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## Article

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### Traditional Chinese Culture and ELT

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#### Introduction

The status of culture in second or foreign language learning has increasingly been given intensive attention. Indeed, it is true that, if you want to learn a second language well, you should be open-minded and understand the culture of the target language.

In an ELT classroom, we always emphasize, “Do as Romans do”. However, it is less usual to consider the culture language learners bring to the language classroom and its relationship to the target culture (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998). In Singapore, English is used in most working environments, as it is acquired in the early childhood of those who use it for communication. Among the Chinese, most of the educated population communicate in English. Compared with the native-speaker counterparts, it is possible that for many Chinese Singaporeans who learn English as a second language, their learning styles and cultural perceptions are somewhat influenced by Chinese traditional culture and ethical value. Therefore, understanding the impact of Chinese traditional cultural resources on language learners can help language teachers meet the practical need to teach English in the most efficient way possible. Brown (1994) encourages the second language learners to make positive use of prior experience (L1) to facilitate the process of learning an L2 by retaining that which is valid and valuable for learning a second language and a second culture.

A story in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.) can help to illustrate an embarrassing situation arising from cross-culture differences. Once upon a time, ambassadors from a western country invited some Qing Dynasty officials to have a dinner in their legation. After the dinner, the Qing officials were served with ice cream. None of them tasted this strange food/dessert before. In Chinese culture, people think that food is tastier when it is hot. When officials saw the ice cream giving off a lot of vapour, they fed a full spoon of ice cream into the mouth. The freezing cold distorted the officials’ faces. Those westerners could not help laughing loudly at their ungraceful appearances. The Qing officials took their revenge in the banquet they prepared for the western ambassadors. They served their guests with a special Sichuan soup, which was hot and spicy. The soup was boiling but with a film of oil the guests thought it was cooled down. When they

drank it, the hot soup burnt out their tongue. Though the story might have been a little bit exaggerated, the mutual understanding of different culture is really important to anyone living in the global societies.

In the following, I will review some key aspects of Chinese traditional culture represented by Confucianism and Daoism that are very influential to Chinese literati for thousands of years. I hope the review of these native culture resources would help language educators to understand Chinese EFL learners at a deeper level and arouse the attention of language educators to the learning of intercultural skills associated with the target language and culture.

### **The Notion of Chinese Traditional Culture**

China is proud of its 5,000-year history. The Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770–221 B.C.), though marked by disunity and civil strife, witnessed an unprecedented era of cultural prosperity—the "golden age" (黄金时代) of China. The atmosphere of reform and new ideas was attributed to the struggle for survival among warring regional lords.

#### *The Hundred Schools of Thought*

So many different philosophies developed during the late Spring and Autumn and early Warring States periods that the era is often known as that of the Hundred Schools of Thought (诸子百家). From the Hundred Schools of Thought came many of the great classical writings on which Chinese practices were to be based for the next two and one-half millennia. Many of the thinkers were itinerant intellectuals who, besides teaching their disciples, were employed as advisers to one or another of the various state rulers on the methods of government, war, and diplomacy.

The body of thought that had the most enduring effect on subsequent Chinese life was that of the School of Literati (Ru or 儒), often called the Confucian school in the West. To Confucius (孔丘, 551-479 B.C.), the functions of government and social stratification were facts of life to be sustained by ethical values. His ideal was the junzi (君子 or ruler's son), which came to mean gentleman in the sense of a cultivated or superior man.

Taoism (道家), the second most important stream of Chinese thought, developed during the Zhou period. Its formulation is attributed to the legendary sage Lao Zi (老子 or Old Master), said to predate Confucius, and Zhuang Zi (庄子) (369-286 B.C.). The focus of Taoism is the individual in nature rather than the individual in society. A scholar on duty as an official would usually follow Confucian teachings but at leisure or in retirement might seek harmony with nature as a Taoist recluse.

*Confucianism*

Confucius is also called Kong Zi, (孔子). As the first private teacher who brought education to a large number of people, Confucius was properly regarded as having made great contributions in the cultural history of China. The school of thought founded by Confucius was known as Confucianism. The written legacy is embodied in the Confucian Classics (五经: 《易经》、《诗经》、《书经》、《周礼》 and 《春秋》 from which the period derived its name), which were to become the basis for the order of traditional society. Nevertheless, a government system supported by a large class of Confucian literati selected through civil service examinations (科举) and Confucian Classics had been committed to be the “core textbook” in more than two-thousand-year Chinese Imperial Era. Confucian doctrines also came to play the dominant role in the intellectual life of Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Thus, in Asian societies in general, learners like to have a “core” textbook as a reliable source of knowledge.

Confucius’s philosophy emphasizes “San Gang Wu Chang” (三纲五常). “San Gang” is the Bonds of three correspondent relationships between the monarch and his subjects, between the father and the son and between the husband and the wife. The former has the absolute authority to the latter. In Chinese culture, the prescribed relationship between the teacher and the student is like father and son. The student is not allowed to challenge the teacher’s supreme authority. In most of Chinese ELT classrooms, students get used to those teacher-centred models and seldom ask questions even when some teachers invite students to do so. The Chinese EFL learners prefer tightly structured learning paths controlled by a clear, logical and systematic teacher. “Wu Chang” is Rites, Intelligence, Righteousness, Trust and Benevolence (礼、智、义、信、仁). “Ren” is core concept among them. “Ren” has been translated as ‘compassion’, ‘perfect virtue’, ‘love’, ‘benevolence’, ‘benevolence’, ‘human-heartedness’, ‘moral character’ (Mei 1967: 152), which is precious ethic value to maintain an ideal social and political order in his assumption. All these concepts have shaped the way of thinking and behaviour of Chinese people in society in the past thousand years until today. Some researchers observed that Chinese ESL learners are not active in classroom activities. This is not because they do not want to get involved in the lesson but they are worried that, if they are too active in class, other people in the class may think that they want to show off, which is not the style of a gentleman in the traditional culture point of view. They would rather prompt answers secretly to the classmate who is questioned by the teacher. They think this is Yi (Righteousness). Some task-based classroom activities are not easy to be implemented in Chinese ELT classrooms because individualism is not encouraged in traditional culture and anyone attempting to express personal ideas freely is at risk of spoiling harmonious relationships among people, which is against the rules of Li (Rites).

Confucius also emphasizes “San Cong Si De” (三从四德, a series of rules for woman). The strict regulation requires a woman to subject herself to a man unconditionally, including her own sons. Women were deprived of rights of education and some basic

rights as human beings. However, things have changed over the past fifty years. Chinese women enjoy an equal social status with men now. You can observe that female students are even more active than male students in ELT classrooms. After shaking off the bond of traditional culture, they give full reins to their talents in language and other fields.

### *Daoism*

Daoism holds that the goal of life for each individual is to find one's own personal adjustment to the rhythm of the natural (and supernatural) world, to follow the Way (道 *dao*) of the universe. In many ways the opposite of rigid Confucian morals, Taoism served many of its adherents as a complement to their ordered daily lives. The Taoist approach to life is embodied in the classic *Dao De Jing* (《道德经》).

Also, to be in accord with the *Dao*, a Daoist must do nothing- “that is nothing strained, artificial, or unnatural” (“Daoism”). This belief is known as the *wu wei*. By following the *wu wei* one achieves action through minimal action. Attaining action through non-action is most easily obtained when a Daoist reverts back to a primitive agrarian life style. To live such a life is to allow nature to have rule. People influenced by this concept tend to be passive and will not devote themselves into the activities to achieve certain social goals.

Another strain of thought followed by Daoist is the concept of yin-yang (阴阳). The concept attempts to explain the universe in terms of basic forces in nature, the complementary agents of yin (dark, cold, female, negative) and yang (light, hot, male, positive). In the Daoist religion there is no such a clear distinction between what is good and what is evil. *Yin* and *Yang* merely represents opposites in nature that are present, and are needed to create harmony. Never will *Yin* be present without *Yang*. The two exist in harmony-always. Daoists believe that to truly know what is good, you must know what is evil. Without good as a comparison, nothing is evil, and to what will you compare the two? How will one know what is good if there is no opposite? *Yin* and *Yang* will forever coexist to produce a life of harmony, and one must never shun the other, but embrace both the *Yin* and the *Yang* as they are (“Introduction to Daoism”). This leads to a circular, or holistic, style of thinking that differs from Western linear logic. (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998) Since there is no absolute good and evil, people always choose the middle path and never take risk to find out what is right. This concept is rooted in most of Chinese people's thinking.

Thus in ELT classrooms, Chinese students are very reluctant to attend classroom activities such as debating, discussion and expressing ideas. If their opinions are not right, they are afraid of “losing face”. Even if they are sure that their opinions are right, they are worried that other people may say that they want to become the focus. When they attempt to use English, they have a strong uncertainty and want to avoid using it. Schachter (1974) investigated the relative clauses produced by adult L2 learners from different language backgrounds. She found that Chinese and Japanese learners, whose

first language does not contain English-like relative clauses, made few errors, while they made fewer attempts at using relative clauses in the first place. This seems to show that when they write an academic thesis or express an opinion, they tend to express themselves circuitously by giving a lot of background knowledge that seems irrelevant to the topic. They want to keep a balance between their own ideas and those previous ones in this field. They are dependent on the authority's instructions to find truth rather than do it through empirical research.

Chinese EFL learners tend to learn language knowledge in a holistic way and possess sufficient analytic skills to perceive, categorise and store the linguistic features of the L2, and monitor errors. As Jin and Cortazzi (1998) point out, Chinese students care about their relationships, harmony in their learning and in their communications with others. They tend to use the moderate tones to state their point of view to avoid disputes. They feel safe to code switch in both English and Chinese in one sentence so as to be understood by each other. A person who speaks in the way of native English speaker feels out of place in local Chinese community.

### **Interpretation of the Impact of Traditional Culture on ELT**

It seems that the impacts that traditional cultures bring to the classroom are generally perceived as totally negative. In fact, it is not necessarily the case. Actually, some concepts in Confucianism about education are very enlightening and heuristic until today. Confucius says, "The teacher is the person who imparts knowledge, passes on practical skills and removes doubts." In ancient times, besides memorising the Confucius classics, the literati of Confucius had to practise the Six Arts, i.e. Rites, Music, Archery, Horsemanship, Calligraphy and Mathematics. They travelled to different states to learn and experience from their journeys. This education concept is in accord with the latest language-teaching tendency of curricular integration. Confucius proposed critical thinking in academic study. He said, "to learn without thinking is labour in vain. To think without learning is desolation." In the Confucian private school system, teacher had an overall educational awareness of the physical and emotional development of their students. Confucius showed no discrimination against students from different family backgrounds. Instead, he advocated teaching to meet the needs of student diversity. His teaching philosophy is a great enlightenment for a development of language teachers.

Here I will use Hofstede's (1986) four conceptual categories of cultural norms that summarise the major Characteristics of Chinese English learners influenced by traditional cultural resources.

	Individualism & Collectivism	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity
Syllabus	Tightly structured Form-based		Unbalanced status of receptive skills and productive skills.	Women equals to men
Teaching Material	Solo core text-book in a long period of time (ten years above)		Intensive model is predominant.	Positive content about women's image
Task /Activity	Classroom activity is regard as wasting of time Single solutions	Harmony Inductive Respect to authority & the known	Listen rather than express own ideas lest make mistake of offend others	
Motivation	Instrumental	Pressure from family and society		
Learner Role	Passive Tolerant Holistic Analytic Face-saving	Obedient Dependant	Avoid asking any questions and expressing own idea for the sake of face-saving; Avoid making mistakes by keeping silent in class.	
Teacher Role	Teacher-centred Spoon-feeding Logical Systematical	Authority Leading	Teaching language isolated from context of culture and situation.	
Assessment	Knowledge rather than skill	Test oriented	Receptive skills rather than productive skills	

### Comparison of Chinese and Western Cultures of Learning

Jin & Cortazzi (1998) provide us with Chinese cultural and English Cultural models of learning based on their ELT classroom observation in China between 1993 to 1995 (see Figure on next page).

Influenced by traditional culture, Chinese society bears the characteristic of collectivism, which reflects that formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times. The Chinese language learners dare not step out of the comfort zone. When communicating in English, they are not confident in expressing themselves in appropriate English; instead, they switch between English and the mother tongue from time to time. In the long run, the habitual code switching between the two languages deeply affects grammatical correctness in using English. Their receptive skills (Reading and Listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking) are also affected in one way or another.

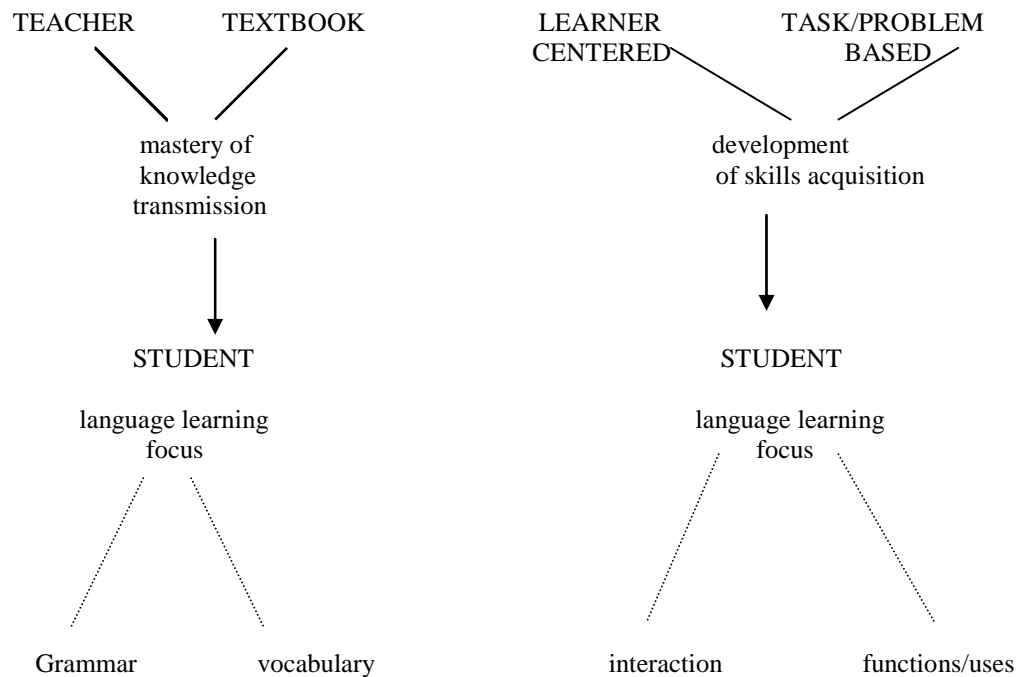
### From Contrastive Analysis to a Cultural Synergy Model

What kind of role does a native language and culture (L1) play in second language learning? Is it an obstacle or an aid in second language learning? There is always

disparity regarding the role of the L1 among researchers. The popular belief is that the linguistic interference of one's native language and culture is always an obstacle in second language learning. Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a theory to raise the consciousness of the difficulties caused by L1. As Lado (1957), a pioneer in the CA field, points out, "The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them." However, at the beginning of 1970s, many attempts to prove the validity of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis show that the theory is inadequate, theoretically and practically, to predict the interference problems of language learner. Therefore, the role of L1 was reappraised rather than ruled out of SLA. Ellis (1985) claims that "If SLA is viewed as a developmental process, and then the L1 can be viewed as a contributing factor to this development, which in the course of time, as the learner's proficiency grows, will become less powerful."

### Chinese Cultural Model

### Western Cultural Model



A Cultural Synergy Model (CSM) put forward by Jin and Cortazzi (1995) suggests the need for mutual understanding of different cultures, communication styles and academic cultures. The model involves the following key notions:

1. Movement towards mutual congruence
2. Collective /individual tendencies
3. Second language acquisition/academic language use and academic culture
4. Identity maintenance

CSM urges language educators to attach equal importance to native cultural resources and target cultural resources. In ELT classrooms, this concept can benefit a language teacher to solve the difficulties he encounters in intercultural classrooms, especially in an EFL context where traditional culture has rooted deeply in people's mind and shaped their daily lives and behaviours.

### **Application in Modern ELT Practice**

Under the circumstance of globalisation, English is no longer viewed as the property of the English-speaking world but as an international commodity. For most of English learners, to acquire satisfied communicative competence in English will lead to educational and economic empowerment. However, in EFL settings, lacking a context of structured interpersonal interaction in the target language contributes to tremendous difficulty for learners to communicate in English fluently and appropriately. Therefore, how to achieve intercultural competence by exploiting available native cultural resources is a rich area for language educators to explore.

To meet these needs, a Chinese language researcher and educator summarises four principles in teaching culture.

#### *Cognitive Principles*

In culture teaching, the principles refer to students' knowing, understanding and learning of the target culture. The emphasis is placed on knowing and understanding, rather than behaving. The cognitive goal of culture teaching is to acquire the knowledge about the target culture, awareness of its characteristics and of differences between the target culture and the learner's own culture.

#### *Assimilative Principles*

When we stress the assimilative principle in culture teaching, we must be reminded of the danger of mechanical absorption of foreign things. In a word, by assimilating alien cultures, our own culture flourishes; but only by keeping our national independence and characteristics can we attain plurality.

*Comparative Principles*

Since different cultures have different judgments, ways of life, values, thinking and social norms, culture shocks or clashes are unavoidable. If we pay close attention to the difference between different cultures, we can deepen our understanding of each other and clear up each other's misunderstanding.

*Tolerant Principles*

This principle shares the same concept with the Cultural Synergy Model. In today's situation of economic and scientific globalization, the tolerant principle advocates mutual understanding among cultures and this understanding is conducive to a diversity of human cultures and improving human cultural ecology. It also helps in avoiding cultural shock or even armed conflicts.

**Conclusion**

Implementing these principles in ELT classrooms can help English teachers to solve their problems by raising their own awareness of the impact of traditional Chinese culture on ELT classrooms and benefit them to make explicit teaching by using their available cultural resources in both native culture and target culture.

A solution for difficulties in learning a foreign language is for participants to become more aware of their own cultural presuppositions and those of others in order to build a bridge of mutual intercultural learning (Jin & Cortazzi). As language educators, under this globalization circumstance, we need to examine the potential benefits of culture teaching in language learning.

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## Research Notes

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### Effects of Planning and Revising on Fluency, Accuracy and Complexity in PRC students' EFL Writing across Genres

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The main focus of my research is to investigate the effect of different planning and revising conditions on PRC tertiary students' writing quality across three genres: argumentative, descriptive and letter-writing. Using a self-designed experiment and questionnaires, my research examines if the manipulation of writing processes under three conditions will have any effects on text quality. This is examined under three conditions: (a) free-writing, pre-task planning and extended pre-task planning; (b) reducing cognitive load through task manipulation and finally; and (c) draft available and draft unavailable conditions improve quality of their writing.

Earlier L1 researchers, Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981, 1986), Hayes (1996), and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) used think-aloud protocols to draw much insightful conclusions about cognitive processes in writing, and how good and weak writers plan and revise, but these only indirectly provide evidence on writing quality. An examination of these writing models reveals an inadequate consideration of cognitive processes on writing performance and a lack of understanding on how the strength of different cognitive load on writing may affect writing performance. It is argued that what is of direct concern to writing pedagogy is not only writing performance in itself, but also the cognitive processes in writing. Furthermore, Graham and Perin (2007) concluded, in their meta-analysis of writing intervention studies, that teaching students planning and revising strategies is indeed a very powerful and effective tool.

In the writing models of Flower and Hayes (1980; 1981), Hayes (1996), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), and Kellogg (1996), planning, transcribing and revising are viewed as important processes involved in the production of written texts. Yet, its direct impact on text quality is not clear; this is in part due to very limited research of writing processes on text quality. Kellogg (1996) and Hoeven (1999), therefore, urge researchers to investigate how manipulation of the three writing processes will affect the quality and rate of language production, using experimental studies. Specifically, Piolat (1999) proposed that it is the amount of planning time which determines text quality, and called for more research in this aspect.

Among the very limited research studies available, writing researchers hold contrasting theoretical perspectives. In 1973, Elbow proposed free-writing as an alternative to the outlining strategy. In free-writing, writers begin writing immediately, and do so continuously, without editing. Elbow (1973) claims that free-writing has the advantages of reducing writer's block, allowing writer's natural voice to be expressed in writing and most importantly, and it allows the discovery of better ideas and promotes coherence in writing. It appears that Elbow's (1973) conception of free-writing shares similar definitional meaning with Bereiter's (1980) associative writing, which is defined as writing down whatever that comes to one's mind. It is also similar to Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) knowledge telling model, which is defined as the generation of text without an overall plan or goal. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) observed that, first, not all poor writing results from knowledge telling model and, second, writing immediately and writing without planning are believed to automatically create coherence as what is written initiated further text; these positions imply that free-writing may possibly result in good writing and potentially be an effective writing approach. However, since its initiation, there has been a lack of empirical research on free-writing, as pointed out by Hayes (2006). One of the earliest studies which provided empirical support for the use of free-writing was conducted by Glynn et. al.(1982). They (1982) found that writers produced more ideas in their first draft when they wrote an unorganized draft and fewer ideas when they wrote a polished draft. Recently, Hayes sparked Elbow's (1973) free-writing approach and proposed that if claims about free-writing are verified, "it would have very important implications for the teaching and learning of writing" (2006, p. 33).

However, contrasting research findings were obtained from several studies which investigated planning on text quality. Some researches showed that planning improves text quality of college students' writing, compared to texts produced without planning (Kellogg, 1988; 1990 & Piolat, 1999). For example, Ellis and Yuan (2004) found that ten minutes' planning produces greater fluency and syntactical variety, as compared with writing without planning. Galbraith and Torrance (1999) pointed out that it is uncertain if benefits in planning are a result of improvement in the quality of the planning processes, or the reduction of cognitive load in the writing process. They further argued that the benefit of planning compared to free-writing is due to "the way free-writing has been operationalized" (2004, p. 66), not so much as due to the real benefits of planning. Indeed, the active debate on cognitive processes and writing performance is anticipated to be on the rise. Bergh & Rijlaarsdam (2007) advocated that in certain stages of writing, certain cognitive activities predominate and the overall quality of the final text is very much dependent on when such cognitive activities are carried out in the writing process.

A few researches (Hoeven, 1999; Breetvelt, Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1994 & 1996; Kellogg, 1987) have shown that texts of higher quality are produced with decreasing generating activities in the writing process. Sharing this perspective, I have structured my writing experiment with the planning in the initial, transcribing in the middle, and summarizing and revising at the end phase of writing. It is hoped that my study can contribute to the development of cognitive models of foreign language writing

performance and address related pedagogic issues.

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## Abstracts

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Invited Keynote Address

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### **Bringing Philosophy into the Classroom: The Experience of P4C in Southeast Asia**

Invited keynote address delivered at the Conference on *Fostering Philosophical Communities, Promoting Philosophical Excellence*, 21-23 September 2007,  
University of Melbourne, Australia  
Ho Wah Kam, Singapore Teachers' Union, Singapore

*“I think Hegel was right when he analysed progress into three stages, which he called Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis, though ... I do not think that the names he gave are very happily suggestive. In relation to intellectual progress, I would term them, the stage of romance, the stage of precision, and the stage of generalization.”*

A. N. Whitehead, “The Rhythm of Education” (1929)

#### **Abstract**

This paper was set against the background of the internationalization of *Philosophy for Children* (P4C), which originated in the US. Since not much has been written about P4C in Southeast Asia as a whole, this paper examined briefly the *practical* experience of introducing P4C in this pluralistic and multicultural region. My point was that P4C in this region today is going through what philosopher A.N. Whitehead would characterize as “*the stage of romance*”. After giving a general picture of the state of P4C in Southeast Asia, I devoted some time to the more *intellectual* aspects of P4C adoption in different cultures. Although the region is rich in philosophical thought and traditions (eg. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islamic Thought), in the last 15 years or so only three countries in Southeast Asia (namely, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines) have reportedly been using P4C. Each of these 3 countries has its own cultural and post-colonial heritage to consider and, in each case, such heritage may or not affect the way P4C is regarded intellectually. I therefore urged that we show some degree of historical sensitivity and social-cultural awareness when dealing with these cross-cultural issues. In line with my general concern as to whether there is any discontinuity between the values that P4C espouses and Southeast Asian philosophical thought, I considered briefly the following issues: how well P4C would be expected to settle in a situation of communitarianism (as against the neo-liberalism of the West); the relationship between ways of thinking (eg. critical thinking) dominant in the community of inquiry approach as practised in the West and the traditional ways of thinking in each country in this region. Finally, the extent to which P4C should and/or could be indigenized was considered.

## Invited Workshop

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**Perspectives on English as a Lingua Franca**

Workshop presented at The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE 2007): World Englishes: Problems, Properties, Prospects, Regensburg, Germany, 4-6 October 2007

Margie Berns, Purdue University & Anne Pakir, National University of Singapore

Invited Participants

*Margie Berns*, Purdue University, USA

*Jennifer Jenkins*, University of Southampton, UK

*Marko Modiano*, University of Gävle, Sweden

*Anne Pakir*, National University of Singapore, Singapore

*Barbara Seidlhofer*, University of Vienna, Austria

*Yasukatu Yano*, Waseda University, Japan

**Abstract**

This workshop brings together different perspectives on English as a lingua franca and is open to all. The six participants working in this group (Berns, Jenkins, Modiano, Pakir, Seidlhofer, and Yano) are generally associated with either the English as Lingua Franca (ELF) movement in Europe or with the World Englishes paradigm. Panel members – in 20 minute presentations - will focus on “lingua franca“ as a theoretical concept within the framework of ELF and/or of World Englishes. The session’s goal is increased appreciation of these two frameworks and insights into the current scholarly debate that has been generated by a range of interpretations of English as a lingua franca. 10 minutes of Q and A will follow each presentation.

Speaker	Topic
Margie Berns	<i>Lingua franca: form and/or function?</i>
Jennifer Jenkins	<i>English as a Lingua Franca: interpretations and attitudes</i>
Marko Modiano	<i>Inclusive/Exclusive? English as a lingua franca in the European Union</i>
Anne Pakir	<i>English as a lingua franca: Glocal English and local identity</i>
Barbara Seidlhofer	<i>World Englishes and English as a lingua franca: two frameworks or one?</i>
Yasukata Yano	<i>The future of the Kachruvian circle model and a supra-normative ELF standard</i>

Invited Featured Speaker

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## **Not just an Outer Circle, Asian English: Singapore English and the significance of ecology**

Invited Featured Speech delivered at *The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE 2007): World Englishes: Problems, Properties, Prospects*, Regensburg, Germany, 4-6 October 2007  
*Lisa Lim, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

### **Abstract**

Singapore English (SE) is often held up as a textbook example of an ‘Outer Circle English’ (OCE), an ‘Asian English’. But while such categories are indeed revealing when used in the ways they were originally intended, namely, for grouping English varieties according to their diffusion, status, functions, or geography, they are not meant to imply that members of a group by definition share structural properties or common genesis. I suggest that, if we are to discuss structural similarities or differences between varieties of English in a more illuminating way, a typological comparison with the adstrates in the specific linguistic ecology of a variety has to be considered, and not just a reliance on its ‘classification’.

For example, that the Englishes of Singapore, Philippines and India have initial unaspirated voiceless plosives is not because they are OCEs, but because the dominant language(s) in contact for all of them have such phonological patterning. Similarly, selecting SE to demonstrate that ‘Outer Circle Englishes’ have a more syllable-timed rhythm than ‘Inner Circle Englishes’ would be glossing over the fact that SE’s adstrates happen to be more syllable-timed, but this may not be the case for all OCEs. Additionally, similarities between ‘Asian Englishes’ and ‘African Englishes’, such as (lexical) tone in subsets of the grammar of Singapore and Nigerian Englishes, may be accounted for by the common factor of tone languages in their ecologies.

Further, it is important to appreciate the shifting dominance of languages in different periods during an English variety’s evolution: I illustrate this with the framework of linguistic eras in the evolution of SE, first developed in investigations into the origins of SE particles. Such careful reconstruction of ecology is vital for ascertaining specific and potentially different sources of features at different points in time in a language’s development. Just as crucially, it is a recognition that the structural aspects of a variety of English – of any linguistic variety – can change across different eras, which can lead to convergence or divergence between different Englishes, regardless of which circles they move in.

## Conference Presentation

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**Graphic Organizers as Scaffold for Students'  
Revision in the Pre-writing Stage**

Paper presented at the Ascilite Conference 2007

ICT: Providing Choices for Learners and Learning, 2-5 December 2007, Singapore  
Chien-Ching Lee, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Writing is a complex process. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) categorize poor and expert writers according to the type of writing they do. Poor writers are likely to use the knowledge telling strategy where students think and write whatever comes to their mind. Their writing reflects their train of thought rather than an understanding of the train of thought of the reader. Expert writers however, use the knowledge transforming strategy. They show an awareness of an overall plan or goal which they develop within the problem constraints given to meet their readers' needs. Graphic organizers have often been used to help students plan their writing but not to revise their writing in the pre-writing stage. Based on the premise that students can revise better if they can see better what they are revising, this paper provides the theoretical underpinnings to show that graphic organizers could be useful revising tools in the pre-writing stage and guidelines on the effective use of graphic organizers as revision tools in multi-draft pre-writing.

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**Upcoming Conferences**

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The 42nd Annual TESOL Convention & Exhibit (TESOL 2008): Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity, 2-5 April 2008, Hilton & Sheraton Hotels, New York, NY, USA. Email: [info@tesol.org](mailto:info@tesol.org)  
website: <http://www.tesol.org/2008convention>

ILA 53rd Annual Conference on Language Policy/Planning, 11-13 April 2008, Old Westbury, New York, USA. Email: [connorbaterk@oldwestbury.edu](mailto:connorbaterk@oldwestbury.edu) Website: <http://www.ilaword.org>

43<sup>rd</sup> International RELC Seminar: Language Teaching in a Multilingual World: Challenges and Opportunities, 21 - 23 April 2008, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore. Contact person: Email: [admin@relc.org.sg](mailto:admin@relc.org.sg)  
website: <http://www.relc.org.sg/seminar.html#TOPIC>

The 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference on English in Southeast Asia (ESEA2008): Englishes and Literatures-in-English in a Globalised World, 4 - 6 December 2008, National Institute of Education, Singapore. Email: [esea2008@nie.edu.sg](mailto:esea2008@nie.edu.sg)  
Website: [http://www.ell.nie.edu.sg/innerpages/news\\_n\\_events/esea/esea.htm](http://www.ell.nie.edu.sg/innerpages/news_n_events/esea/esea.htm)

## Book Announcement

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Ansaldo, Umberto, Stephen Matthews and Lisa Lim (eds). 2007.  
*Deconstructing Creole*. (Typological Studies in Language 73.)  
Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins. xii, 292pp.  
ISBN978 90 272 2985 4

[http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t\\_bookview.cgi?bookid=TSL%2073](http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t_bookview.cgi?bookid=TSL%2073)

*Deconstructing Creole* is a collection of studies aimed at critically assessing the idea of creole languages as a homogeneous structural type with shared and peculiar patterns of genesis.

Following up on the critical discussion of notions of ‘creole exceptionalism’ as historical and ideological constructs, this volume tests the basic assumptions that underlie current attempts to present ‘creole structure’ as a special type, from typological as well as sociohistorical perspectives. The sum of the findings presented here suggests that careful empirical investigation of input varieties and contact environments can explain the structural output *without* recourse to an exceptionalist genesis scenario. Echoing calls to dissolve the notion of ‘creolization’ as a special diachronic process, this volume proposes that theoretically grounded approaches to the notions of simplicity, complexity, transmission, etc. do not warrant considering so-called ‘creole’ languages as a special synchronic type.

## **SAAL Executive Committee Members 2006-2008**

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