier studies on 'productive bilingualism' (Gao, 2001, 2002), based on Fromm's (1948) 'productive orientation' and empirical data of recognized 'best foreign language learners' in China. Contrasted with Lambert's (1974) 'subtractive' and 'additive' bilinguals, productive bilinguals enjoy mutually enhanced L2 and L2 competence, and mutually deepened C1 and C2 understanding. They are distinguished for openness and criticalness toward and incorporation of both cultures, in their own individual manner.

As a poetry translator, for example, one participant translated many ancient Chinese poems into English and French. The following is his rendering of Du Fu's 'Deng Gao' (On the Height):

Original couplet in Chinese and Pinyin:

无边落木萧萧下，Wubian luomu xiaoxiao xia,
不尽长江滚滚来。Bujin changjiang gungun lai.

Translation by Participant:

The boundless forest sheds its leaves shower by shower;
The endless river rolls its waves hour after hour.

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Compared with other translations which focused mainly on meaning[2] and rhyme, the translator's above rendering made an additional effort to capture the sound parallelism in Chinese:

> It is said that in English strict parallelism without the repetition of a word is nearly impossible, while parallelism involving repetition will quickly seem rigid and monotonous. But in the above version we may find only unimportant particles repeated without entailing rigidity or monotony. It is true that in the second line of Du Fu's original couplet the word 'roll' is repeated (gungun), while in this version it is not. Isn't it a loss? So it is, but the loss is compensated for by the repetition of 'hour', which cannot be found in the original. Then this may be called a loss at sunrise with a gain at sunset. (cited from Gao, 2002, p. 154)

Along with his translation practice, the translator proposes his principle of poetry translation: 'beauty in meaning, sound, and written form'. 'The West values truth; the East treasures goodness; as a poetry translator I pursue beauty. Truth, goodness and beauty are congruent with one another' (Gao, 2002). In his own field and in his own manner, he incorporated the beauty of L1 and L2, and actualized his own potential as a poetry translator.

In a later ethnography on student volunteers for the Beijing Olympic Games (BOG; Gao, 2010), it is found that the student volunteers underwent an identity change from the legitimate speaker to the dialogical communicator. The study captured a change of volunteer proposed slogans for their office wall in a competition venue:

When proposing 'We speak and the world will listen' prior to BOG (Figure 1), the volunteers wanted to convey 'our ambition, and our competence of exerting influence'. As Chinese volunteers, they felt 'ambitious, confident and courageous; the whole world is listening to us'. This ambitious slogan, setting 'we' and 'the world' apart as the speaker and the listener, was later replaced by an assembly of names of nations and languages represented by the competing teams in the venue (Figure 2). During BOG, volunteers developed empathy with international guests they served. In a post-BOG discussion, a volunteer reflected:

> I was very happy when I was being able to help, and received thanks for that. In my view, 'we speak' is an internal talk among (Chinese) foreign language learners. As volunteers, our focus should be serving the needs of the external. We should not impose on others. So when addressing the external, 'we speak' needs to be changed. After we've invited others, and they've got *their own* positive feelings, they'll naturally have a good impression of us. And we'll in turn feel proud of ourselves. Serving the needs of others – this is what a volunteer should do. (Gao, 2010).

Figure 1. Initial slogan on the wall: Legitimate speaker identity.

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Figure 2. Later change: Dialogical communicator identity.

Apart from the office wall slogan, the volunteers also reflected on their experience inside the Paralympics venue (Liu & Gao, 2013). In a table tennis competition, when the overwhelming majority of audience was cheering for Chinese athletes, a minority of volunteers started to cheer for the guest team. One volunteer reflected afterwards:

> If I were a foreign journalist sitting in the venue, my vision would be filled with Chinese faces and redness; foreign athletes seemed so negligible. Apart from respect, would this nation arouse my fear of some kind? I guess yes. Would this fear be a kind of awe, or disdain? Would this nation arouse my respect because of its strength/power, or would it impress me with nothing other than strength/power? :… I sometimes think – quite seriously – what kind of Chinese I want to be, what kind of nation China should be. Being powerful, becoming Number One and winning gold medals – these are important, but what is more important is how we treat others. BOG is a good opportunity to demonstrate what kind of nation China is. For friends who have never been to China, we hope you'll see we are not economically poor and culturally blank; we are not only economically promising, but also good in other respects. Every Chinese has such a responsibility of showing to the world what kind of nation China is'. (Liu & Gao, 2013, p. 77)

Taken together, student volunteers started with a rather narrow patriotic or nationalistic stance, claiming and celebrating the acquisition of a legitimate speaker identity. During and after BOG, they developed a growing capacity of critical self-reflection, and started to step beyond the 'we'–'they' opposition. Patriotism was deepened, through dialoging with an international perspective. The new position developed later was that of a dialogical communicator.

The spirit of dialogicality, particularly between the local and global, is widely found in research discourse, though terminologies vary. In portrayal of the cross-cultural awareness development, for example, Kramsch proposes the finding of 'the third place', which 'would enable learners to take both an insider's and outsider's view on C1 and C2' (Kramsch, 1993, p. 210). Explicitly drawing on Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, Kramsch conceives contexts of interaction as 'sphere of intersubjectivity', 'sphere of intertextuality', and 'sphere of interculturality' (Kramsch, 1993, p. 13). In this view, cultures are understood only in dialogical relation with other cultures. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) 'sociocultural linguistic approach' to identity sees identity as intersubjectively produced and interactionally emergent. Dörnyei, Csizér, and Nemeth (2006) state that bicultural identity is partly rooted in local culture and partly rooted in global culture. Byram (2008) proposes a move from foreign language teaching to 'education for intercultural citizenship'. Holliday (2013) extends his nonessentialist notion of 'small cultures' to a grander 'grammar of culture', exemplifying how the self may dialogue with the 'other',

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and with social and political 'structures'. Wu Zongjie (2009) proposes English education in China should promote learners' dialogue with C1 history and local culture, with expanded competence of meaning interpretation of texts. His 'China study from an intercultural perspective' has already generated interesting ethnographic work and pedagogical practice.

Contexts

In the post-cold war world, relations among cultures have become a center of attention. Huntington (1996) proposed that instead of ideological differences, people's cultural and religious identities will be the major source of conflict, hence 'the Clash of Civilizations'. This theory generated heated discussion and debates. As a response to Huntington's perception, the former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami proposed the theory of 'Dialogue Among Civilizations', which caught international attention and became the basis for United Nations' resolution to name the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. After al-Qaeda's brutal 9/11 attacks on US targets in 2001, more international efforts have been made to promote such dialogues. In 2005, 'The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations' (UNAOC) was proposed by the Prime Minister of Spain, and co-sponsored by the Prime Minister of Turkey. The initiative seeks to galvanize international action against extremism through the forging of international, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue, with a particular emphasis on defusing tensions between the Western and Islamic worlds (Wikipedia). In 2010, a UNAOC forum was held at the Shanghai World Expo, paying special attention to dialogues in the Asian–Pacific region. Within nations, there has also been an increasing call for attention to isolation and segregation of ethnic minorities, for example, in the criticism of 'multiculturalism' in European countries and Australia in the past 10–20 years (Wikipedia). As a lasting theme in history, dialogue among cultures has acquired its particular importance in the present era when the world is becoming increasingly smaller, but violence and segregation are becoming common and easy solutions.

The dialogical communicator has both traditional and contemporary intellectual origins. Its direct theoretical resource is Bakhtin's theory of dialogism/dialogicality. According to Bakhtin, dialogical communication is the very essence of existence. 'In dialogues, people not only present themselves to the external world, but also become who they are for the first time' (Bakhtin, 1988, p. 344). 'Only in communication, in the interaction between human beings and about human beings, can one's 'inner human being' be revealed to the self and other' (Bakhtin, 1988, p. 343).

There are other intellectual resources from different cultures that nurture the dialogical communicator. Among these are Confucian principles such as 'Sage within and king without' and 'cultivate the self, harmonize the family, govern the state, and bring peace to the world', Erich Fromm's 'productive orientation', Abraham Maslow's 'self-actualization', to name a few. Though from different perspectives and located in different cultures, they all favor transcendence of dichotomies, most notably between 'self' and 'other'.

Based on critique of previous social theories, contemporary sociologist Margaret Archer (2000, 2003) offers her social realist theory to the tension between social structure and individual agency, focusing on 'internal conversation'. Distinct from social determinism, individualism and what she calls 'central conflation' of structure and agency (e.g. Giddens), Archer finds 'internal conversation' a missing link between the two. Through such an inner dialogue, individuals reflect upon their social situation in the light of current concerns and projects. This theory has obtained attention in applied

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linguistics and intercultural communication research (Block, 2013). The idea of 'internal conversation' between structure and agency, society and individual, other and self, may provide further theoretical nurturance to the growth of the dialogical communicator.

Constraints

At the social level, a nurturing environment for the dialogical communicator is not always granted in reality. Paradoxically, only with more dialogical communicators can the soil for their growth be fertilized. It is very difficult to develop love if one lives in an environment full of hatred, sadness, and frustration. At the individual level, when deficient basic needs – physiological needs, safety, belonging, and esteem – are not substantially satisfied, it is very hard to achieve the merge of 'specieshood' and 'selfhood' (Maslow, 1971, p. 187). In addition, from an educational perspective, the growth of the dialogical communicator does not lend itself easily to programmed training or testing (cf. Kramsch, 1993). It relies essentially on sustained personal commitment and gradual maturation in a nurtured environment. This may disappoint eager educators and learners driving at fast and immediate outcomes.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented my viewpoint that, over the past half century, the model L2 learner/user of English has undergone a development through several prototypes – the faithful imitator, the legitimate speaker, the playful creator, and the dialogical communicator. Along with the shift is the sociohistorical change – the collapse of colonialism, the increased impact of globalization, the increased call for intercultural dialogue amidst clash and conflicts. The development of intellectual resources has also contributed to the formation of the prototypes.

I will further venture to convey my perception that the prototypes can be roughly paralleled to stages of individual psychological development. The faithful imitator resembles a small child without a 'self', eager for identification with parents. The total integration or merging with parents provides a sense of badly needed security. The legitimate speaker and playful creator resemble an adolescent or young adult, striving to develop a distinct self-identity by making loud (resistant) voices or performing 'peculiar' acts. The need for autonomy, recognition, and esteem has surpassed that for parental affiliation and security. The dialogical communicator is like a mature adult in productive love (Fromm, 1948). It is based on ample sense of security and esteem that one can readily opens up to the exploration of simultaneous deepening of specieshood and selfhood (Table 1).

It should be noted, however, that these L2 identity prototypes are not rigidly positioned on a linear evolutionary continuum, socially or psychologically. In my perception, sociohistorically they peak in different times – the faithful imitator in the 1970s, the legitimate speaker in the 1980s and 1990s, the playful creator is now undergoing its high time in the first two decades of the new millennium, and the full development of the dialogical communicator is yet to come. Their general waves overlap; an old prototype may ebb but continue to exert influence when a new one's tide is high. The faithful imitator has continued to function, for instance, though its golden time as the dominating prototype has long passed. Different prototypes may also exist within the same individual, and have variations and combinations for different situations. It is also clear that L2 identities are not determined by social or individual factors alone; they

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Table 1. Summary of four L2 learner/user prototypes.

	Faithful imitator	Legitimate speaker	Playful creator	Dialogical communicator
Characteristics	L2 and cultural conduct strictly modeled on NS	Claims equal standards and rights with NS	Creates hybrid language use for self-expression	Converses on the basis of mutual respect; reflectivity
Contexts	Modernism; influence of colonialism	Fall of colonialism; postcolonialism	Postmodernism and globalization	Clash and dialogue among civilizations; dialogism
Constraints	Identity conflicts; loss of L1/C1	Paradoxical marking and strengthening of lower position	Constrained in domains of influence	Lack of nurturing environment; unsatisfied deficiency needs
Bilingualism	Subtractive	Additive	Hybrid	Productive
Psychological stage parallel	Small child	Adolescent; young adult	Adolescent; young adult	Mature adult

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emerge in the interaction between the two. Therefore, it is not contradictory to examine at the same time individual learning 'motivation', 'orientation', or 'investment', how the contexts fosters them, and how they serve to constitute the changing context. It also follows that in constructing L2 identity models, researchers are constructing social and psychological spaces for further practice.

The above portrayal is primarily descriptive rather than normative, and the choice and evaluation of prototypes will depend on specific contexts and individuals. I hope the conceptualization of embodied persons will offer alternative targets for L2 learners, educators, and researchers in their own situations. Nevertheless, I have my own perception that the model L2 learner/user of English has undergone a marked development, on a general path from innocence to maturity. The dialogical communicator prototype, which remains to be fully developed, has particular implication for future English education targeted at intercultural competence and intercultural citizenship.

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Notes

1. http://huati.weibo.com/29836?order=time
2. For example: 'Leaves are dripping down like the spray of a waterfall, While I watch the long river always rolling on'. – Witter Bynner.

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