

Content: **Portfolio of HPEN7007-Language Variation and Change**

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Table of Content

1. An analysis of my idiolect against Standard English.....	2
2. Isogloss dialect maps of key English phonological variations in native Chinese speakers....	8
3. An analysis of Drag Queen's Language.....	17
4. Metaphorical commentary on three poems.....	22

An analysis of my idiolect against Standard English

1. Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language in the world. It has developed into indigenised varieties of English under the influence of the United Kingdom or the United States. During its development, it has been constantly changing. People around the world speak English in ways of their own characteristics. According to Kachru's Three Circles of English, China is in the Expanding Circle, where English is learned as a foreign language at school and used only as a medium in international communication (Wikipedia). In the process of learning English as a second language, Chinese learners of English are inevitably influenced by their mother tongue. As comparative linguists believe that if a person learns a language with a phonetic system different from that of his/her native language, he/she may use some of the phonetics in his/her native language system in place of those of the language he is learning (Platt, 1984: 38). Of course, this phenomenon applies to Chinese-speaking English learners. Having learned English for most of my schooling in China, I inevitably speak English in the Chinese way.

This is my idiolect, the pattern I speak with my characteristic ways. And I share it with many other Chinese English speakers, though it may be strange in certain circumstances. In this essay, I intend to illustrate the differences between the two norms of the English language, namely British and American English. Based on this, I will find out where my pronunciation sits against these variations. And then, I will analyse the causes for the formation of my present English pronunciation.

2. Differences between the British and American English

However, I have been consciously trying to follow the norms of the speakers of in the Inner Circle of World Englishes, which are the British and American English. To illustrate my understanding of the differences between the two dominant groups of English speakers, I first collected the famous Gettysburg Address, spoken in American English. And then, by asking a British friend to read aloud the same speech transcript and record it, I have managed to collect the same speech delivered in British English. After that, I have made an IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) notated list of 30 words from the Gettysburg Address that demonstrates the differences between the two Englishes.

The following is the text of the original Gettysburg Address.

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate...we cannot consecrate...we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far

above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Below is a list of the words pronounced differently by the British and American versions of Gettysburg Address:

Words with letter “r” at the end of a syllable, such as four, score, fathers, liberty, are, war, endure, their, altogether, larger, poor, power, here, world, remember, never, forget, rather, work, far, before, honoured, measure, birth, earth.

Continent - Br English /¹kɒntɪnənt/ ; Am English /¹kɑːntɪnənt/

On - Br English /ɒn/; Am English /ɑːn/

Proposition - Br English/prɒpə¹zɪʃ(ə)n/; Am English /¹prɑːpə¹zɪʃn/

proper - Br English/'prɒpə(r)/; Am English/'prɑːpər/

Battle - Br English/¹bæt(ə)l/ ; Am English /¹bætl/

cannot - Br English/kɑːnɒt/; Am English /kænɒt/

Consecrate - Br English/¹kɒnsɪkreɪt/ ; Am English /¹kɑːnsɪkreɪt/

little - Br English/¹lɪt(ə)l/ ; Am English /¹lɪtl/

Rather - Br English/¹rɑːðə(r)/ ; Am English /¹ræðər/

Honoured - Br English/¹ɒnəd/; Am English /¹ɑːnərd/

Advanced - Br English/əd¹vɑːnst/; Am English/əd¹vænst/

task - Br English/tɑːsk/; Am English /tæsk/

last - Br English/lɑːst/; Am English /læst/

resolve - Br English/rɪ¹zɒlv/; Am English/rɪ¹zɑːlv/

God - Br English/gɒd/; Am English/gɑːd/

In British English, there is no /r/ sound in words ending with letter “r”, while in American English, the /r/ sound is clearly enunciated.

/ɒ/sound tends to be pronounced as /ɑː/ in “proposition, continent, proper, consecrate, resolve, God”.

In “battle and little”, /t/ tends to be omitted in American English, while in British English, it is very clearly pronounced.

Letter “a” is pronounced /ɑ:/ in “rather, cannot, task, last” in British English, but it is pronounced /æ/ in American English.

3. Where does my pronunciation sit against these variations?

To position my English pronunciations against these variations, I read aloud the Gettysburg Address in a natural manner and recorded it. I did not pronounce the words consciously to distinguish British and American English, so that I can ensure that it is my own natural idiolect. I have found my pronunciation tends to sound like the British. But some of my pronunciations are American. Among the pronunciations listed above, I pronounce:

3.1 Mixture of British and American English

Words with letter “r” at the end of a syllable without making the /r/ sound, like the British do, in “four, score, fathers, liberty, are, war, endure, their, altogether, larger, poor, power, here, world, remember, never, forget, rather, work, far, before, honoured, measure and birth”. But I pronounced “forget” and “earth” with the /r/ sound, like the Americans.

Continent - Br English /¹kɒntɪnənt/

On - Am English /ɑ:n/

Proposition - Br English /prəpə¹zɪʃ(ə)n/

proper - Br English /¹prɒpə(r)/

Battle - Br English /¹bæt(ə)l/

cannot - Am English /kænɒt/

Consecrate - Br English /¹kɒnsɪkreɪt/

little - Br English /¹lɪt(ə)l/

Rather - Br English /¹rɑːðə(r)/

Honoured - Br English /¹ɒnəd/

Advanced - Br English /əd¹vɑːnst/

task - Br English /tɑːsk/

last - Br English /lɑːst/

resolve - Br English /rɪ¹zɒlv/

God - Br English /gɒd/

3.2 Other pronunciation problems

In addition to the above pronunciations, I have some problems in pronouncing the words ending with /l/ sound, such as “milk”, “battle” and “little”. I tend to pronounce /l/ sound something like /ou/.

4. Reasons for the noted differences

4.1 Formation of my mixed British and American pronunciation

I am very interested in language variation and change, as I have been conscious of distinguishing British English and American English. I personally favour Br. English, because when I was in college, I was amazed by the accent of my Oral English teacher, a lady from east of England, who speak with beautiful RP (Received Pronunciation), that is considered as standard for British English. Therefore, I have been consciously imitating her English accent in college, and following the accent of British speakers, such as the BBC and the Oxford Union in my later English studies. However, during my college I also took another English course - *Family Album USA*, which is a television course teaching English on an example of American everyday life. Engaged in following the speeches in the course, my English was unconsciously influenced by the American English. Also, later in my later, I made some friends from America and Canada. Although I had been trying to stick to British English, some of the American pronunciation have entered and embedded my English phonetic system.

4.2 Negative transfer of my native language

Before I received college education, I made pronunciation mistakes that are common among most Chinese-speaking English learners. The following are some typical examples of them.

4.2.1 /p/and/b/

When the Chinese English learners pronounce the two consonants that are at the end of a word, they unconsciously add a vowel /ə/ or /u/ after these two consonants to make it what they consider a complete syllable. This is because the Chinese characters are monosyllabic, so every character is always pronounced with a consonant plus a vowel, with very few exceptions. A word ending in a consonant sounds unnatural to Chinese speakers. Therefore, they tend to add a vowel after the consonant. For instance, they say sheep /ʃ i : p ə/, cab/kæbə/, or /kæbu/, instead of /kæb/ in RP.

4.2.2 /f/and/v/

Since there is no fricative /v/ in Chinese phonetics, when /v/ appears at the end of a word, native Chinese speakers use /f/ for it, and when /v/ appears at the beginning of a word, it is replaced by /w/. Examples are “very/’feri/ or /’we·ri/ rather than RP [’veri/], van/fæn/or/wæn/ rather than RP /væn/, halve /hɑ:f/ instead of RP /hɑ:v/ and five/faif/ instead of RP /faiv/.”

4.2.3 /θ/and/ð/

Unvoiced consonant /θ/ and voiced consonant /ð/ do not exist in the Chinese phonetic system, so many Chinese English learners will use other sounds in Chinese to replace them. The most commonly used alternatives include /s/, /z/ or /t/, /d/, as in examples: three/sri/or/t'ri-/ instead of RP /θri:/, thin/sin/or/tin/ instead of RP /θin/.

4.2.4 /m/, /n/, /l/ and /ŋ/

Chinese English speakers have difficulty distinguishing between /m/ and /n/, and they usually pronounce both sounds with their mouth shut, especially when they appear at the end of a word. This way, /m/ and /n/ are pronounced the same. Some Chinese often use /l/ to replace /n/ that appear at the beginning of a word. For some Chinese speakers, they ignore the consonant /ŋ/ at all, which is replaced by /m/ or /n/ in their English pronunciation. Examples are saint/seimt/or/seiənm/ rather than RP /seint/; garden/gɑ:dm/ or /gɑ:dəm/ rather than RP /gɑ:dn/; not/lot/ rather than RP /not/; morning/'mɔ:lim/ or /'mɔ:li/ rather than RP /'mɔ:nɪŋ/.

As for my problem in pronouncing the words ending with /l/ sound, such as “milk”, “battle” and “little”, I would make some analysis to overcome it. The /l/ sound is called the “alveolar lateral approximant.” It is called the light L when it comes before the vowel or diphthong in the syllable. It is called the dark L when it comes after the vowel or diphthong in a syllable. I am OK with the light L. I should bear in mind that when making this sound, the tongue is placed against the upper teeth and the air is pushed around the sides of the mouth.

Thanks to the English Pronunciation course that I took at college, I had the opportunity to correct the majority of the typical mistakes made by the Chinese English speakers with the help of my professor. Additionally, due to my conscious effort to imitate native speakers' accent, I have avoided the major problems with my English pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

As a L2 learner of English, I have my own idiolect. I am in constant learning of English, and my objective is to achieve native-like English pronunciation and fluency. Also, as an educator of the English language, I believe it my duty to bring my students the standard English. Therefore, I will try to follow the norms of native English speakers.

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Isogloss dialect maps of key English phonological variations in native Chinese speakers

1. Introduction

Of all aspects of English language learning, phonology is of the greatest difficulty. Although, after many years of learning, many native Chinese learning English have acquired a large amount of lexical and grammatical knowledge, they still speak the language with Chinese characteristic accents. This is mainly because Chinese and English belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family and the Indo-European language family respectively, which differ vastly from each other in their phonetic systems (Jia Yuan, Li Aijun, Zheng Qiuyu, 2013). During the process of English learning, the negative transfer of their native language influences the acquisition of their English phonology.

What makes English pronunciation learning even more complicated for the Chinese is that a number of dialects are spoken in different parts of the vast land of China. Though they can be basically grouped into seven systems, namely Mandarin, Wu, Gan, Hakka, Xiang, Min, and Yue (Cantonese) dialects (see Figure 1), they differ further from each other in numerous minor places. The negative transfer of their dialects causes significant variations in English pronunciation in each of the different dialect regions.



Figure 1. Isogloss dialects map of Chinese (Pinterest)

They are different from each other lexically, phonologically, and grammatically, with the differences particularly enormous in phonology (Zhai Honghua, Zhao Jiling, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this assignment is focused on some key English phonological variations in native Chinese speakers in various dialect regions, and to illustrate them through isogloss dialect maps.

2. Literature review

2.1 Dialectology

According to Wikipedia, “Dialectology is the scientific study of linguistic dialect, a sub-field of sociolinguistics. It studies variations in language based primarily on geographic distribution and their associated features”. The earliest study of English dialectology is dated back to the 1300s, when people began to be conscious of the English dialects spoken in different places in Britain. Since then, this field of study had been much researched in other parts of Europe. In response to Dieth’s criticism that Britain lacked studies in this field, scholars in Britain had published large amounts of works on dialects in Britain in the 19th century, such as the English Dialect Dictionary and the English Dialect Grammar in 1905, Survey of English Dialects, Linguistic Survey of Scotland, the great Linguistic Atlas of England and Linguistic Atlas of Scotland.

2.2 Manchester Model

One of the modern research projects about the English dialectology in the UK is the Manchester Model. It is carried out by students of Linguistics and English Language at the University of Manchester. They conducted dialect survey by asking their friends and family to complete questionnaires. This project is becoming more influential as it involves more universities and people in the UK. Based on years of investigation, they have completed over 30 dialect maps. This assignment is based on the principle and methods of this model. Enlightened by these dialect maps, I intend to draw the isogloss dialect maps of some key phonological variations of English in China.

2.3 Negative transfer

As I travel and teach English across China, I notice that speakers in different parts of the country pronounce the same English words differently. For example, students in Yunnan province often confuse the pronunciation of /n/ with /l/ in words where vowels follow these sounds, as in “nice”. I presume that this is linked to the special pronunciation of the local dialect, as the students habitually apply the phonetics in their local dialects to their English pronunciations. And I believe that such negative transfer of the local dialects to English also take place in other dialect regions.

“Language transfer is the application of linguistic features from one language to another by a bilingual or multilingual speaker” (Wikipedia). Chinese and English are vastly different languages, with huge differences between them. Before Chinese students start learning English, they have already acquired Chinese as their native language. Therefore, negative transfer occurs when their established Chinese phonetic system cause mistakes in their English pronunciation.

3. Key English variations in different dialect regions of China

As mentioned above, there are seven dialect regions in China, namely Mandarin, Wu, Gan, Hakka, Xiang, Min, and Yue (Cantonese) dialect regions (see Figure 1). Due to the complicated varieties of Chinese, English variations in these regions are too many; also, because of the limited space in this assignment, I choose some typical English variations in some of China's dialect regions.

3.1 Mandarin dialect region

3.1.1 Long and short vowels

In English phonetics, there are five pairs of long and short vowels, which are /i:/ - /ɪ/, /ɜ:/ - /ə/, /ɑ:/ - /ʌ/, /ɔ:/ - /ɒ/, /u:/ - /ʊ/. However, in Mandarin region or even among all dialect regions, there are no such a distinction as long and short vowels. All Chinese vowels tend to be the same length. So, students in these regions neither pronounce the short vowels short enough, nor long vowels long enough. Typical examples are /i/ and /u/, which they tend to pronounce as /i:/ and /u:/. So, when they say "bit" and "fit", they sound like "beat" and "feet".

3.1.2 /s/ and /z/ for /θ/ and /ð/

These two sounds are the most common ones that the Chinese students make mistakes with, because there are no such sounds in the whole Chinese phonetics system. Chinese students are awkward about the way they are pronounced - put the tip of your tongue between the upper and lower incisors and keep the tongue flat, and then squeeze the air between the tongue and the teeth, with the vocal cords not vibrating to make the /θ/ sound and vibrating to make the /ð/ sound. It is very hard for Chinese students to make these sounds correctly. Very often, they end up replacing these sounds with /s/ and /z/, as in pronouncing the words "thank" as /sæŋk/ (see Figure 2) and "though" as /zəu/.

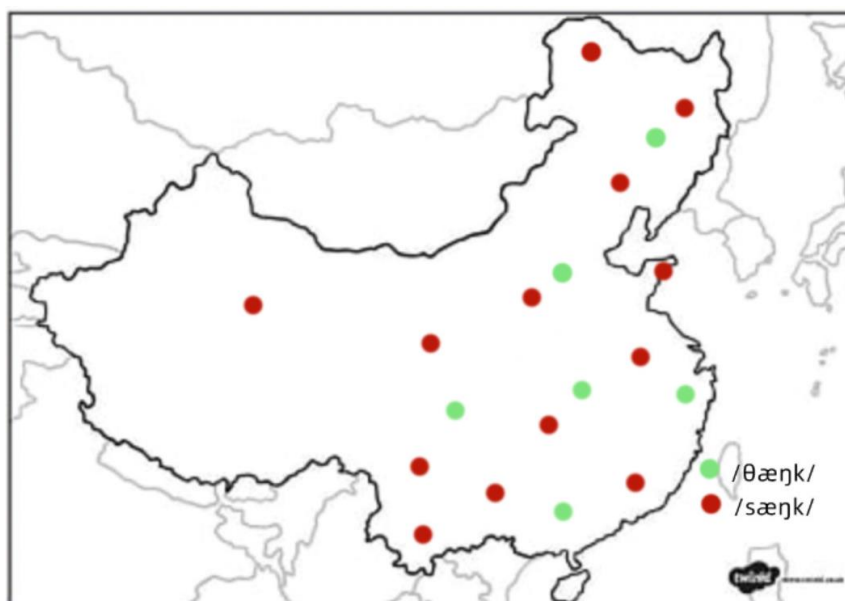


Figure 2. Isogloss dialects map of "thank"

3.2 Wu dialect region

3.2.1 /z/, /ts/, and /s/ for /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /ʃ/

What is common with the second pair of three sounds is the tip of the tongue is a bit curled at the front of the top of your mouth. However, none of the sounds in the Wu dialect are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled. This difference makes Wu people to produce /z/, /ts/, and /s/ more easily than /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /ʃ/. So, for instance, when pronouncing words “sugar/jugə/”, they say /sugə/(see figure 3). This is also an important feature that make Wu dialect different from the Chinese Mandarin which does distinguish /zh/ (/ʒ/), /ch/ (/tʃ/), /sh/ (/ʃ/) and /z/, /c/(/ts/), /s/ in its Pinyin system.

It needs to be pointed out that this feature is not unique in Wu dialect. It also exists in southwestern China, particularly in Sichuan province. Therefore, native Chinese in Sichuan have the same English variations.

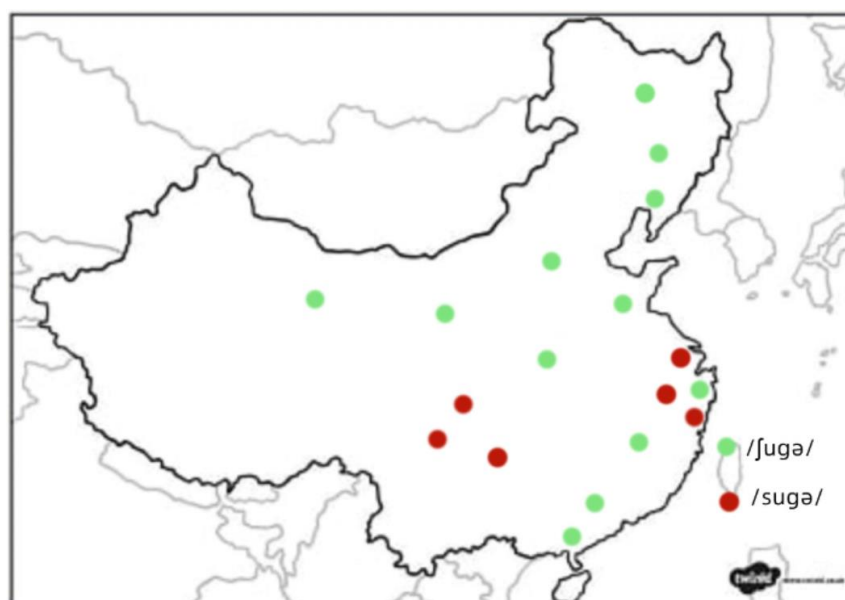


Figure 3. Isogloss dialects map of “sugar”

3.3 Gan dialect region

3.3.1 /ŋ/ or /m/ for /n/

People in Gan (Jiangxi Province) often confuse /n/ and /ŋ/. When they pronounce /n/ which is at the end of a syllable, they tend to have two alternatives. Those in Pingxiang, Guixi, Anfu of Gan pronounce /ŋ/ for all words ending with /n/ and /ŋ/. For instance, when they say “山 /shan/” (meaning mountain) and “商/shang/” (meaning business), they pronounce both words as the same /ʃan/ sound. When this transfers to English, they say “pan” as /paŋ/ rather than /pan/(see Figure 4). Those in Dongxiang, Linchuan, Yihuang of Gan use /m/ sound to replace /n/ for all words ending with /n/. For instance, they pronounce “站/zhan/” (meaning stand) as something like /tsam/. When this negatively transfers to English pronunciation, they say fan /fæm/ instead of /fæn/ in Dongxiang, Linchuan, Yihuang and fan /fæn/ in Pingxiang, Guixi, Anfu.

The tendency of pronouncing /ŋ/ rather than /n/ also appear in some other southern provinces in China, such as Yunnan and Guangxi.

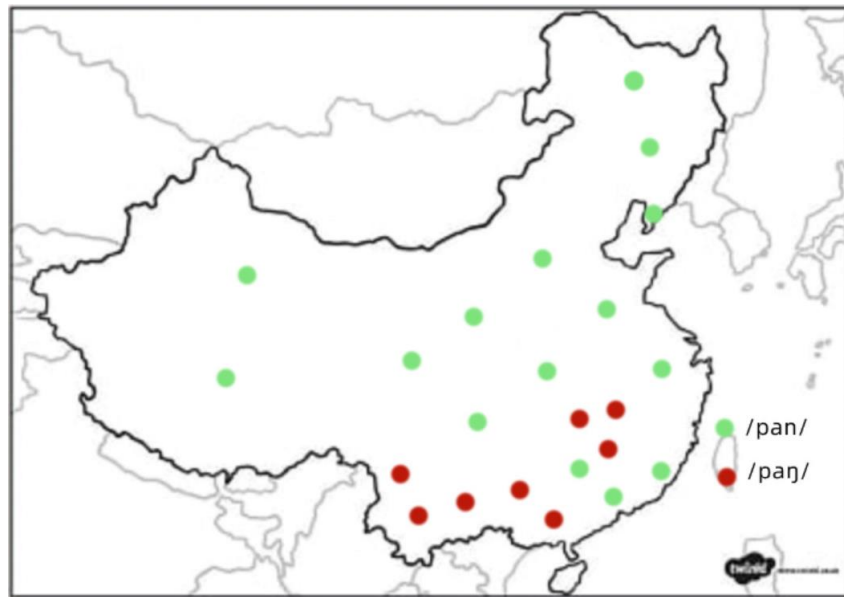


Figure 4. Isogloss dialects map of “pan”

3.4 Hakka dialect region

3.4.1 /n/ for /ŋ/

Hakka dialect and English both have nasal /ŋ/, but the distribution of this phoneme in syllables is different: /ŋ/ in Hakka can appear at both the beginning and the end of a syllable, while in English /ŋ/ does not appear at the beginning of any words. There is no problem for this sound in most cases except the /in/, because Hakka dialect has /in/ sound but no /iŋ/ sound. So, when /ŋ/ is at the end of a word, like “sing”, or in the middle, like “English”, Hakka English learners pronounce /n/ to replace /ŋ/. Another typical example is the word “singer”/siŋə/, which is generally mispronounced as /'sinə/. The wrong articulation shows that most Hakka English learners cannot distinguish /ŋ/ from /n/.

Such a variation also appears in Yunnan and Gan.

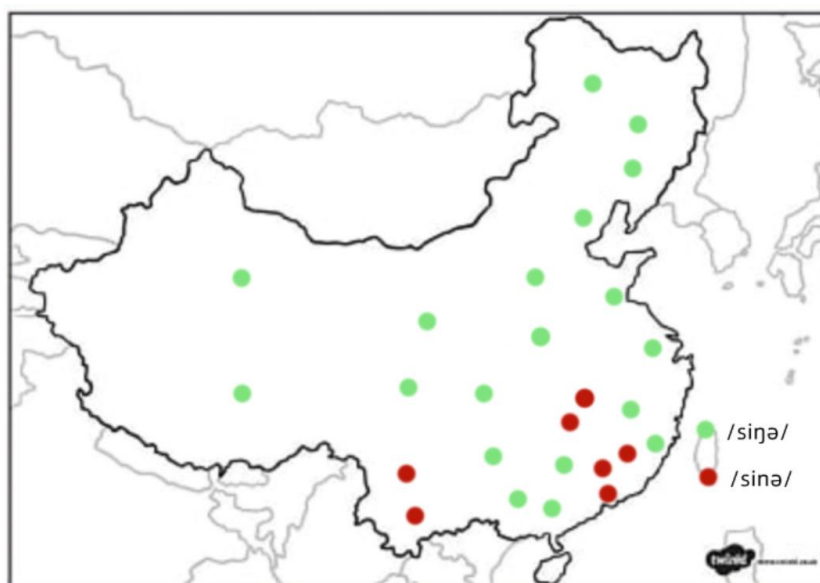


Figure 5. Isogloss dialect map of “singer”

3.4.2 /v/ for /w/

Another easily mistaken English phoneme by Hakka English learners are the approximant /w/. It is inclined to be pronounced as the voiced labiodental /v/, a fricative. It is very likely that when they are saying “very well”, /'veri 'vel/ is produced. This is a common mistake for all native Chinese speakers, as there is no the voiced labiodental /v/ in the any of the Chinese dialects.

3.5 Xiang dialect region

3.5.1 /e/ for /æ/

Again, I should point out that this is a much more common problem with most of the Chinese English learners, as there is no such a sound as the back vowel /æ/ in any of the Chinese dialects. Learners in Xiang dialect region have particular difficulty in pronouncing /æ/; they pronounce it either like the front vowel /e/, or produce something like “爱”/ai/ sound in Chinese. For example, many students make the same pronunciation /bed/ for both “bed”/bed/ and “bad”/bæd/.

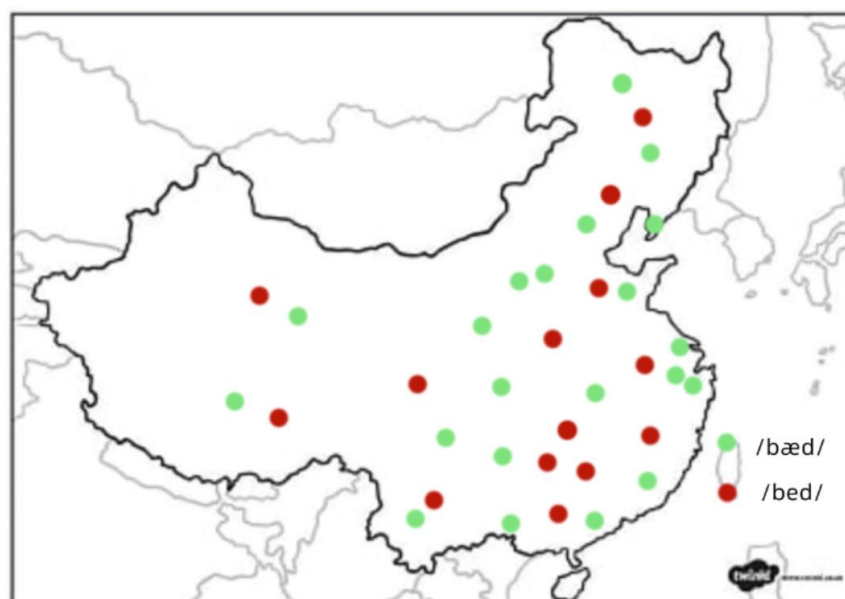


Figure 6. Isogloss dialect map of “bad”

3.6 Southwestern mandarin dialect region

3.6.1 /l/ for /n/

My investigation has revealed the pattern of pronouncing the word “nice”. /nais/ is pronounced by 90% of the speakers in the northern provinces of China. Speakers in these places basically have no difficulty in pronouncing this word correctly. It is because they have no problem distinguishing these sounds in Mandarin which they speak as their common language.

However, in the southern provinces, particularly Sichuan, Yunnan and Hunan, 40% speakers tend to pronounce “nice” as /lais/. They cannot distinguish /l/ and /n/ in English words because they do not have such distinction in their local dialects. For example, they pronounce “奶奶/nainai/” (meaning grandmother) as /lailai/, “男人/nanren/” (meaning man) as /lanren/.

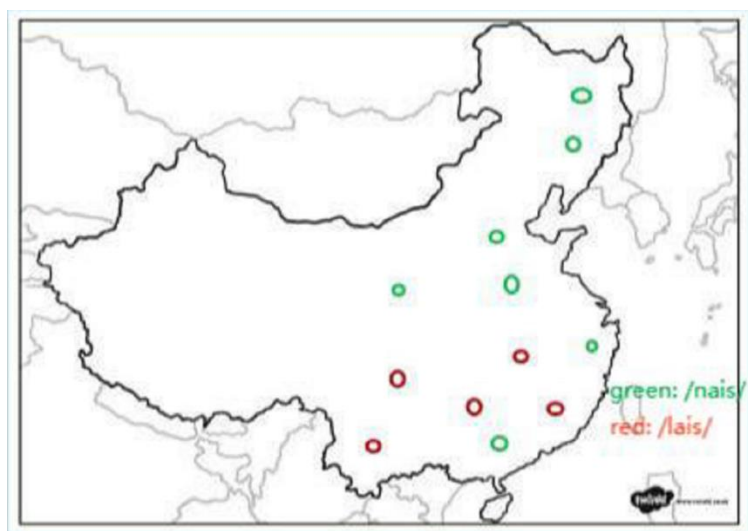


Figure 7. Isogloss dialect map of “nice”

3.6.2 /n/ for /ŋ/

Another sound that is often mispronounced Southwestern Mandarin dialect region is the /ŋ/, because in the dialects of most southern provinces, such as Yuannan and Jiangsu, there is no /ŋ/ sound. Take as example, “亲情/qinqiŋ/” in standard Mandarin (meaning family love) is pronounced as /qinqin/ (meaning kiss) in Yuannan and Jiangsu dialects. However, in standard Chinese - Mandarin, /ŋ/ and /in/ are clearly distinguished. For this reason, they negatively transfer their dialect pronunciation to their English pronunciation. This is especially the case in rural areas where local dialects are prevalent.

4. The impact of education in improving the English pronunciation

During the process of the study, I also find that English variations tend to happen less in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Nanjing, where English education quality is high, and Mandarin is well practiced. In these cities, English teachers are well informed of the negative transfer of the local dialects through their training and research work. Therefore, they can adopt various teaching methods to improve the students' English pronunciation. For instance, they create English pronunciation profiles for each of their students since they start the English course and provide them with tailored guidance. Also, in big cities, students have access to various English speaking opportunities, such as the English corner, English speaking competitions, English dubbing competitions; they also have rich online learning resources, such as English songs, English films and mobile English learning apps. All these have achieved effective results in improving their English pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

The negative transfer of the local dialect is significant. As shown in the research, the English consonants are more influenced than vowels. Through this research I have gained an in-depth understanding of the negative transfer of various Chinese dialects to English phonetics. In future English teaching, I will attach greater importance to the negative transfer effect of dialects on English pronunciation. As for the language policy, I suggest that China should launch English teaching reform, and actively develop pronunciation teaching methods to improve Chinese learners' English pronunciation in local dialect regions.

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Figure 1. Isogloss dialects map of Chinese (Pinterest):
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/286049013820914864/>

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An Analysis of Drag Queen's Language

1. Introduction

The feminists have been fighting against the traditional patriarchal order in many battlefields. In field of linguistics, they believe that men have built an oppressing and exclusive social order through the use of language. They bitterly expressed their criticism that "it has been the dominant group - in this case, males - who have created the world, invented the categories, constructed sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which is in their interest" (Cameron, 1980: 142). Such language traps are common in our media, such as television, the Internet, the books and everyday language. For instance, it is not realistic and ridiculous to say that "Man is a mammal which breastfeeds his young and experiences difficulty in giving birth." Feminists attack such language because they become aware of them and develop language that can objectively represent the reality.

What the feminists are doing share something in common with what the drag queens have been using their unique language. Under the influence of postmodern culture since the 1960s, many unique subcultures have been exerting their impact on the mainstream culture and playing an increasingly important role in constructing a multicultural world. Drag queen subculture is a typical example of them. As a popular queer reality show in America, the languages used by the drag queens in *Rupaul's Drag Race* contain lots of vulgar expletives, sex-related expressions, strange online catchwords and all kinds of language variants about the queer community. An important feature of their use of language is that it blurs the gender boundary of traditional male and female dichotomy.

In this assignment, I will examine the language used by drag queens in *RuPal's Drag Race*. The English-language programme contains lots of gendered language about the queer community. I will analyse how drag queens' unique gender identity is constructed in their speech act.

2. Conceptual themes

2.1 Gender bias in language

Feminist critical linguists believe that there are asymmetries and inconsistencies in the language we use. Such language has been evolved throughout history that define the limits of femininity and masculinity. If we look at this phenomenon in a wider concept of gender, which include the LGBT+, we can find that the historically evolved language do not apply to the LGBT+ community, either. Like Cameron argues (1985:69) that "One attacks these discourses primarily by becoming aware of them and by developing rival discourses (ways of representing) that people will eventually incorporate into their own method of dealing with reality." Far from uncovering language asymmetries and inconsistencies, LGBT+ are just trying to be visible and heard by expressing themselves in the language that they think comply with their real identity.

2.2 Gender identity

(Laurel Wamsley, 2021) argues that “Gender identity is one's own internal sense of self and their gender, whether that is man, woman, neither or both. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not outwardly visible to others. For most people, gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth, the American Psychological Association notes. For transgender people, gender identity differs in varying degrees from the sex assigned at birth”. On the basis of this understanding of gender identity, we need to understand that this is the way these people are themselves, when they express their gender externally, whether by how they behave, how they are dressed, how they make their voice or by other perceived characteristics. We need also to have the knowledge that although our world has the traditional gender dichotomy of masculine or feminine, what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

2.3 *Rupaul's Drag Race*

RuPaul's Drag Race is the first American reality competition television series. The founder of the TV show is RuPaul who plays the role of host, mentor, and head judge for this series. A panel of judges, including RuPaul, Michelle Visage, an alternating third main judge of either Carson Kressley or Ross Matthews, and a host of other guest judges critique the contestants' progress throughout the competition. The judges decide whether the contestants advance to the next stage or be eliminated from competition through selection of their various talents and skills, such as drag, cosmetics, costume and performance. All these are done by the contestants themselves. The winner should demonstrate the best of their Charisma, Uniqueness, Nerve and Talent. A major part of their performance shall be realised through their language.

2.4 Drag queen

According to Barret (1998), drag queens are gay men that give their performance at gay bars dressed in women's costume. This is an incomplete definition because not just gay men, but also lesbians, transgenders, even heterosexual people can cross-dress themselves and do “drag”. “Drag” is a performance of gender. It can serve to inspire the discussion about gender boundaries in theatre, politics and society; it is art, as it blurs the gender boundary by creativity. It incorporates various elements, such as gender, racial background, and aesthetics and artistically reproduce them in a new form. From the perception of drag queens themselves, they recreate themselves and there is no limit to this creation.

3. Drag queens' language in *Rupaul's Drag Race*

3.1 Englishes used by drag queens

The language of the drag queens is diverse and mixed because they come from various regions and are of various educational, cultural and racial backgrounds. Of all the seasons of the programme I have watched, the drag queens in *Rupaul's Drag Race* speak Standard American English, Southern US English, African American Vernacular English, Gay Men's English and Stereotyped White Women's

English. Not all the drag queens speak a mixture of all the mentioned Englishes, they speak any one of them or a mixture of any of them. For example, Silky in Season 11, a black man coming from the south of US, speak African American Vernacular dialect with strong Southern US English accent; also, he speaks with the style of Gay Men's English. Another contestant, Brooke Lynn, speak a mixture of Standard American English, Gay Men's English and Stereotyped White Women's English. Drag queens speak the varieties of English interchangeably, and they also acquire the English from each other. However, as Barrett (1998) pointed out that such use of language "does not reflect the natural speech of any actual white woman, gay man, or African American. Rather, the styles reflect prevailing stereotypes concerning the speech of members of these three social groups" (p. 145). By using these stereotypes, drag queens often challenge the male and female gendered linguistic system in the heterosexual society.

3.2 Pronouns used by drag queens

Though most of the drag queens are male, all the pronouns, except "I, me, my, you, your", used by them in the programme are "she and her". For example, in the 11th season, Ariel Versace's comments on Soju: "I know Soju from online. I know that SHE is not much a performer." Apart from referring to others, they also use "she and her" to refer to themselves. The example is in Silky's self-introduction to the audience: "Introduced to some, acquainted to others, SHE is the creamy, the dreamy, the southern belle HERSELF, and SHE goes by the delicious name of Silky Nutmeg Ganache." In addition to this, "girl, sister, honey" are frequently used by the drag queens to address each other. They use such pronouns to construct their unique gender identity as drag queens, who are usually male, and who perform as female by using drag clothing and makeup. This way they imitate and often exaggerate female gender signifiers and gender roles for entertainment purposes.

So why the pronouns "she and her" used for the related category of female gender, and "he or him" for the male are used differently by drag queens? It is because this is the reality with the drag queens. In the internal sense of self, not all people consider themselves as either man or woman. They may consider themselves as neither man nor woman, or both. The traditional gender dichotomy of man and woman is not for gender minorities. In the case of the drag queens in *Rupaul's Drag Race*, when they are performing women on stage, they like others to consider themselves beautiful and feminine and address them as "she and her". If the judges or the audience do not think they are not feminine enough and refer them as "he or him", they may not be happy.

3.3 Other gendered language used by drag queens

By addressing themselves "she or her", it does not mean that they should speak absolutely like a woman. The drag queens do not deliberately cover up the other side of themselves as man. This is reflected by the gendered vulgar expletives and sexual expressions, which are also used a lot by the drag queens in the programme. To reveal the realness of the programme, such language as "ass, fuck, damm, bitch, hell, pussy, shit, whore, ho (slang for whore)" are kept by the programme directors rather than eliminated. These vulgar expletives and sexual expressions are stereotyped languages used by man, while women are supposed to behave properly and to use polite language.

Such use of language not just breaks the stereotypes of man and woman, but also blurs the boundary of gender.

It needs to be noted that the message conveyed in these languages depends on the context in which they are used. For instance, in 9th episode in season 11, when Vanjie told a joke, but nobody laughed, he said: "Why you all whores aren't laughing?" Here he used "whores" (an offensive word used to refer to a woman who has sex with a lot of men) to refer to other drag queens, not to really offend them, but to express humour. And nobody was offended because they understand that they are in an entertainment situation; another example is "Now you belong to a sisterhood of badass bitches!" by RuPaul when he welcomed the participants to his programme. Instead of a curse, power ladies and gay men use "badass bitches" to express a strong position against the male and heterosexual supremacy, when addressing themselves or others.

4. Conclusion

Language expresses our thoughts and knowledge, while at the same time it limits how we understand ourselves and how we perceive reality in the world. Thus, sexist language constructs a sexist world. However, with the recognition and legitimization of the LGBT+ people, our original language system is not sufficient to address the identity and needs of this community. Before equal right movements of LGBT+ people make any progress in terms of linguistics, what we can do is to help people communicate accurately and respectfully with one another. We should use gender identity terms, including pronouns properly, as this is a crucial way to show our courtesy and acceptance. As Alex Schmider, associate director of transgender representation at GLAAD, puts it, when comparing using someone's correct pronouns to pronouncing their name correctly – "a way of respecting them and referring to them in a way that's consistent and true to who they are." In conclusion, the drag queens use such gendered language to construct their unique gender identity and challenge traditional binary understanding of masculinity and femininity. It has provided further evidence for the view that the shape of language is conditioned by the functions which it serves. We should have a developmental view on our language system and not let it limit our understanding of the world.

Reference

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Metaphorical commentary on three poems

1. Introduction

Before analysing metaphors in the poems, I would like to review some basic theories about metaphor that is related to the metaphors in the poems.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 5: “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. From this definition, we know that metaphor is conceptual. It is used in our language to shape, structure and define that concept and our experience that it refers to.

The structure of all metaphors consists of two different subjects, which are the principal subject (frame) and subsidiary subject (the metaphorical word). The principal subject acts as the frame of a sentence that can be understood literally, while the metaphorical word is used to carry the underlying idea which the metaphor expresses. We can find both similarity and difference between the principal and subsidiary subjects. The similarity and difference exist to turn literal language into figurative language through metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that we define or construct a conceptual metaphor by the physical experience of our body. We gain concepts of the world through our physical senses, that is, what our body experiences with the concrete objects. These experiences provide us the physical foundation to understand metaphors, which share similarities within our bodily experience, through which we can understand more abstract things, such as emotions or ideas.

In this assignment, I intend to use the metaphor theories to analyse the metaphor used in the three poems: *The Marriage* by Anne Stevenson's, *The Ache of Marriage* by Denise Levertov and *Men Improve with the Years* by W.B. Yeats.

2. Metaphorical analysis of three poems

2.1 *The Marriage* by Anne Stevenson's

In the poem, “The Marriage”, differences between men and women are subtly and playfully described by the author. It also depicted the difficulties to unify the different sexes inherent in men and women. As the couple position themselves to sleep comfortably in bed, they also reveal a vivid, comprehensive, and universal picture of marriage, which are portrayed through master use of metaphors.

“They will fit, she thinks,
but only if her backbone
cuts exactly into his rib cage,”

In the above stanza, the principal subject of “cut” is “her backbone”, and the subsidiary subject (the metaphorical word), though it is not explicitly stated, is “gear”. “Her backbone” and “gear” share similarity in that the wife thinks “Her backbone” can match into her husband’s rib cage, just gears cut into each other. This metaphor is used to depict the wife and the husband pressing hard to each other. “Cut” is potentially understandable in this line because it discovers the similarities between the two concepts - “her backbone” and “gear”.

Similar use of metaphor is in the following:

“and only if his knees
dock exactly under her knees
and all four
agree on a common angle.”

“Dock” originally is a noun, which means “an enclosed area of water in the harbour to bring a ship or boat”. In this stanza, it is used as a verb to describe the action of bringing the husband’s knee into that of the wife’s, when they sleep facing the same direction. the principal subject should be “knee”, though not shown, and the subsidiary subject (the metaphorical word) is “harbour”. “knee” and “harbour” share similarity because they both can store something.

2.2 *The Ache of Marriage* by Denise Levertov

The “ache” is a typical example of what Lakoff and Johnson propose as defining or structuring concept of metaphor from our bodily experience. By means of physical feeling of a continuous dull pain, the abstract concept as aching marriage, is understood vividly.

The same use of metaphor applies to the next stanza:

“thigh and tongue, beloved,
are heavy with it,
it throbs in the teeth”

Endless argument in the author's marriage is conceptualised as the aching tongue, and the thighs ache because the heavy burden of marriage is placed upon their shoulders. The image of bodily pain is also depicted in "it throbs in the teeth", building on the meaning of sickness and 'ache'.

"It is leviathan and we
in its belly
looking for joy, some joy
not to be known outside it"

In this stanza, the author uses "leviathan" as a metaphor for her marriage and she and her husband are in its belly. Apparently, the principal subject (frame) is "marriage" and subsidiary subject (the metaphorical word) is "leviathan". This creative metaphor indicates that the couple cannot escape from their unhappy marriage and expect less and less happiness from it.

"two by two in the ark of
the ache of it."

In the final stanza, "ark" is a metaphor for their marriage. "ark" reminds us of the Noah's Ark. Levertov uses the image of the 'ark', perhaps to seek destruction of their marriage from which they can begin to rebuild.

2.3 *Men Improve with the Years* by W.B. Yeats.

"*Men Improve with the Years*" by W.B. Yeats is also a poem that is rich in the use of metaphors. It narrates the experience of aging, for the male figure in particular.

"I am worn out with dreams;
A weather-worn, marble triton
Among the streams;"

"Worn out" here is used as a polysemy. It literally means to become thin or no longer able to be used, usually because it has been used too much. A related sense of this is to make yourself/sb feel very tired. It is used in the latter sense to describe the man being reduced by fatigue and gives us a sense of his wholeness being chipped away by the "streams".

“Streams” metaphorically refers to force of time and hardship of life. Time past shares similar concept as streams/water because the latter has the power to wear stones, as in the famous proverb, “dripping water wears the stone.”

Also, the author metaphorically describes himself as a “triton”. This creative metaphor gives us the impression that he should have a lot of pride and glory in his youth, but he is now weather worn. It thus creates similarities between the man and a triton.

“O would that we had met

When I had my burning youth!”

“Burning youth” here is also used as metaphor. In this line, the author expresses a regretful and pitiful emotion as he realises that his youth is past. “Burning” literally meaning very hot and strong, refers to wood producing flames and heat. When this sense is to describe youth, it gives us the concept that youth is full of desire, love and passion, which is related to the sense of wood burning. Such is abstractionist use of metaphor. Abstractionist metaphor is based on pre-existing similarities in meanings (hot flame of wood and passionate youth).

3. Conclusion

Firstly, when analysing metaphors, we should bear in mind some basic properties of metaphor, such as principal subject and subsidiary subject. We need to identify both the similarity and the difference between the principal and subsidiary subjects. Secondly, many metaphors derive directly or metaphorically from our physical experience. Typically, we make sense of the nonphysical in terms of the physical. Thirdly, sometimes, it is hard to distinguish metaphors from other figures of speech, such as metonymy, polysemy and homonymy. We should know that non-metaphorical literal language can be understood directly rather than that has a potential to be understood by means of something else. Lastly, to judge if a figure of speech is a creative metaphor, we should understand that a creative metaphor creates similarities instead of formulating similarities that are already there.

Reference

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George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 6, 4. For a summary of several of the most important arguments in this book, see

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 'Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77 (1980), 453-86.

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Max Black, 'Metaphor', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n.s. 55 (1955), 273-94 (p. 291) (repr. in Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 25-47) (all further references are to the earlier publication).

Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. xiii.

Paul Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', *New Literary History*, 6 (1974), 95-110 (p. 99).

Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor*, The Critical Idiom series, 25 (London: Methuen, 1972; repr. Routledge, 1989), p. 60.

The work of Black, Beardsley and Ricoeur on metaphor is in the fields of philosophical aesthetics, poetics and rhetoric; whereas Lakoff and Johnson's work is in philosophy of language and cognitive linguistics. There is also an historical difference for much of the work of the former group is written before 1980, whereas that of Lakoff and Johnson and others in what Gerard Steen calls the 'cognitive turn' in metaphorology is largely post-1980. Gerard Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature: An Empirical Approach* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 3-5.