

**ACCEPTABILITY AND AUTHORITY IN CHINESE AND NON-CHINESE ENGLISH
TEACHERS' JUDGMENTS OF LANGUAGE USE IN ENGLISH WRITING BY
CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

by

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Abstract

This study solicits Chinese and non-Chinese English teachers' judgments of linguistic (un)acceptability in writing by presenting teachers with essays by Chinese university students and asking them to comment on unacceptable features. Studies of error and variation in first and second language writing studies have often focused on errors in writers' texts (see Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), but recent sociolinguistic perspectives used in this study take a broader view, considering variations from standard written English in light of the globalization of English. These perspectives, including world Englishes (Canagarajah, 2006; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010), English as a Lingua Franca (Horner, 2011; Jenkins, 2014), and translingual (Canagarajah, 2013; Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011) approaches to L2 writing, are applicable to academic English writing in international contexts. This study thus adopts a non-error-based approach to teachers' reactions to nonstandard language use in Chinese students' English writing, using the construct of "acceptability" (Greenbaum, 1977).

The study includes two parts: first, it solicits a group (n=46) of Chinese (n=30) and non-Chinese (n=16) English language teachers' judgments of (un)acceptability by presenting teachers with seven essays by Chinese university students and asking them to comment on unacceptable features. Second, in follow-up interviews (n=20), the study examines teachers' explanations for accepting or rejecting features of students' writing and the ways in which they claim the authority to make these judgments.

Using these methods, the study is able to determine which lexical and grammatical features of the texts the Chinese and non-Chinese participants judge to be unacceptable, how participants react when they encounter putative features of Chinese English and English as a

Lingua Franca, and how they describe their authority to make judgments of linguistic unacceptability.

The study finds wide variation in the features of the texts that participants judge as unacceptable, and identifies some possible differing priorities in the Chinese and non-Chinese teachers' judgments. It also describes how participants from both groups claim authority in judgments, variously positioning themselves as mediators, educators, and language users. The study adds to a body of scholarship which suggests that the identification of "errors" in writing is highly variable and contextual.

Preface

This dissertation is the intellectual property of its author, Joel Heng Hartse. All research design, data collection, and analysis was done by the author, and the research was approved by the University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board (certificate H11-01966). Several sections of the dissertation have been published in slightly different form in other venues, described below. All portions of co-authored publications also appearing in the dissertation were solely written by Joel Heng Hartse.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation is in large part about the ways in which people in the position to judge academic writing make judgments about it, especially when they judge it to be in some way non-standard, and how this is impacted by the transnational contexts in which teachers and students live and work. I cannot speculate as to whether I would have been able to write it more quickly, efficiently, or painlessly if the subject matter had not made me suspicious of many linguistic, rhetorical, and editorial decisions I have made. At various points during the writing of what would become this dissertation, I have been told both that my writing is good and that it is difficult to follow; I have been told that I have a clear academic voice and that I am trying too hard to write like someone I am not; I have been told that language I have used is too technical or not technical enough. When I submitted one of the dissertation chapters as an article to a major journal in my field (it was rejected), one of the reviewers wrote “izzat a word?” in response to a lexical item I took to be the only sensible choice for my meaning. During my doctoral studies, I published one book and co-wrote another, and had several articles accepted by prominent academic journals. Yet because of these contradictory comments, I have often questioned my ability as an academic writer and asked myself whether I can write for a scholarly audience at all. As one of my mentors is fond of saying, academic writing is a second language for everyone. And it seems we are all judged, often harshly and in contradictory ways, by a variety of judges, when writing in that language.

The contradictory responses I have had to my own writing have led me to the conclusion that the only reader I can hope to satisfy is myself — but they have also given me more insight into and interest in the ways that the readers of academic texts make these judgments. Of course, as an English language writing teacher myself, I am frequently called upon to make judgments of

my students' writing, and while I try to do so to the best of my ability (as those who made the contradictory comments about my own writing did), I am finally aware that making judgments about good writing, even — and especially — at the level of “small and common words” (Chen & Lee, 2009) is far from a simple, black-and-white matter.

This dissertation takes that reality as its starting point, and investigates it in a specific context. The context is academic English writing in higher education in the People's Republic of China, a context very much embedded in the internationalization both of the English language and of English-medium higher education. (My understanding of “academic English writing” is broad; I use the term to describe any English writing done at the postsecondary or scholarly level, but this study focuses on writing produced by Chinese college students in English writing courses or on exams.) The specific focus is how Chinese and non-Chinese English teachers make judgments about the unacceptability of language use that they view as non-standard in texts written by Chinese university students.

The spread of English in the contemporary world has been widely acknowledged, and many scholars have, especially in the last thirty years, explored the consequences and implications of this spread in many contexts from a number of perspectives. One area in which English is particularly important is the continually internationalizing domain of higher education. English writing in particular is a “practical tool” (You, 2006, p. 200) and a necessary resource for a large number of college and university students around the world. “English writing,” however, is not a monolithic skill set transferable from one social context to another; writing pedagogies and practices differ across various boundaries, and international students know too well that a well-written essay in an English writing class in their home country is not the same as a well-written TOEFL essay, nor a well-written term paper at an English-medium university, nor

a well-written refereed journal article in a particular discipline. As the transnational movement of students from one English-using context to another continues, and the reality of differences in standards, norms, and models of English is better understood, a reevaluation of second language (L2) writers' practices and their texts is in order. This study contributes to that reevaluation by investigating questions about how academic writing which deviates from a presumed standard written English (SWE) is received by those who read it – questions which are difficult to answer without crossing disciplinary, theoretical, and geographical boundaries.

Traditionally, a distinction has been made between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing and English as a Second Language (ESL) writing, and both have been seen as distinct from first-language writing in English (or L1 composition). Globalization in education and other domains has blurred these distinctions, however, and while decades of research on second language (L2) writing has produced useful results for educators, it is important to consider how “non-error-based” or “variation-based” approaches to second language writing can result in new knowledge and insights (see Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014), and in fact to look beyond the disciplinary boundaries of “second language writing” for new ways of understanding texts and the people who interact with them (see chapter 2 for a discussion of translingual writing, for example). Several such approaches have been advocated in recent years (described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation), and in this study I look at data about academic writing through the lenses of world Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), translingual writing, and language ideology.

1.1 Context of the study

The People's Republic of China, the context which this study investigates, offers challenges to current understandings of “English in the world” (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2005). There

have been many studies of English in China in recent years, ranging from explorations of English and identity (Lo Bianco, Orton, & Gao, 2010), the history of the language in the region (Bolton, 2003), ideologies in English textbooks (Adamson, 2002), and surveys of English education in Chinese-speaking areas (Feng, 2013). While China has been described as an EFL, or, to use Kachru's (1986) terminology from his model of WEs, an "Expanding Circle" context (in which English has limited usage in restricted domains, mainly for communicating with foreigners, and with reliance on the norms of "inner circle" standard English), the endorsement and appropriation of the language by the country's educational policymakers has blurred the lines between ESL and EFL, and the growing English-knowing, middle-class population of China blurs the lines between the "Expanding Circle" and the "Outer Circle" (that is, countries in which English has been widely appropriated and is used intranationally in many domains, such as Singapore and Nigeria). For China, the question of "what... English literacy means" remains open (You, 2006, p. 200), as educational policy now advocates the learning of English from grade three through university (Chao, Xue, & Xu, 2014; Nunan, 2003, p. 595) and English is increasingly used for a variety of purposes by young middle-class professionals (You, 2011).

I became interested in this research because of my experience working as a university English instructor in Mainland China. I did this for two years (2007-2009), and it was my first full-time, 'real' English teaching position. This experience had a profound impact on the way I see teaching, language, and the role of internationalization in education. (In fact, I had *no* previous opinion on some of these issues.) During my time in China, I began reading the literature on world Englishes, and China English in particular, so my reading of the literature and my professional life informed each other as I began to think about possible PhD research topics.

China's increased emphasis on English in recent years has coincided with the rise of

alternative theoretical approaches to non-native Englishes. Rather than viewing English use by Chinese (and other) second language speakers as potentially being error-laden or deviant from standard English, these perspectives – particularly WE and ELF – aim to objectively describe and advocate for varieties of English that differ from American or British norms. The two areas of most immediate relevance to this study are China English (CE) (from the WE paradigm) and ELF. CE and ELF were selected because research suggests that features of these types of English are likely to be present in the texts used in this study, and studies of reactions to CE and ELF in the *written texts* of Chinese English users have been almost nonexistent. These two research traditions are described below.

1.1.1 China English

English has long been regarded as an important foreign language in China, and educators have recognized the need to contextualize it in a way that accommodates local needs. Ge (1980) is credited with proposing the notion that China could have its own variety of English. He argues that “China English” should be recognized as necessary in Chinese-to-English translation; he cites terms such as “eight-legged essay,” “four modernizations,” and *baihua* (a vernacular Chinese literary movement) which do not exist in American or British English. He refers to these terms and other unique features of English developed in China as 中国英语 or “China English” rather than 中式英语 (“Chinese English,” also called “Chinese-Style English” or “Chinglish”), the latter being a mostly pejorative term that more often refers to learner error or, in recent years, inaccurately translated signage. Jiang (2003) suggests that Ge’s motivation was in part to replace the pejorative “Chinglish” with a positive term which matched the reality of the need for uniquely Chinese words in English. Although the notion of CE was developed independently of Kachru’s (1986) Three Circles model, it eventually found its home in the WE framework.

The distinction between “China English” and “Chinglish” has been crucial to Chinese scholars. Starting in the mid-1990s, papers distinguishing the two appeared in international journals, beginning with Jiang (1995), who argues that Chinglish is “a pidgin” or an interlanguage, which is “an unavoidable yet necessary stage on the way to learning English as a second or foreign language” for a Chinese student (p. 51). “China English,” on the other hand, is characterized by “a near-native yet Chinese accent,” words unique to the Chinese context, old-fashioned forms resulting from outdated materials, and a mixture of American and British norms (pp. 51-52). This distinction is also taken up by Dong (1995), Zhang (1997), Wei and Fei (2003), Jiang (2003), Yang (2006), and Cui (2006), and in recent years the existence of a legitimate “China English” as opposed to a stigmatized “Chinglish” has been largely accepted by many scholars and educators of English in China. More recently, He and Li (2009) and Xu (2010) have offered reviews of their efforts to clarify and define the meaning of CE. After synthesizing previous definitions, He and Li (2009) propose to define CE as a

performance variety of English which has the standard Englishes as its core but is colored with characteristic features of Chinese phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse pragmatics, and which is particularly suited for expressing content ideas specific to Chinese culture through such means as transliteration and loan translation. (p. 83)

Similarly, Xu (2010), refers to CE as

a developing variety of English, which is subject to ongoing codification and normalization processes. It is based largely on the two major varieties of English, namely British and American English. It is characterized by the transfer of Chinese linguistic and cultural norms at varying levels of language, and it is used primarily by Chinese for intra- and international communication. (p. 1)

Scholars have studied social attitudes about CE (e.g., Hu, 2005, Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002, Pan & Block, 2011) and made provisional attempts to define its linguistic features; the place of CE in relation to American, British, and other world Englishes (Hu, 2004) remains an area ripe for research. Studies of written CE have tended to emphasize its use in media (Cheng, 1992; Gao, 2001; Yang, 2005) and occasionally literature (Xu, 2010; Zhang, 2002) and the Internet (Fang, 2008; You, 2008, 2011), but have rarely been extended to academic writing. While the “Chinese style of English writing...has begun to be conceptually appreciated” by some scholars (You, 2004a, p. 256), studies of academic L2 writing in China have largely not adopted a CE focus. This study thus aims to address that gap by investigating participants’ reactions to putative features of CE (these features are described in Chapter 4).

1.1.2 English as a Lingua Franca

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is another important research tradition which has implications for the use of English in China. ELF is a research tradition which draws on WE scholarship but distinguishes itself from WE in several ways. While understandings of what the term ELF actually refers to may differ (see Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010), the classic definition of ELF is a “contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996, p. 240). As a concept, ELF has much in common with more generic references to “English as an international language” in that it attempts to describe the way in which English is used as a language of wider communication among many people of differing linguistic backgrounds across national contexts; in practice, however, ELF refers to a specific research tradition which focuses on empirical descriptions of the type of communication described in Firth’s definition, both in terms of linguistic features and communicative strategies.

ELF researchers have posited, in addition to pronunciation and pragmatic features of ELF, a set of grammatical features that may be typical of communication between nonnative speakers (first developed by Seidlhofer, 2004, based on preliminary analysis of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, and taken up by other ELF scholars such as Cogo & Dewey, 2012). How people react to these features has not been widely studied, though Y. Wang's (2013) study involving acceptability judgments (discussed further in Chapter 3) and her 2012 dissertation examined what she has called CHELF, or Chinese speakers' English as a Lingua Franca.

From an ELF perspective, it can be argued that most (if not all) Chinese speakers use English as a lingua franca, and thus it makes sense to investigate their language use from this perspective. It is only recently that ELF scholars have extended their research to academic writing (see a discussion of this in Chapter 2), and in general, discussions of ELF are beginning to move from simple "features" to more expansive inquiries into multimodal language practices (see Matsumoto, 2015). but for a study like this one, it is prudent not only to examine readers' reactions to potential CE but also to potential ELF usages in Chinese university students' written texts, since both of these traditions have important implications for Chinese English users' language and reactions to it. The features of ELF that have been described by ELF scholars are covered in Chapter 4.

1.2 Gaps

Broadly speaking, this study is situated in the gap between descriptive sociolinguistic studies in world Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and related approaches on the one hand, and second language writing (or simply writing studies) on the other. While sociolinguistics and contemporary writing research share similar concerns – particularly when it comes to forms,

functions, and contexts of language use – there has been little fruitful cross-pollination between these fields. Recent work by Lillis (2013) and Coulmas (2013) shows that this has a historical basis in sociolinguistics' privileging of spoken language over writing, but in the last few decades, the influence of sociolinguistic approaches on scholars who work with writing has been growing considerably (see McKay & Hornberger, 1996, and Hornberger & McKay, 2010).

Specifically, this study merges the concerns of descriptive sociolinguistic work in areas like world Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca with those of second language writing scholars interested in the unique features of L2 writers' texts. While the former is usually described in terms of variation or difference from standard English, usually with the goal of showing how non-standard (or non-Inner Circle) varieties are coherent and legitimate languages, the latter has traditionally approached L2 writers' texts as distinct from first language writers' texts in negative terms, such as being less complex or more error-laden (see Silva, 1993, and Hinkel, 2002).

The present study thus borrows both theoretically and methodologically from both approaches. This is described in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3; both sociolinguistics and writing studies have traditions of researching readers' reactions to nonstandard language use and the consequences of those reactions – acceptability judgments in sociolinguistics and error gravity studies in writing – and this study merges those two by adopting a sociolinguistic variation-based approach to readers' reactions to L2 writing. That is, in this study, I examine readers' reactions to putatively non-standard language use in academic English writing by Chinese university students, but without a preconceived notion of what counts as an error.

This allows the study to fill two important knowledge gaps: first, it allows us to examine, on a large scale, what different readers prioritize when they encounter language use they deem

nonstandard or unacceptable in academic writing. This is done in a bottom-up fashion, without predetermining “error” categories for research participants or showing them obviously unconventional sentences in a decontextualized questionnaire (a technique that has been common in both linguistic studies of acceptability – see Chapter 2 – and studies of error gravity in writing – see Chapter 3); instead, they read full essays and make judgments of lexical and grammatical use in context. Secondly, this more contextual approach allows an investigation of how and why readers react to features of non-standard varieties of English (specifically, Chinese English and English as a Lingua Franca) when they encounter it in its “natural habitat” of an authentic text.

Finally, when it comes to the question of both *what* judgments people make about language use and *why* they make them, studies of language ideology in sociolinguistics (e.g., Cameron, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 2012) have rarely been applied to studies of reactions to written language. This study addresses that gap by looking at participants’ perceptions of how they exercise the authority to make judgments about (written) language use; I view both of these *what* and *why* questions as being embedded in languages ideologies (described more in Chapter 2).

1.3 Research questions

In light of the existing gaps identified, this study focuses on acceptability judgments and participants’ accounts of how and why they make those judgments. These, then, are the research questions:

1. What lexical and syntactic features in Chinese student writing do Chinese and non-Chinese English teachers identify as unacceptable, and why?

2. How do participants react to chunks which evince features of either Chinese English or English as a Lingua Franca, and why?
3. By what authority do participants make judgments about the acceptability of English usage in writing?

To answer these questions, this study uses as its primary method of inquiry an acceptability judgment task (AJT) (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977; Higgins, 2003; Schütze, 2011; see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of AJTs) with follow-up interviews. Critically, unlike most “acceptability” studies in linguistics and related areas, which tend to use decontextualized sentences of stereotyped or unusual usage rather than language in context (e.g., a whole essay), this study asks participants to make their acceptability judgments of linguistic features in the context of an entire piece of writing (see Gupta, 1988, and Parasher, 1983). This is an innovation which broadens the concept of an acceptability judgment task for sociolinguistic research, allowing for participants’ subjective judgments to be analyzed both quantitatively, in the sense that the most frequently “marked” usages can be represented via descriptive statistics, and qualitatively, in that their judgments of acceptability will be accompanied by language data expressing their reasons for making the judgments. This study thus makes a contribution not only to knowledge about reactions to second language writers’ language use, but also to the methodology of studying these reactions in a variety of contexts.

1.4 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to some of the disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological issues involved in a study of this nature, touching on pressing issues involving sociolinguistics and second language writing and positioning the study as inspired by acceptability studies in sociolinguistics but moving toward a

more ideologically-inflected perspective.

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant theoretical literature related to the topic, including approaches to language difference and error in first and second language writing studies; the primary guiding assumptions of approaches to writing in the areas of WE, ELF, and translingual writing; the history and development of acceptability judgment research; and the relationship of language ideology and authority in language to acceptability judgments.

Ultimately, I argue that there is a need to investigate reactions to nonstandard usages in writing from readers' perspectives in light of the recent turn toward sociolinguistics in writing studies inspired in large part by globalization.

Chapter 3 is a review of empirical studies drawn from three different disciplines – composition, second language writing, and sociolinguistic studies in WE and ELF – which deal with readers' reactions to deviations from standard English, summarizing both their findings and their methodological approaches, and their relevance to the present study. This chapter shows an evolution in these studies from a decontextualized, experimental approach to creating hierarchies of errors by category to a more qualitative, open-ended approach in which researchers investigate participants' reactions to language in context via not only surveys but also interviews and other forms of talk.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the research design, methodology, and data collection and analysis procedures for this study, as well as reflections on my own position as a researcher on this topic in the context of China. In this chapter I describe the need to make the large amount of data (nearly 3,000 separate comments on chunks made by participants – for a definition of “chunks” in this study, see below) manageable. I also discuss my decision to narrow the scope of the analysis to certain “focal chunks” in order to investigate participants' particular judgments of

certain types of chunks in greater detail.

There are three data analysis chapters. Chapter 5 examines results from the AJT, describing the chunks of text that were most often marked by both Chinese and non-Chinese participants in the study, and discussing and analyzing differences between Chinese and non-Chinese participants' responses to the AJT. It also includes explanations and analysis of interview excerpts in which participants discussed their reasoning for rejecting or not rejecting particular chunks. Chapter 6 also looks at the results of the AJT, but with a specific focus on how participants reacted to putative features of CE and ELF when they encountered them in the texts.

Chapter 7 focuses primarily on the follow-up interviews, offering a thematic analysis of the ways in which participants position themselves as people with the authority to make judgments of linguistic acceptability; these are divided into three themes of authority as a mediator, as a language user, and as an educator, each of which is expressed differently by members of the two groups.

Chapter 8, the conclusion, summarizes and synthesizes the data, and discusses implications of the study for theory, method, and practice in second language writing research, including implications for pedagogy and other practical applications for those who work with L2 writers and texts.

1.5 Definitions and acronyms

Below, I list some terms and acronyms that are used frequently in this dissertation. Some are relatively straightforward definitions of terms that may be unfamiliar, while others may be more ideologically contested; I present those to offer the reader my own interpretation of these contentious terms. I further discuss my own language ideology in section 4.11.

- **AJT** (acceptability judgment task): An AJT is a research procedure originally used by

linguists (e.g. Quirk & Svartik, 1966) to elicit research participants' knowledge of whether certain sentences are legitimately part of their language. The AJT is distinguished from the grammaticality judgment task (GJT) in its acknowledgement that the research instrument cannot necessarily be assumed to be accessing only a participant's internal grammatical knowledge and that participants' responses may be influenced by other factors. This distinction is further discussed in Chapter 2.

- **CE** (Chinese English or China English): A term describing a variety of English unique to the Chinese context, which is argued by some to be currently developing (Xu, 2010). It is generally distinguished in the literature from “Chinglish” which is characterized as the error-riddled language of Chinese learners of English, whereas CE is seen as a legitimate and grammatical variety of English expressing Chinese culture and identity (see, for example, Hu, 2004).
- **Chunk**: The word “chunk” is used in this dissertation to refer to a sequence of words selected by a participant as unacceptable in the AJT. Chunks range from a single word to a phrase to a whole sentence to multiple sentences. These should be understood as distinct from any notions of “chunking” or “formulaic chunks” referred to in SLA or other literature on language learning. In this study “chunk” has no particular linguistic definition and is understood in relation to the text a participant highlighted in Microsoft Word during the AJT.
- **ELF** (English as a lingua franca): while this term can potentially be used to describe any interaction between two interlocutors for whom English is not a shared first language (see Firth, 1996), in practice it has come to refer to a particular theoretical approach to studying the usage of English across geographical and linguistic contexts. ELF as a field

is associated with the investigation of features and pragmatic norms that govern interactions between (mainly) non-native speakers of English who do not share the same first language and culture. ELF is discussed more in Chapter 3, and its putative features are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 6.

- **ES** (English speaker): Anyone who is a speaker of English, regardless of when he/she learned it.
- **ESL** (English as a second language): This term is traditionally used to describe the learning of English by those who have not learned it from birth, in contexts where English is the dominant language in the society where it is being learned (as opposed to EFL). In recent years, the word “second” has been seen as problematic (sometimes replaced by “additional,” as in EAL) for learners who are multilingual, but I use this term due to its prominence in the field.
- **EFL** (English as a foreign language): This term is traditionally used to describe the learning of English in a context where English is not a dominant language in the society where it is being learned. Globalization has, however, made this term sometimes seem ill-suited to contexts where it has traditionally been used (is English foreign in Denmark to the same degree that it is foreign in North Korea?).
- **NES(T)/NNES(T)** (Native English speaker (teacher)/Nonnative English speaker (teacher)): These terms are used to distinguish speakers/teachers of English who have learned the language since birth from those who learned it later in life.
- **SWE (Standard written English)**: This term refers to a loosely-defined understanding of “educated” English usage used in written domains such as higher education, the media, and government.

Chapter 2: Sociolinguistic and ideological approaches to variation from standard written English in a globalized context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at traditional second language writing approaches and sociolinguistically oriented approaches to variation from standard English, with an emphasis on writing. It aims to connect recent theoretical approaches to writing influenced by sociolinguistics to standard language ideology, and to argue that a conceptual shift from viewing L2 texts as containing clearly defined *errors* to viewing them as including *variations* from ideologically-inflected notions about standard written English (SWE) will produce fruitful results in research about L2 writing and readers' reactions to it.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: first I review the notion of language standardization, particularly focusing on English, and discuss the role of written English in the construction of standard English, and the difficulties in applying a single understanding of standard written English, given its global spread. Next, I describe theoretical approaches to variation from standard written English, ranging from traditional 'error-based' approaches to L2 writing to recent variation-based approaches (namely world Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and translingual writing), arguing for the need to move from an error-based approach to a variation-based approach. Because a variation-based approach calls for a more flexible construct than error, I describe the construct of linguistic acceptability, arguing that the more subjective and sociocultural aspects of acceptability which linguists have tended to view as weaknesses are actually strengths for investigating peoples' reactions to non-standard language usage. Finally, I look at the place of acceptability judgments in the study of language ideology, arguing for the importance of studying authority in language judgments not (only) as something

inherent in social institutions or powerful individuals but as a claim that is produced by judges of language use in their encounter(s) with texts.

2.2 Standard English as an ideological construct

One of the main concerns of the current study is variation from standard (written) English in academic writing, and how that variation is viewed by readers. It is important, then, to first understand what is meant by “standard English.” Drawing on sociolinguistic understandings of language varieties and standard language, standard English can be seen as an ideological construction predicated on “the suppression of optional variation” (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 30), which itself is ideological and based on (inter)subjective factors and social tensions. As Halliday (1978) argues, “although (language) attitudes are explicitly formulated in connection with immediately accessible matters of pronunciation and word formation, what is actually being reacted to is something much deeper. People are reacting to the fact that others *mean* differently from themselves” (p. 162). While Halliday goes on to argue that some people may make negative judgments about others’ language use because “they feel threatened by it,” it is not necessary to assume bad faith or intentional animosity on the part of those who actively defend “standard English,” even in an explicitly ideological way. After all, the more “progressive” sociolinguistic understandings of language difference I describe below are themselves ideological as well, as Cameron (2012) points out. However, it is necessary to establish a theoretical position showing that standard English, rather than being a clearly defined variety of the language, is less a linguistic than an ideological construct.

Below, I discuss the meaning of a “variety” of a language, how a standard (written) variety of English comes to be recognized, and the social nature of this process. I then discuss why the delimiting of standard written English is more complex in an era of globalization and the

use of English in a number of contexts outside of traditionally (or ideologically) monolingual settings of English and the “first diaspora” of English (Bolton, 2006b, p. 293).

2.2.1 Language varieties

Variation in language use is one of the central concerns of sociolinguistics, unlike much mainstream linguistic theory, which “dismiss(es)...variation as an accidental feature of language” (Coulmas, 1997, p. 7). For sociolinguistics, the locus of research is not the language itself as only a “structured set of forms” (Linell, 2005, p. 4) per se, but rather how the differences between “meaningful actions and cultural practices” (p. 4) cause languages to differ. Thus, the “speech community,” a group of people who “agree on the social meanings and evaluations in the variants used,” is of utmost concern in determining which variations are used and accepted (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 51). Speech communities do, in some way, “agree” on appropriate norms, but the amount of variation which causes a separation between, for example, dialects, is not strictly quantifiable, and indeed recent work describing “translanguaging” – “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages” (García, 2009, p. 128) – complicates notions of separating varieties all together. It does seem, however, that the particular agreed-upon variations of one community “who believe themselves to be speakers of the same language do indeed cluster enough for the belief to be highly plausible” (Pateman, 1984, n.p.). The term *variety*, while inexact, accommodates the fuzziness of how variations in language usage lead to people making distinctions between languages. Trudgill and Hannah (1994), for example, refer to “the two main standard varieties” of English (“English English” and “North American English”), outlining differences of “phonetics, phonology, grammar, and vocabulary” between these varieties (pp. 2-

3), but recognizing that while people describe them “as if they were two entirely homogeneous and separate varieties,” there is also considerable variation within each variety (p. 56).

Historically, the definition of “a variety” of a language has always been vague: the term can denote “any identifiable kind of language” (Spolsky, 1998, p. 126), and has been used synonymously with other metalinguistic terms like *dialect*, *register*, *medium*, *field*, *style*, *accent*, *sociolect*, *idiolect*, and so on (Bolton, 2006b, p. 290). On one hand, variety is not a technical term, yet there is a sense in which its broadness allows it to elude both the more theoretically conflicted term *language* and the more ideologically inflected term *dialect*. If we want a serviceable definition of “a variety of a language,” it might be called a collection of variations in language use which cause it to be defined as separate from other varieties of the language, but which is considered to share enough in common with other varieties to be related to them. It is, of course, *people* who “define” and “consider” varieties to be what they are; ultimately, what makes a variety of a language is people’s belief that it is one. This should not be taken to mean that varieties are not “real,” but that they are constituted in large part by what we say they are. The labeling of varieties of English, for example, has had important social, political, and identity implications for their users, both negative and positive.

2.2.2 Standard(ized) language

Trudgill and Hannah’s (1994) reference to “Standard Varieties of English” elucidates another important point about the differences between varieties of a language: the most socially relevant division made in a given society (and even, perhaps, internationally), is that between *standard* and *non-standard* varieties. To be conversant with the standard variety of language in a given society is, in a sense, to sociolinguistically belong in a way others do not. Yet a “standard variety” retains all the definitional fuzziness of a simple “variety.” The British Committee for

Linguistics in Education, for example, refers to standard English as “one variety of modern English, alongside a wide range of non-standard varieties” which “may be distinguished from non-standard varieties according to a relatively small number of linguistic features” (Committee for Linguistics in Education, n.p.). In fact, even if its contours are often delimited via prescription (shoulds) and proscription (should nots), standard English has no essential linguistic definition. Crystal (1994) refers to standard English as “a minority variety (identified chiefly by its vocabulary, grammar, and orthography) which carries the most prestige and is most widely understood” within a given “English-speaking country” (p. 24). To other scholars, standard English is “the variety of the English language which is normally employed in writing and normally spoken by ‘educated’ speakers of the language” (Trudgill & Hannah, 1994, p. 1), or simply “the language of the educated” (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 54), defined by a set of abstract norms which advocate the “suppression of optional variation at all levels of language,” ostensibly in the service of less misunderstanding and more efficiency in communication, but also motivated by social, political, and commercial factors (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 30). The concept of standard language itself, according to Crowley (2003), emerged in Britain “from the difficulties and problems found by nineteenth century linguists and in particular the lexicographers of the late 19th century” (p. 104). This is not to suggest that there is no agreement among groups about which variations should be used; rather, it confirms that standard language is not a linguistic concept, but an ideological one.

Because there is no linguistic definition of “standard English” as an entity, a more salient concept is the *standardization* of English, or the social and ideological process by which a variety comes to be called standard and promoted as the ideal variety to be used in a given society. This has implications in “monolingual” Inner Circle English societies as well as those

described as Outer Circle and Expanding Circle contexts, though the development of a reified standard Inner Circle English (American or British) necessarily precedes the development in the latter. Milroy and Milroy (2012), in their analysis of standard English in (ostensibly) monolingual contexts, discuss the standardization of a language as a process comprising the following steps (presented here in slightly different order than the original):

1. A *need for uniformity* is felt by an influential group in society, ostensibly for purposes of efficiency and intelligibility. Note that even at this early stage, the way the process is described is necessarily subjective and ideological: a “need” is “felt” by what the Milroys describe as “influential portions of society” (p. 22). While the goal may be ease of communication, the process is inevitably one carried out by an elite, educated group.
2. A variety is *selected* to fulfill that need. In fact “competing varieties might no doubt be selected by different parts of the community” (p. 22), so the “selection” of a variety is likely to be a jockeying for position between individuals and social groups of various social status and influence in society.
3. That variety is *accepted* by influential people in society. When eventually one variety emerges as the most influential, it is thus again because of its acceptance by the influential (powerful, educated) *people* in society.
4. That variety is *diffused* (i.e., imposed) through social institutions such as the media, government, publishing, and, especially, education.
5. The standardized variety is *maintained* via a number of processes, including:
 - a. “Elaboration of function,” or the spreading, specialized use of the standard variety in certain high-status domains.

- b. The imbuing of the language with prestige, for example via its usage in respected institutions or by influential people.
- c. The codification of the language in pedagogical and reference works (dictionaries, grammars, textbooks).
- d. Prescription and proscription in a number of contexts (promotion of the standard variety in popular books about language use, rejection of alternate usages and new variations).

Thus, what is meant by “standard English,” while it is still frequently appealed to as a static entity in disputes over usage, is actually created and sustained through an ideological process; as Lippi-Green (1997) argues, the “ideology of standardization... empowers certain individuals and institutions” to “control and limit spoken language variation” (p. 59). Far from being a neutral code, standard English is an ideological discourse; a community cannot really ever have more than one “standard variety” of English because “the standard” exists more as an hegemonic ideal than as a variety among varieties. In the traditionally English-speaking countries, the ideology of standard English promotes educated, written usage and suppresses variation, particularly variation associated with socially marginalized groups (e.g., the poor, African Americans, rural residents, and so on). The many definitions of standard English which refer to it as the language of “the educated” are a clue to one of the neglected areas of examination in standard English, which is the role of writing and literacy in its maintenance. This is explored in the next section.

2.3 Writing and standard English in a globalized context

As a field, sociolinguistics has long been focused on speech as “authentic” language-in-use, with writing viewed as secondary or merely a way of “recording” language. Coulmas (2013)

offers an account of why linguistics resisted “the tyranny of writing” (p. 1) when establishing itself as a field. While there may have been reason to separate writing and speech in the history of linguistics and sociolinguistics, it does not make sense to limit the discussion of standardization to spoken English, since writing plays a key role in most people’s understanding of standard English and in its continued maintenance.

In this section, I argue that because written language and literacy education arguably play the most influential role in the development and maintenance of standard English in any given society, more attention should be paid to writing (particularly academic writing, where standardness is most actively enforced) as a site where standard language ideologies are enacted. I then describe the impact of globalization on the importance of standard written English and the related stigmatization of written English use that is perceived as non-standard, and the possibility of differing standards for written English across different global contexts.

2.3.1 Written English as standard English

Lurking behind the term “standard English” is nearly always (except in the case of pronunciation) standard *written* English. It is *written* norms and *written* models which tend to be followed as standard; as Linell (2005) points out, “models and theories of language have been developed that are strongly dependent on long-time traditions of dealing with writing and written language,” and these models “are ultimately derived from concerns with cultivating, standardizing, and teaching forms of written language” (p. i). Despite this, however, most scholarly and public debates about standard varieties center on the *speakers* of a language or disputes over how it should be *spoken* (see, for example, Lippi-Green, 1997). This uncritical conflation of writing and speaking should prompt more investigation into how writing is viewed

and taught, and how ideas about standardness are reproduced in discussions of writing and writing pedagogy.

Written language has had a disproportionate role in the standardization process in most English-speaking countries; indeed, the standardizing of writing has been more successful than that of speech, and many complaints about spoken English are seemingly due to spoken usage not matching the formal norms of writing. Milroy and Milroy (2012) argue that historically, English “standardization has first affected the writing system, and literacy has subsequently become the main influence in promoting the consciousness of the standard ideology. The norms of written and formal English have then been codified in dictionaries, grammar, and handbooks of usage” (p. 30). In fact, the term “standard English” has almost always been synonymous with “the medium of writing in the English language, grammatically stable and codified” (Crowley, 1999, p. 271). To be familiar with standard English is, then, to know how to read and write it.

Halliday (2006) also argues that when a language “becomes... written” and standardized, the change is not merely a social one, but is actually “systemic” (p. 357). The standard (written) language expands into more domains so that it becomes the preferred mode for *doing* certain things: “the semogenic power of the language is significantly increased” (p. 357). Writing and standardization – which go hand in hand – lead to change and growth in meaning potential, according to Halliday, so that it becomes possible to mean and ultimately do more with a standard (written) language. Thus, in a society which places the highest premium on standard written language, not to avail oneself of standard written English may lead to the inability to perform certain socially beneficial actions. Written language, as a primary channel of standardization, suggests a settling of difference, a literal marking down of norms regarding what is accepted or valued by the influential and educated in society. The effects of being proficient at

reading and writing standardized forms are undeniable in terms of access to information, education, prestige, and other cultural capital.

The idea of writing as a necessary skill in order to “do more” is well attested, especially in educational and academic settings. Lea and Street (1998) discuss how writing, and being able to write in a particular way, is positioned as a necessary skill: the process of writing, especially student writing, is “defined by what constitutes valid knowledge within a particular context,” and the social significance of this knowledge “can be identified through both formal, linguistic features of the writing involved and in the social and institutional relationships associated with it” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 172). Standard language ideology is embedded in norms of academic writing; to write well academically is to join the educated community of standard-bearers. This becomes more complicated when the community of English users spans various national contexts, as in the case of higher education.

2.3.2 Standard written English and globalized academic writing

So far, the theoretical positions on standard English described above have been developed by theorists describing “monolingual” English contexts, for whom the implications for understanding the meaning of standard English in “non-English-speaking” countries are rarely a concern. However, it is important to adopt a conceptualization of standard(ized) English that can be applied to the globalized, internationalized contexts applied linguists are used to working in today. Not only is written language the primary channel of standard(ized) language, as we have seen above, but the emphasis on writing and standard written English in international academic culture makes the stakes even higher: English literacy implies the need for facility in both reading and writing standard (British or American) English. Li (2007) argues that for non-native users of English, “being equipped with Standard English” is an indispensable “prerequisite for

life-long learning,” and he advocates a pedagogy in China and Hong Kong which will allow students “to be literate in, and conversant with, lexico-grammatical features of the written standard variety in order to absorb all kinds of information in print or on the Internet” (p. 14). Canagarajah (2002) further argues that the mainstream view holds that “knowledge is writing,” and that therefore “rhetorical, linguistic, and genre conventions of writing are not simply matters of textual form” (p. 101), but they have consequences for whether writing that is viewed as non-standard is even afforded the status of legitimate knowledge. Being able to write and publish in standard written English, even for those in non-English speaking countries, means meeting an “international standard” (Flowerdew & Li, 2009, p. 13) in order to participate in a global flow of information, ideas, and knowledge. However, writing in a way that is judged unconventional by “center” scholars, educators, publishers, and others in relative positions of power can lead to writers being marginalized in significant ways. The tension is not only between native norms and non-native local norms, but also perceptions of “acceptability,” both considered locally (“Do I – or does my teacher – accept this as standard written English?”) and internationally (“Would a native speaker accept this as standard written English?”). It can be difficult, if not impossible, to separate these issues from each other when considering the ways in which ideologies of standard (written) English are constructed in particular contexts.

Standard English was originally conceived of by 19th century linguists, as a “certain and uniform literary form around which were grouped distinct sub-varieties” (Crowley, 2003, p. 87); it was considered “the form common to all literary pieces not tainted by the merely provincial” (p. 88). Today, however, the question of being “tainted by the provincial” is much more complicated by the spread and development of English around the world. The sociolinguistic realities described by world Englishes research (see below) suggest that not only different

varieties, but different *standard* varieties of English can emerge. This has implications not only for pedagogy in monolingual English institutions which enroll students from other countries, but also and especially for Outer Circle and Expanding Circle contexts where the issues of local models in education (Li, 2007), large-scale language testing (Davies, Hamp-Lyons, & Kemp, 2003; Hamp-Lyons & Davies, 2008) and many other facets of English are complicated by both the multilingual realities of the country and the powerful influences of globalization and internationalization.

2.3.3 The globalization of English and the possibility of competing standards

Appeals linking standard English to literary traditions and national identity are commonplace and accepted in the United Kingdom and the United States. However, given the internationalization of education and academic writing, and the reality of globalization in general, there is a need to examine the ways in which standard English becomes a pervasive construct in education and other domains *beyond* “English-speaking” countries. It is worth examining the “language effects” (Pennycook, 2007) of the export of standard English ideology from monolingual English writing contexts to a variety of multilingual countries where English usage has developed in its own way.

From the above understandings of standardization, we have seen the influence of “the educated” (including, of course, linguists, who created the concept) and influential people in a society as being central to the maintenance of standard language. Standardization is not a democratic process by which certain forms happen to emerge and become accepted by a speech community. While there is no reason for bottom-up changes in language not to occur—vernacular language change certainly cannot be controlled—standardization is more a political and social project than it is a linguistic one. And if we broaden this concept to examine the

global spread of English, the question of standardization becomes more complicated, because the spread of English has brought with it the dominance of standard American or British English. The seemingly necessary social advantages of being conversant with these varieties, especially in their written forms seem, for many, to outweigh the potential costs associated with acquiescing to politically powerful interests. One does not need to wholeheartedly adopt Phillipson's (1992) view that this is deliberate "linguistic imperialism" on the part of the United States and United Kingdom (although purposeful spreading of the language has, historically, been advocated by some in those countries) to see that British and American English do represent a kind of hegemonic standard, especially ideologically, for many teachers and learners of English. For example, 100% of the 1,261 Chinese students surveyed by Hu (2004) chose both British and American English in response to the multiple-choice question "What kind of English do you think is standard?" No students chose Indian, Singaporean, nor even Australian, Canadian, or New Zealand English.

Phillipson (1992), who divides the English(es) of the world into the "core" and "periphery," describes the dilemma faced in non-Inner Circle countries: whether to acknowledge and accept local norms (which may be in the process of being established), or to stick with the core standard English(es) that have historically been viewed as preferable. As Phillipson puts it, "The essential question then is the nature of the relationship between the standard English of core English-speaking countries and periphery English variants...The political, social, and pedagogical implications of any declaration of linguistic independence by periphery English variants are considerable" (1992, p. 26). He cites the debate between Quirk and Kachru (1991) on the legitimacy of non-native varieties of English as one which has important implications for "linguistic and pedagogical standards, language variation, the status of indigenized varieties of

English, and the norms that should hold for learners of English in a variety of contexts,” all of which are underscored by the question of “who has the power to impose a particular norm and why” (p. 26). The question of whether to uphold local or center standards has real consequences for teachers, learners, and many others in countries which have chosen or been forced to “import” English and have been developing local norms which sometimes deviate from the center standard English(es).

The tension between acknowledging (a) rhetorical and linguistic practices in many non-native contexts which differ from center/standard English, and (b) the reality of the dominance of a particular (US/UK) standard variety of English has led to many debates about the proper role of non-native norms and models, and whether a non-center standard can or should be established. That written texts differ across contexts seems indisputable, but whether the features of those texts – and thus the knowledge they produce – are seen as aberrant or legitimate (by, crucially, a potentially diverse pool of readers) is a question to which too little thought has been given.

It is true that different communities, whether in monolingual or multilingual English settings, may have developed standards which differ from the dominant standard promoted in the educational system. Second language writing scholars are uniquely poised to deal with globalized academic writing as a site where standards are maintained and struggled with; to better address this tension, L2 writing scholars will need a more robust theoretical approach to “non-standard” English, which is the subject of the next section.

2.4 Approaches to variation from standard English in academic L2 writing

We have established above that standard English is not a linguistic, but an ideological construct, and that the role of writing in the understanding of standard English is preeminent. We have also seen that the application of theories of standardization to standard (written) English in

globalized or international contexts is further complicated by the notion of local standards when considered in opposition to a kind of hegemonic Inner Circle English norm that predates the development of local norms. Given these tensions, it does not seem prudent to approach standard written English simply from a “common-sense” perspective which is able to identify some usages as objectively belonging to a monolithic “standard (written) English” while other usages do not. However, sometimes in traditional L2 writing scholarship, the notion of standard English and deviation from it have not been sufficiently problematized.

In this section, then, I consider several related currents of research and thinking that can be brought to bear on the issue of variation/deviation from standard written English in NNES writers’ texts. Here I am specifically interested in exploring the implications these approaches have for lexicogrammatical variation, because though this area is of paramount importance to many stakeholders involved in L2 writing (students, instructors, test-takers, test creators, editors, and so on), we have seen little research or discussion of how it is dealt with in practice. In most contexts involving academic writing, lexicogrammatical variation from standard English is easily noticed by native and nonnative English speakers alike, and it can quickly lead to sentences, texts, or authors being perceived as deficient. While some variations are readily identifiable as linguistic errors, others may not be so straightforward, posing a challenge for us to draw the line between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” variations in certain contexts. Indeed, it is possible to view the acceptability of variations as socially constructed and highly unpredictable, as Williams (1981) demonstrated by deliberately inserting one hundred “errors” into an article in a prestigious academic publication.

In scholarly inquiries focusing on second language writing, issues of linguistic variation have been discussed from several perspectives. While not all scholarly approaches to variations

in written language discussed below have historically made writing and/or lexicogrammar an explicit focus, each offers important implications in this area. Below, I highlight what I consider to be a more or less “traditional” approach to errors in L2 writing, followed by three related theoretical positions which are more likely to treat deviation from standard written English as potentially legitimate variation rather than errors. Briefly, the four approaches discussed are:

1. The traditional error-based approach, which investigates errors in L2 writing and/or the unique characteristics of L2 writers’ texts as distinct from L1 writers’.
2. The WE approach, which advocates accepting multiple varieties of English.
3. The ELF approach, which investigates written language usage in terms of features common to nonnative English speakers’ discourse.
4. The translingual approach, which views texts as hybrid constructions influenced by multiple linguistic and rhetorical factors.

In each section, I will describe the approach in general as well as its applications to writing and lexicogrammatical variation in writing in particular.

2.4.1 Traditional error-based approach

The field of L2 writing in North America emerged, at least in part, as a “reaction to immediate pedagogical concerns in U.S. higher education” (Matsuda, 2003, p. 34), and during the early decades of its development as a field, was heavily influenced by the North American academic context. Perhaps unintentionally, this led to a monolithic conception of good writing based on practices of NES American students and instructors. NNES writers’ texts are thus usually read with an eye to how they differ from a presumed native speaker standard, often at the word and sentence level, and this has been a natural focus of L2 writing research. For example, Silva’s (1993) synthesis of early studies in ESL writing found that L2 writers made more errors

than L1 writers in the areas of morphosyntax, lexicosemantics, verbs, prepositions, and nouns. While great advances have been made in examining and explicating features of NNES writers' texts at the global level and arguments in favor of rhetorical structures other than narrowly defined traditional Anglo-American ones have been made (Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Matsuda, 1997; Ventola & Mauranten, 1996), examinations of L2 writers' lexicogrammar have primarily been influenced by traditions of error analysis in L1 and L2 composition.

What could be termed "error studies" became influential in L1 English composition toward the end of the twentieth century, with studies by Shaughnessy (1977), Connors and Lunsford (1988) (replicated by Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008), and Williams (1981) (see Chapter 3 for a detailed review of empirical studies in this area). L1 composition instructors recognized the disconnect between theory (the process approach placed less emphasis on correcting errors than developing whole compositions) and practice (most instructors felt a need to address students' lexical, grammatical, and other local errors). L2 writing scholars found error studies more immediately relevant to their work (see Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, for further discussion of this phenomenon and a history of the treatment of error in L1 and L2 composition). Studies of teachers' reactions to writers' errors, measuring constructs such as acceptability, comprehensibility, and irritation, also became influential in L2 writing (Janopoulos, 1992; Kobayashi, 1992; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001; Roberts & Cimasko, 2008; Santos, 1988; Shi, 2001). Hinkel (2002) notes that studies in L2 writing have shown that faculty members reading L2 writers' texts are "consistently focused on lexicogrammatical features of text, such as sentence structure, vocabulary, the syntactic word order, morphology/inflections, verb tenses and voice, and pronoun use, as well as spelling and punctuation" (p. 29). Lee and Chen (2009) highlight the pedagogical implications of this focus, suggesting more training for L2 writers "at

the lexico-grammatical level” (p. 281); they argue that “while these may be small and common words, instructors may need to make a bigger deal out of them, as they connect with larger issues in academic writing” (p. 292).

It is clear that lexicogrammatical variation from mainstream norms in L2 writers’ texts is a concern of most stakeholders in L2 writing (writing teachers, content faculty, and of course, students) and has been a major concern in L2 writing scholarship and pedagogy. This is demonstrated in the large body of research on written corrective feedback (see Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), which suggests that research on L2 writing remains concerned with variation from standard written English, usually with the goal of allowing NNES writers to acquire the norms of academic written English in monolingual contexts.

2.4.1.1 The shift from error-based approaches

In recent decades, two relevant developments are opening new areas of inquiry for L2 writing: first, the growth of sociolinguistics-influenced research and theory in applied linguistics has given rise to a number of perspectives on difference (rarely referred to as error) from standard English relevant to writing, and second, an increased interest in sociopolitical concerns has focused on L2 writing for publication (rather than solely in the classroom). Studies on NNES graduate students’ and scholars’ difficulties publishing in English, often related to language issues (e.g., Cargill, O’Connor, & Li, 2012; Flowerdew, 1999, 2000, 2007; Y. Li, 2002; Li & Flowerdew, 2007), and larger studies of linguistic inequality between NES and NNES writers in academic publication (Ammon, 2001; Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis & Curry, 2010) should encourage us to look more closely at how non-error-based approaches could be applied to the issue of NNES writers’ written English. Below I describe three such approaches that are becoming influential.

2.4.2 World Englishes approach

While research on L2 writing has focused on variation in the form of errors, more explicitly political calls for recognizing variation as legitimate, or “pluralizing” academic writing, have recently been made from the world Englishes (WE) perspective. The WE paradigm grew out of Braj B. Kachru’s research on English in Asia, which broke new ground in the understanding of the global spread of English. One of Kachru’s innovations was to distinguish between non-native English for international and intranational purposes: “there is a need to distinguish between (a) those countries (e.g. Japan) whose requirements focus upon international comprehensibility and (b) those countries (e.g. India) which in addition must take account of English as it is used for their own intranational purposes” (Kachru & Smith, 1985, p. 219). This theoretical division between second language and foreign language contexts is reflected in Kachru’s most well-known concept, the “Three Concentric Circles” model of English (1985) which was briefly described in Chapter 1. This model suggests that while there are significant differences in usage across the three circles, each variety should still be considered English. The language is pluricentric; the Inner Circle is not the “center,” but simply the result of the first historical diaspora of English.

In second language writing, proponents of WEs have argued for recognition of non-Inner Circle features in academic texts as legitimate. These scholars hold that different national or social contexts are home to particular, localized (and legitimate) varieties of English whose norms and standards have uniquely emerged. Canagarajah (2006) made a call for “pluralizing academic writing by extending it to the controversial terrain of grammar” (p. 613) and has been active in promoting the acceptance of different varieties of English in academic publishing (Canagarajah, 2012). Y. Kachru (1995, 1997) suggests that L2 writers ought not simply be taught

to write in the dominant and allegedly “direct, linear pattern of Western academic writing” (1995, p. 28). She points out that the Western norm limits the acceptance of variation in style, genre, and individual creativity for any writer of English; all varieties of world Englishes, and their related rhetorics and styles, she argues, should be acceptable. Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) pinpoint the relevance of WEs to the lexicogrammatical level of academic writing, highlighting several important pedagogical implications, including the teaching of both dominant and nondominant forms and functions of English, examining “what works and what does not” in different writing contexts, and strategies for (as well as risks involving) deliberately using non-dominant or nonstandard varieties of English in writing (p. 372). Knowing that many writing teachers “would lower the student’s grade for a writing assignment if it includes features that deviate markedly from the perceived norm” (p. 371), Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) argue for the need to “embrace the complexity of English and facilitate the development of global literacy” (p. 373).

2.4.3 English as a Lingua Franca approach

The basic definition of ELF, as communication between two nonnative speakers of English, was briefly covered in Chapter 1. Research on ELF traditionally focused on a “common core” of the features of English used in spoken communication between nonnative speakers (Erling, 2005; Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001) and on pragmatic strategies (Seidlhofer, 2004), and has begun to explore implications for academic spoken English (Mauranen, 2012) and, more recently, academic writing (Carey, 2013). Although the field has mainly been concerned with the highly contextual nature of ELF communication in spoken English, Horner (2011) argues that the “attitudes and strategies” identified in ELF, such as “tolerance for language variation, patience, humility, and strategies of accommodation and negotiation” should

be employed in writing and reading as well (p. 302). Since many of the features identified in ELF, such as non-marking of the third person verb, unconventional article usage, and so on are likely to be those that most easily “mark” texts as non-standard, a broadening of the ELF approach to writing could potentially identify worldwide trends in how academic language is actually used, which could represent a break from traditional idealized ‘standard written’ English. Jenkins (2011), commenting on the implications of ELF for internationally-minded English-medium universities and academics, suggests that ELF norms could be embraced by the worldwide scholarly community, arguing against “polishing” by native speakers and that there is “no principled justification for the norms of written academic English throughout the world to be those of Britain and North America” (p. 932). In her study on academic ELF in higher education, Jenkins (2014) reports a tendency among university instructors, especially those in Anglophone countries, to enforce conventional expectations for academic writing despite the actual practices of English writers in other contexts.

Empirical research on textual features from an ELF perspective is in its infancy; a corpus of Written English as a Lingua Franca in Academic settings (WrELFA) is currently being assembled at the University of Helsinki (The ELFA Project, 2012). The researchers describe the justification for their project:

The current world of academic writing and publishing is far more globalised than it was a decade or two ago. Yet we have no research evidence on the determinants of effectiveness in academic rhetoric in a world that is permeated by English as a lingua franca, and a constant flow of cultural influences from a variety of sources.... Project WrELFA collects and analyses academic texts written in English as a lingua franca. The

texts cover high-stakes genres in different fields, both published and unpublished. (para. 2-3)

The results of this project are expected to provide insights into actual textual practice in ELF written academic discourse.

2.4.4 Translingual approach

A more recent approach clearly shares affinities with both the WE and ELF approaches, though it is more postmodern and fluid in its application. This is a “translingual approach” to “language difference in writing,” proposed by Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011). (This should be understood as an approach to conceptualizing writing rather than a new term describing writing done by second language or other writers; see Atkinson et al., 2015). Rather than only focusing on discrete varieties of English or features of NNES communication, proponents of the translingual approach view “difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (p. 303). Here, *difference* becomes the main reality with which to contend in academic writing, regardless of its source. Specifically, the authors state their aims as:

1. Honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends
2. Recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally
3. Directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations (p. 304).

These three points have important implications for a variety of issues in second language writing, but of particular concern here is the authors’ situating L2 writing in the framework of “language

difference,” a broad term which encompasses varieties of English as well as differences in proficiency, dialect, register, and other factors. In addition, lexicogrammatical variation is important: there is a need to look closely and empirically at “what constitutes a mistake (and about what constitutes correctness)... in matters of spelling, punctuation, and syntax” (p. 312). Canagarajah (2013) advocates the “translingual practice” of what he refers to as “codemeshing,” or “the mixing of languages,” “novel idiomatic expressions,” and “grammatical deviations from standard written English” (p. 1) in both student and scholarly writing. Canagarajah argues that some well-known scholars have successfully implemented codemeshing in their published texts and encourages students and novice scholars to embrace it (p. 125). A translingual approach to writing, as a more ideological examination of language differences, could potentially lead to wider acceptance of non-standard lexis and grammar in published texts.

You’s (forthcoming) concept of Cosmopolitan English (CE) is another translingual (or transliterate) approach. You calls CE the “English actually used by individuals across the globe, each with accents reflected in his or her pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and/or discourse structures” (pp. 9-10). According to You, CE “intends to capture the multiplicity of ways that individuals speak and write English within and across communities... [I]t requires that we understand the characteristics and functions of English beyond any single cultural category” (p. 10). You, like the authors above, acknowledges language difference as the main issue to contend with in conceptualizing English use, and describes a definition of CE which “bypasses linguistic differences defined by birthright, nation, region, race, and ethnicity” (p. 9). Rather than defining English based on geographical location, native/non-native status, or other factors, CE acknowledges both the “nativeness” (“In a sense, every English speaker is a native speaker, native to one or multiple speech communities or to certain established norms”) and

“accentedness” (“At the same time, every speaker would sound different, or accented, to interlocutors outside his or her communities”) of every individual English speaker, and, by extension, every instance of English use. In fact, while You uses “accent” – a speaking-related metaphor—to introduce CE, his goal is “calling for a cosmopolitan turn in writing studies” (p. 14).

2.4.5 Summary: A variation-based approach to L2 writing

All of these variation-based perspectives have important implications for second language writing research. While WE focuses more on local characteristics of English based on local (national) social contexts, ELF on a more general look at the emergent properties of NNES-NNES communication, and the translingual approach on a reappraisal of language difference by withholding judgment and honoring writers’ textual choices, what they all have in common is a refusal to simply view difference from idealized standard written English as error, but to further investigate the contexts in which the writing takes place. A variation-based theory (whether it draws primarily on any one of these three areas) that is agnostic about ‘error’ is a natural fit for a more sociolinguistic approach to L2 writing, and to what Lillis (2013) calls “uptake,” or broadly, what readers “do” with texts, especially when they deem the language use nonstandard. What is necessary, I argue, is to investigate what actually happens when readers are faced with texts in which they encounter instances of “difference,” however they define it. As You argues, the “accentedness” of any (written) English will be noticed by some readers, and it is necessary to explore why and how this is.

The discussion above has established that standard English is an ideological rather than a linguistic reality, and that variations from it can be approached from an understanding other than one of “error” for many reasons. If standard English is maintained by judgments against

nonstandard usage – and if nonstandard usage is just another kind of “language difference” that can be investigated in its own terms, rather than strictly in terms of “error” in (L2) writing – then a sound theoretical approach to readers’ judgments of variation is necessary. Below, I describe how the construct of acceptability, originally described by Chomsky (1965) as a more usage-oriented corollary of grammaticality, is suitable for this purpose.

2.5 Theorizing acceptability as an approach to language difference

As I have mentioned, a position I wish to advance in this dissertation is the use of “acceptability” as a construct in studies of writing, rather than traditional notions of “error.” This is not because “errors” have not been recognized as socially constructed and highly variable – they have, as mentioned above – but because shifting the focus from predefined, reified “errors” in language use or writing to a more general, bottom-up emphasis on language variation and how people react to it allows for a broader investigation of readers’ reactions to language use. While part of the next chapter will review studies of acceptability which focus primarily on variation rather than error, in the following section of this chapter I describe the concept of acceptability in detail, emphasizing its social and ideological nature.

2.5.1 Distinguishing acceptability from grammaticality

Below, I discuss the genesis of the construct of acceptability in theoretical linguistics and its applicability to other areas of language studies. My purpose here is to show that while studies of acceptability in language grew out of a cognitive and quantitative tradition, the shortcomings it has been criticized for by linguists is a necessary boon to sociolinguistic investigation because of the ways in which it can be applied to variation in language.

Chomsky’s (1965) influential theory of language has driven the use of acceptability judgment tasks in language research. His distinction between “competence” (linguistic

knowledge) and “performance” (linguistic behavior) has long endured, and his assertion that “linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community” (p. 3) has arguably had an important influence on the assumed primacy of the “native speaker” in linguistics and applied linguistics, though Chomsky does not believe he is uniquely responsible for promoting this concept and has rarely commented on applied linguistics (Wu, 2008). Nevertheless, the competence/performance distinction is the main reason the grammaticality judgment task (GJT) or later, the acceptability judgment task (AJT) was initially and remains one of the most important methods of linguistic research.

In its most basic form, the GJT simply involves “explicitly asking speakers whether a particular string of words is a well-formed utterance of their language, with an intended interpretation stated or implied” (Schütze, 2011a, p. 349). These “strings,” usually presented to research participants as single sentences or lists of sentences, are “arbitrary situations for adults to deal with, which tap the structural properties of language without having any real function” (Schütze, 1996, p. 2). This avoidance of “real function” is purposeful; while the study of language-in-use can to some extent allow linguists to discern the structure of a language, naturalistic data does not allow the distinguishing of “possible from impossible utterances” (p. 350). Schütze mentions four unique affordances of GJTs: examining sentence types that rarely occur, examining “negative information” about “strings that are not part of the language,” distinguishing grammatical knowledge from accidents of speech, and minimizing other factors in the study of the mental nature of grammar (p. 2). This final point is controversial, as the extent to which other factors can be minimized is difficult to discern.

Theoretically, Chomsky’s generative grammar is an important catalyst for researchers’ interest in gathering data on the grammaticality of certain sentences. For Chomsky, competence,

“the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language,” and performance, “the actual use of language in concrete situations,” are distinct, and the linguist, if he or she wishes to determine the grammaticality of a particular sentence, needs a way to access that part of a person’s cognitive grammar faculties rather than “grammatically irrelevant conditions” such as “memory limitations, distractions, shift of attention and interest, and errors” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 4). This distinction has encouraged researchers to design tasks which allow access to their research participants’ “intuitions” (see Schütze, 1996), presumably guided by the cognitive mechanism of universal grammar (UG), an “innate endowment...of principles which are common to all languages” that allows humans to learn language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 18), rather than other aspects of cognition or allegedly confounding factors like those Chomsky lists above. The use of the term *grammar* here is twofold: linguists hope to gather reliable data from GJTs about whether certain syntactic structures are grammatical according to participants’ internal *grammar* (as a “component of the speaker’s mind”), which will allow them to construct a formal linguist theory of the *grammar* of the language in the sense of what is and is not part of the language (ten Hacken, 2011, p. 349).

The distinction between the terms “grammaticality” and “acceptability” is instructive, as it points the way toward the use of acceptability as a concept outside of theoretical linguistics and in more socioculturally oriented fields of language study. “Grammaticality” is a theoretical term which refers to the acceptance of a sentence or linguistic feature as a confirmed part of a language’s grammar (i.e., the UG in an individual’s mind). Thus, “a sentence that is well-formed according to a given grammar” (*grammar* here in either sense of the term) can be considered grammatical (ten Hacken, 2011, p. 349). However, the construct validity – i.e., “the degree to which inferences may be made about specific theoretical constructs on the basis of the measured

outcomes” (Babbie, 1998, p. 298) – of “grammaticality” remains questionable for linguists, since one can never be sure how the UG knowledge interacts with other factors. Thus, it seems clear that most researchers actually elicit judgments of “acceptability,” which “is a concept that belongs to the study of performance,” and that “grammaticalness is only one of many factors that interact to determine acceptability” (Chomsky, 1965, p 11). This admission that “acceptability” is only a partial way to access a research participant’s grammar instinct, or competence, is problematic to linguists who wish to develop theories of syntax, but the definition of acceptability is actually a great boon to those who approach variation in language – and judgments of variation in language – under the rubric of “language difference” as proposed, for example, by the translingual approach. Already in Chomsky’s introduction of the term “acceptability,” we can see a flexibility that will serve a variation-based approach to L2 writing well.

The main difference between acceptability and grammaticality is that acceptability is taken to include almost any other factor influencing a judgment about language use beyond (though also including) mental grammatical intuition. Greenbaum’s (1992) summary of acceptability calls it a judgment made by “native speakers as to whether they would use a sentence or would consider it correct if they met it” (p 451). To Chomsky, acceptability refers to sentences (grammatical or not) which are “more likely to be produced, more easily understood, less clumsy, and in some sense more natural” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 10). Greenbaum (1977) adds that “a given piece of language need not be inherently acceptable or unacceptable,” but that “its acceptability may depend on sociological or psychological factors” (p. 6), and Schütze (1996) notes that “acceptability” can connote “contextual appropriateness rather than structural well-formedness” (p. 27). Greenbaum (1992) mentions a number of other influences, including

“views that a sentence is nonsensical, implausible, illogical, stylistically inappropriate, or socially objectionable” (p. 451). While the difficulty in isolating grammaticality indeed presents a barrier to studies in (cognitive) linguistics, these “distracting” factors can and do, in fact, yield useful data for socially-oriented studies of acceptability.

2.5.2 Acceptability in world Englishes and related fields

World Englishes, as a research area motivated by sociolinguistic realities of the global spread of English, is a prime example of a field which is concerned with the construct of acceptability in a social and cultural sense rather than simply “grammaticality.” WE looks at acceptability as indexed by both individual and wider social attitudes at the micro (features of language usage) and macro (the status of language varieties) levels. In the micro sense, WE is concerned with the “acceptability” of variations or particular “features” of a language (which may be innovations, if accepted) in use; in the macro sense, WE considers the “acceptability” of a variety of English itself, based on the attitudes of English speakers toward its features, speakers, or functions and status in a given society. (This type of work has also been done by sociolinguists not necessarily associated with the WE tradition; see the edited collection by Greenbaum, 1977, for several examples involving English in Nigeria, Guyanese Creole, and modern Hebrew).

Kachru (1986a) lays out two senses of “acceptability” (or “acceptance”). For Kachru, “acceptability” “expresses a language attitude, and implies various types of appropriateness” (p. 16); this is “an external matter, educational or social” (p. 30). At the micro level, acceptability is an attitude toward an innovation in a non-native variety of English: Kachru describes the stereotypical reaction of a native speaker to a feature of a non-native variety as a judgment rendered by the statement “as a native speaker I would not use it” (p. 16). This acceptability

judgment is therefore taken to be indicative of social norms, cultural knowledge of the form and functions of linguistic items across contexts, educational models, and other “external” factors. It is not only native speakers who act as arbiters of acceptability, however; Kachru’s notions of endonormativity and exonormativity in WEs suggest that non-native speakers can either willingly adopt an exonormative standard, based on “a native model (e.g., American or British)” or an endonormative one, based on “a local educated variety as the model for teaching and learning” (Kachru, 1986a, p. 21). A non-native speaker, therefore, can easily have a similar reaction as the hypothetical native speaker mentioned above, and depending on the social context, may make an acceptability judgment based on a preference for his or her own established non-native variety or a native variety.

Bamgbose (1998) further develops the concept of acceptability in WE when he names it as one of the five “factors necessary for deciding on the status of an innovation” (p. 3). For Bamgbose, innovations are key to the development and recognition of a variety of English: “an innovation is seen as an acceptable variant while an error is simply a mistake or uneducated usage. If innovations are seen as errors, a non-native variety can never receive any recognition” (p. 2). Thus, Bamgbose also connects the micro-level acceptability of variations to the macro-level acceptability of non-native varieties. In order to determine whether a given usage is an innovation, the questions “How many people use the innovation? How widely dispersed is it? Who uses it? Where is the usage sanctioned? What is the attitude of users and non-users to it?” must be answered; Bamgbose calls these (respectively) demographic, geographical, authoritative, codification, and acceptability factors (p. 3), noting that acceptability is “the ultimate test of admission of an innovation” (p. 5). Li (2010) further argues for the continuing importance of

acceptability in determining the status of innovations, specifically in an era when English speakers use “the Internet as a catalyst of acceptance” (p. 627).

At the macro level, Kachru’s (1992) explanation of the development of institutionalized non-native varieties of English is analogous to the micro-level question of the acceptability of a variation: a variety of English can either be accepted or rejected by users; it can move from “non-recognition” to eventual “institutionalization,” which is “the sociolinguistic acceptance of new norms” or local models for English usage (Mollin, 2007, p. 34). Acceptability or acceptance by non-native (and perhaps native) speakers is therefore crucial in the question of a variety’s legitimacy and continued use. Kachru lays out other criteria for the ontological status of institutionalized varieties, including consideration of its “sociolinguistic status” (p. 39); the gradual acceptance of a new non-native variety is called an “attitudinal process,” which, along with the “linguistic process” of a variety’s development, is a key factor in the establishment of the variety. In order for a variety to have sufficient sociolinguistic status, users should accept the local norm. Kachru argues that “a variety may exist, but unless it is recognized and accepted as a model it does not acquire a status” (p. 57), and that non-native speakers (to say nothing of native speakers) are often “hesitant to accept” a local variety of English. Finally, in his discussion of the development of a local “model” (essentially defined as an accepted standard), Kachru again places social acceptability at the heart of non-native Englishes, which, he says, move from a status of non-recognition to sometimes mocking recognition (“English labeled *Indian* was an ego-cracking linguistic insult”) to eventual recognition or acceptance, when there is “linguistic realism and attitudinal identification with the variety” (p. 57).

With these two intimately related senses of acceptability together, we can begin to see the importance of the concept for studies of “non-standard” uses of English. At the micro level,

AJTs can be used to investigate how a particular variation which is attested in non-native usage is perceived by a participant, and it is assumed that this judgment will be based on conscious attitudes, beliefs, and so on, influenced by a participant's life experience. A judgment of "unacceptability" will be of interest to researchers, as might a comparison of AJT results to actual usage in the particular country or context under investigation. The actual judgment of acceptability or unacceptability may be less important than the reasons participants give or the discourse they produce as they make the judgment, which can be analyzed to discern broader orientations to norms, standards, attitudes, and beliefs about English (see, for example, Higgins, 2003, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). In addition, macro-level acceptability, or research investigating whether a given variety (or variant) is accepted by an individual or a speech community, can also be indirectly investigated by means of AJTs used in conjunction with surveys which ask direct questions about language attitudes. One does not need to be working exclusively in the WE paradigm in order to apply AJTs in this way; rather, the way that WE theorizes acceptability shows that it is relevant to any scholar working in a variation-based paradigm.

2.5.3 Re-theorizing acceptability judgment research

There is obvious resonance between the concept of acceptability and the variation-based or non-error based approaches to language difference in L2 writing described in the previous section. Shifting from a construct of "error" to one of "acceptability," in which "language difference" is confronted, discussed, and analyzed, will open up many new possibilities for research on readers' uptake of L2 writers' (and indeed L1 writers') texts, and this has important real-world consequences for writers.

In fact, most social theories of language which have risen to prominence in applied linguistics are amenable to views of “acceptability” which would interpret individual judgments of language use as being embedded in a social milieu rather than as products of cognitive phenomena. While many linguists take a view of one’s native language as a mental structure, social theories focus on the cultural forces which shape our conceptions of what language is or should be. For example, Bourdieu (1991) argues that a social study of language should “take as its object *the relationship between the structured systems of sociologically pertinent linguistic differences and the equally structured systems of social differences*” (p. 54, emphasis in original). Similarly, Bakhtin’s theories suggest that languages comprise “dynamic constellations of sociocultural resources that are fundamentally tied to their social and historical contexts” (Hall, Vitanova & Marchenkova, 2005, p. 2). In short, a social view of language, while not denying the worthiness of investigating the mental structures of grammar, instead emphasizes the multiple social and linguistic influences on language (and again, by extension, judgments about language) by all who use it. By now, it should be clear that acceptability is a useful construct for those who wish to investigate language difference and its consequences. Table 2.1 below proposes a “social/ideological model” of AJTs which differs from the “cognitive/linguistic” model.

Table 2.1 Comparison of linguistic/cognitive view and social/ideological view of AJTs

	Cognitive/linguistic	Social/ideological
Academic heritage	Generative linguistics, second language acquisition, cognitive psychology	Sociolinguistics, sociology of language, world Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca
Prominent goals of research	Build theoretical models of language (linguistics) or describe learner language (SLA)	Investigate perceptions about variations in usage
Understanding of acceptability	A judgment (at least partially) determined by an individual’s internal, mental grammar(s)	A judgment (mostly) produced by an individual’s encounter with norms, standards, attitudes

	Cognitive/linguistic	Social/ideological
Purpose of AJT	Allowing (indirect) access to learner’s internal cognitive process of making a judgment	Producing discourse about speaker’s judgments based on social factors
Texts used in AJT	Context-free “unusual” sentences	Samples of authentic language from media, literature, corpora, etc
Methods used for AJT	Questionnaire and/or interviews	Questionnaire and/or interviews
Type of Analysis	Often quantitative	Often qualitative
View of non-native speakers and their judgments	Learners of target language whose judgments describe their cognitive knowledge of the target language	(May be) competent speakers of non-native varieties whose judgments index norms, attitudes
Status of “unaccepted” instantiations of language	Not part of a language’s grammar; may be errors	Further source of investigation (to ask “why”); potential innovation in language use

My purpose in providing this table is to reiterate the ways in which a variation-based approach to judgments of acceptability goes beyond the theoretical linguistics approach and opens up new questions and possibilities for research. Rather than being limited to judgments about decontextualized sentences and whether or not they are a part of an individual’s intuitive mental grammar, the social/ideological AJT looks at naturally occurring samples of language and investigates all possible reasons for judging language use as unacceptable. Kachru referred to acceptability as an “external” matter, and a social or ideological view of acceptability acknowledges that making judgments about language – like the use of language itself – is an inherently social activity, and one that is frequently engaged in by all users of language. The section below explores this concept in more detail, looking at the everyday, commonplace use of judgments of acceptability and what this means for investigations of acceptability judgments.

2.6 Acceptability, ideology, and authority

While “acceptability” has its roots as a theoretical construct for investigating grammar, judgments of acceptability (or correctness, standardness, appropriateness, or any number of other concepts) are actually a commonplace reality in everyday language use. Research by sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists on language ideologies has shown that judgments of language use are a part of normal linguistic behavior, and that language ideologies emerge, as it were, in interaction (Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009) from metalinguistic talk. In this section I undertake a brief description of the role of acceptability judgments in talk about language from a ‘language ideology’ perspective, arguing that judgments of language are an indispensable part of any language user’s linguistic behavior. I look at perspectives from Milroy and Milroy (2012) and Cameron (2012) on what these judgments are, what they do, and how authority is implicated. Finally I take up the question of authority in judgments, arguing that authority is not (only) an institutional force, but a kind of social resource which individuals are able to claim in order to position themselves as credible judges of acceptability in language use.

2.6.1 Language ideology

Metalinguistic discourse, or talk about language, is a common everyday practice, and language ideologies are commonly produced through this kind of talk (Cameron, 2012; Liebscher & Dailey O’Cain, 2009; Laihonen, 2008; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). I use the term “ideology” or “ideological” in more or less its most basic meaning in order to distinguish a phenomenon like standard English or a judgment of acceptability in language as “ideological” (that is, wholly or partially constituted by beliefs, attitudes, or other subjective ideas) rather than, say “objective” or “scientific.” I adopt the perspective that language ideologies are simply “explicit metalinguistic...talk about language” with a “social character” (Laihonen, 2008, p.

669); they are a “set of beliefs about language shared by a community” (Bex & Watts, 1999, p. 169). The notion of language ideology thus provides a useful way to examine how people “take up” language use, since it recognizes the socially constructed nature of (un)acceptability of particular usages as well as the perceived legitimacy of language varieties.

2.6.2 Metalinguistic judgments as a linguistic practice

It has been argued that language ideologies, and specifically judgments of language use, are as much a part of language as its functional use is: language ideologies and metalinguistic judgments are “an integral part of using” language (Cameron, 2012, p. 3). Silverstein (1979) refers to linguistic or language ideologies as “any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use,” and argues that these ideologies are influential in shaping language use itself; “to rationalize it (language use), to ‘understand’ one’s own linguistic usage is potentially to change it” (p. 233). The influence of language ideology on language use can take place at the individual but more importantly the social level, as beliefs about language use and structure become reified and stable, influencing behavior. Thus language ideologies, often manifested in explicit judgments, play a key role in the ongoing maintenance of a standard language; as Cameron argues, “how people understand and evaluate language, and what they do with it... may not be so easily separated” (p. 32). There are two useful models for looking at the role of ideological judgments of language use: Milroy and Milroy’s “complaint tradition” and Cameron’s “verbal hygiene.”

Milroy and Milroy (2012) argue that the primary methods of maintaining standard English are first the codification of formal written English in “dictionaries, grammars, and handbooks of usage,” and subsequently “prescription through the educational system” (p. 30). The other important public method of maintaining standard English is what they refer to as the

“complaint tradition.” The “complaints” are mostly associated with public intellectuals, journalists, writers, politicians, and people who write letters to the editors of newspapers, and Milroy and Milroy separate them into two types: Type 1 complaints are “concerned with correctness” and attack “mis-use” and “errors” in English, while Type 2 complaints are “moralistic” arguments in favor of “clarity in writing” and attack “abuses of language that may mislead and confuse the public” (pp. 30-31).

The two types of complaints have a slightly different focus – Type 1 is focused on usages which are taken to be a violation of the structure of standard English, and is associated with the idea that a language is “degenerating” or that schools are no longer properly teaching grammar. These types of comments, while they sometimes refer to written English (as in the popular website known as “The ‘Blog’ of Unnecessary Quotation Marks”), often take language users to task for not following the norms of standard written English in their speech, as in the complaint cited by Milroy and Milroy that a professional used the form “I seen” rather than “I saw” (p. 31). Type 2 focuses specifically on standard written English; these complaints do not argue that the questionable usages are nonstandard, but unclear, dishonest, or irresponsible. The many complaints made in contemporary popular discourse about the use of the “passive voice” is one pervasive example of this type of complaint (see Pullum, 2014).

The Milroys refer to many of the complaints made about language as “irrational” and as resulting from a confusion between the norms of standard written English (which, they argue is more stable) and spoken, colloquial English. They also associate language complaints with social and political attitudes and “authoritarianism.” We will return to the question of authority in the next section.

Cameron (2012) proposes another model for describing judgments about language, which she refers to as “verbal hygiene.” Unlike Milroy and Milroy, Cameron does not dismiss ideological judgments of correctness and morality in language as “irrational,” but considers them “a discourse with a moral dimension that goes far beyond its overt subject to touch on deep desires and fears” (p. xiii). Verbal hygiene, she argues, is part of a “general impulse to regulate language, to control it, to make it ‘better’” (p. 9). It is something that all language users, not only pundits, engage in, and happens “whenever people reflect on language in a critical (in the sense of ‘evaluative’) way” (p. 9). This includes judgments which would fall under both Type 1 and Type 2 complaints in Milroy and Milroy’s schema: in addition to complaints about nonstandard usage, Cameron’s wide-ranging examples of verbal hygiene include practices like copyediting, campaigning for spelling reform, debating the use of non-sexist language, and mocking people’s accents.

Unlike Milroy and Milroy, Cameron rejects the dichotomy between professional linguists’ efforts to be “descriptive” of actual language structure and usage practices and linguists’ condemnation of “prescriptivism,” which usually means laypeople’s judgments of correctness in language according to traditional grammar or other non-professional or “folk” rules of English. She refers to linguists’ tendency to condemn prescriptivism as itself a prescriptive stance, and argues that linguists are involved in practices which lend themselves to prescription, including language planning and lexicography. While description of language is often treated as scientific and rational and prescriptivism as ideological and irrational, Cameron asks “a real and serious question as to whether it is inherently irrational to care about the way language is used” (p. 222). She argues that every language user (including linguists) agrees in practice that “some kinds of language really are more worthwhile than others” (p. 224).

Rather than isolating non-experts' judgments as ideological, she proposes some guidelines for discussing language judgments made by anyone. One can legitimately make value judgments on the use of language, she argues, but not all judgments are equally valid. Debates about language use should be subject to the same rigorous standards of argument as other topics are, including "reasoned argument, logic, the marshaling of evidence," and so on (p. 225), and objective facts about language should not be ignored, even if judgments are often subjective. She also argues for further inquiry into how and why specific "rules" of language have come to be promoted, and whose interests and agendas are served by judgments about language use.

Though they differ in their emphases, both models of judgments about language use described above offer a useful framework for analyzing judgments of acceptability in language. Rather than regarding acceptability judgments as inherently irrational, non-scientific, and irrelevant to understanding what constitutes language, they should be understood as an important component of language use and language users' linguistic repertoires, and as contributing in no small measure to the ongoing maintenance of standard English in both its spoken and – too often ignored – its written form. Considering all judgments of correctness, appropriateness, rightness or wrongness as being connected to questions of social, political, and linguistic values levels the playing field, as it were, for researchers to explore judgments from many different types of people. While traditional notions of grammaticality may privilege professional linguists' judgments and may regard laypeople's judgments with suspicion as to whether they are truly based on grammatical intuition, sociolinguistically and ideologically oriented studies are free to look at judgments from linguists, non-linguists, and a variety of others in between (e.g., language professionals such as teachers, writers, editors, and so on) and investigate the ways in which they make judgments and the reasons they give for doing so.

The reasons for judgments – that is, the “why” questions Cameron refers to – are tied to the notion of authority, or the basis on which judgments are made, because in reality, judgments of language have two parts: first, the actual judgment, and then, the reason or basis for the judgment, or the authority on which a person is able to make it. Below, I briefly describe language ideology approaches to authority, and then argue that a more individual or intersubjective notion of authority is more appropriate in investigations of authority in judgments of linguistic acceptability.

2.6.3 Authority: Claiming the right to make judgments about language use

Traditionally, the concept of authority has been approached in studies of language ideology from an institutional perspective, referring to authority as coming from the state (Errington, 1995), the public (Gal & Woolard, 1992), language academies such as those in France and Spain (Villa, 2013), academic or educational institutions (Bermel, 2006), or “writers, teachers, media practitioners, examination bodies, publishers, and influential opinion leaders” (Bangbose, 1998, p. 4). In this view, “authority” is understood in a political or otherwise institutional sense, as something external to an individual language user which exerts power or control and which can be appealed to as a reason for making a judgment or for support in a debate about acceptability.

Milroy and Milroy (2012) operate with a similar external understanding of authority. Though the Milroys’ book is subtitled “Authority in Language,” they do not explicitly define their understanding of authority; it seems, however, to be linked to their understanding of “prescription,” or “imposition of norms of usage by authority” (p. 2). In turn, they argue that prescriptivism, in the views of many who complain about language, creates a connection between “good grammar” and “obedience to authority” in a general sense (p. 134). In addition to

this general understanding of authority as a person or institution with power or control, they also refer to people's tendency to refer to dictionaries and other books as "authorities," which, although it is less institutional, still conceives of authority as something external to the individual language user.

Cameron's (2012) view of authority differs from a strictly institutional one. She argues that "it is not always so easy to identify the relevant authority, or to know whence it derives its legitimacy" in matters of language judgments (p. 6). This suggests that while there can be external sources and institutions for authority in language (most notably, linguists and other scientists), there is also a sense in which authority is a less clearly-defined abstract concept; Cameron refers to authority in language as "the respect people have for custom and practice, for traditional ways of doing things" (p. 13), and argues that "linguistic conventions are routinely felt to be of a different order from many other social rules and norms. Their authority is not just an external imposition, but is experienced as coming from deep inside" (p.14). The way Cameron describes authority in language judgments here suggests that convention in language use itself has authority ("their authority"), but also that authority is something people feel "inside." While acknowledging this highly subjective, personal notion of authority, however, Cameron notes that various people in positions of power operate as authorities in judging language, such as editors, corporations, lexicographers, and so on.

While authority is most often conceived of in studies of language judgments as something external, imposed by institutions, people in power, or publishers of prescriptive language materials, Cameron's assertion that authority is "experienced as coming from deep inside" is worth more consideration. Studies of acceptability have analyzed participants' metalinguistic discourse as a way to measure what has been referred to as "ownership," a

concept which has been used to describe this internal disposition Cameron refers to above – sometimes referred to as legitimacy, indigenization, or the degree to which speakers “project themselves as legitimate speakers with authority over the language” (Higgins, 2003, p. 615).

While the metaphor of “ownership” to describe the legitimacy of English speakers as people with the right to use, shape, and judge English has been prominent in applied linguistics for twenty years, I suggest that a subjective and language-user-focused definition of “authority” is more useful for discussing an individual English user’s relationship to the language and the judgments of linguistic acceptability.

I advocate the concept of authority rather than ownership (e.g., Higgins, 2003) for several reasons. First, the concept of ownership – even though it has been used in order to argue that native speakers are not the sole “owners” of English but that non-native speakers are also legitimate owners (see Widdowson, 1994) – encourages a short-sighted view of English and language in general that views it as a static entity that can be “owned” by a person or group.

Secondly, actual users of English, even when they are involved in making judgments or engaging in ideological debates about it, are always already sidestepping the ownership question, because the reality of the language and its use are immediately relevant in their lives whether or not they feel “ownership.” Regardless of whether people perceive themselves to be “owners” of English, they must face real-world language problems in the same way any other speaker would: by drawing on their own knowledge of, proficiency in, and beliefs about English – and in this and similar studies, they are given the task of making a judgment regardless of whether they feel ownership of the language. Thus, the pertinent question becomes not whether they talk about language in a way that positions them as owners of English, but how they talk about how they

are able to claim the authority, or in a sense *ethos* – their *own* credibility and authority – in order to describe how or on what grounds they make judgments of (un)acceptability.

Thus, I posit a notion of authority as a symbolic resource to be accessed by language users, and one which, like language ideology itself, emerges in the normal course of language use (which itself includes judgments). Just as Henry (2010) argues that labeling an English use as “Chinglish” is not an objective linguistic categorization but is “produced in the intersubjective engagements between language learners and native speakers” (p. 669), authority needs to be conceived in a more intersubjective way; when we make judgments about language, we actually position ourselves as people with authority based on our own knowledge, experience, and self-conception. Rather than viewing authority as an external force, I view it as something that individual language users claim for themselves. Authority is produced by individuals’ drawing on ideologically-inflected understandings of language, language learning, institutions, and the relationship between readers and writers. This will be further explored in the data analysis in Chapter 7.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined four intimately interrelated concepts: the ideological construction of standard (written) English, non-error-based approaches to variation from standard written English, theorizing acceptability as an approach to people’s reactions to variation, and the role of authority in acceptability judgments. Based on the framework laid out above, we might expect to see complex and contradictory understandings of what constitutes acceptable usage for English writing in different contexts. Writing is likely to be a site of struggle, and various theoretical positions outlined above suggest that there may be factors of push and pull toward both favoring a standard written English based on Inner Circle norms, and

local standards in which English is written in accordance with norms that have developed in a particular context. Different people may make different arguments for the (un)acceptability of particular non-standard usages and make different claims to authority based on their own contexts, backgrounds, and dispositions.

Surprisingly, very little research has been carried out on these topics, especially in the area of writing. By asking people what they think about actual written language, we can probe their attitudes about the “deviant” features, and see whether these can point us toward understanding how local context makes a difference in terms of how acceptability is perceived. We know that “standard English” is an ideological construct which writers – especially academic writers, if they wish to have the benefit of being considered worth the attention of readers – must aspire to. Yet because standard written English is a kind of chimera, there is no simple account of how writers follow norms of standardness nor how readers determine what they deem acceptable usage, and on what grounds, and with what authority. It seems clear that a number of diverse factors play a role in any English user’s understanding of acceptability: individual proficiency, exposure to written texts, concerns of audience, rhetorical purpose, and institutional and individual understandings of appropriate style and register, to name a few. An ideological approach to acceptability judgments of putatively non-standard usage in texts offers fruitful opportunities for research in second language writing.

Chapter 3: Literature review of empirical studies of reactions to variation from standard English

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical underpinnings of an approach to (written) English which does not assume a stable, clearly defined category of “error,” but assumes that reactions to variations from a presumed standard (written) English are ideological, subjective, and contextual, and that the globalization of academic writing and of English itself further calls into question traditional notions of standards and authority in written English usage. It also proposed “acceptability” and the use of acceptability judgment tasks as a potentially useful method of studying reactions to “nonstandard” English usage in texts.

With this in mind, I review in the current chapter empirical studies from several different research traditions – L1 composition, L2 composition, and world Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – in order to examine the methods they use and results they obtain when investigating reactions to deviations from presumed standards in English. While they were carried out in different fields, what the studies reviewed below all have in common is that they involve providing written texts (whether full-length compositions or lists of sentences) to research participants to solicit their judgments of language use. Studies in each of the three areas are reviewed below, with discussions of the unique characteristics of the approach taken by scholars in each field, and finally a conclusion discussing strengths and weaknesses of each approach in light of the present study.

3.1 Error studies in composition

While error was one of the most important facets of composition since its inception in the late 19th century, it was not until the 1980s that an understanding of error as a social construction, or a result of reader response to a text, came to prominence. The contemporary

tradition of L1 composition error studies begins with Shaughnessy's pioneering 1977 work *Errors and Expectations*. Shaughnessy's work signaled the end of the era Bitchener and Ferris (2012) refer to as one of "error as character flaw" (p. 30). Santa (2005), in a similar classification, refers to the history of L1 composition until the 1960s as an era of "attention to mechanical correctness" (p. 25); during this period the predominant view was of "error as deficit and... the writer as the source of the deficiency" (Olinger, 2011, p. 419). In the last thirty years – particularly in the 1980s and 1990s – a number of conceptual essays (Anson, 2000; Bartholomae, 1980; Horner, 1992; Lu, 1994; Williams, 1981) and empirical studies (especially Connors & Lunsford, 1988; Hairston, 1981; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008; and Wall & Hull, 1989) were instrumental in recasting the notion of error as a highly subjective and variable social construction. In a sense, the translingual perspective, championed by Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011) and used in an empirical study by Zawicki and Habib (2014), represents the logical theoretical and methodological culmination of this line of thinking in composition studies. One can easily trace Williams' (1981) notion that error is a "flawed verbal transaction between a writer and a reader" to Lu's (1994) discussion of error as a "conflict between the codes of standard English and other discourses" (p. 455), then to Canagarajah's (2006) assertion that nonstandard usage can be "an active choice motivated by important cultural and ideological considerations" (p. 609), and recently to Zawacki and Habib's (2014) description of error as a negotiation not only "between the student and the instructor," but "a whole host of interested others who populate the contact zone where error is negotiated" (p. 187). Errors have thus been placed in a social context where the issue is less one of absolute adherence to unchanging rules of correctness in usage and more one of how writers and readers deal with the many changing contexts and standards for language use in writing.

Though error studies in L1 composition have had less prominence in the discipline since the 1990s, the empirical studies reviewed below show the methods that composition researchers have used to determine both the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of writing teachers’ perceptions of and reactions to ‘errors’ in student writing. The studies I review here represent two streams of research: the first, “error gravity,” was a prominent type of study in both L1 and L2 writing from late 1970s until the early 2000s, and it still exists as an approach. Although this research has been more thoroughly developed in L2 writing (see, for example, Rifkin & Roberts, 1995, and Roberts & Cimasko, 2009, for reviews of error gravity research), error gravity has been the most common empirical method for advancing error studies in L1 composition; interestingly, all of the classic error gravity studies (with the traditional method of presenting participants with a list of decontextualized sentences containing errors, and asking them to rate the egregiousness of the errors) use businesspeople as their participants, since a sense of how the average “layperson” views written English errors is seen as an important indication of how composition instructors should shape their pedagogy. The second stream of research is what I refer to here as “post-hoc error analysis”. This category involves looking at texts that have already been written and/or marked by instructors in order to determine which errors are the most commonly noticed or marked by instructors. Two studies are less classifiable, with one in each category: Wall and Hull (1989) is similar to an error gravity study but uses a full composition rather than a list of sentences (which is an important difference, described below), and Zawacki and Habib (2014) involves no texts, only interviews about faculty members’ attitudes toward their L2 students errors’ – a kind of post hoc error analysis without the use of actual texts by the researchers. (Though this study technically involves L2 writers, it is included here because the work is situated in the area of writing across the curriculum (WAC) and adopts a translingual

perspective, and WAC and translingual writing are largely situated within the L1 composition disciplinary community.) Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 below outline the major empirical error studies which involve readers' judgments of texts in the tradition of L1 composition research.

Table 3.1 Error Gravity studies reviewed

Author (Year)	Participants/sources	Instrument/text
Hairston (1981)	84 nonacademic professionals	65 sentences based on common student errors
Wall & Hull (1989)	55 English instructors (primary/secondary/college)	One college admissions essay
Gilsdorf & Leonard (1990)	200 business academics, 133 business executives	58 sentences with errors typical of business students
Beason (2001)	14 business professionals in two cities	Five versions of a business document, each with specific types of errors deliberately inserted
Leonard & Gilsdorf (2001)	130 business academics, 64 business executives	50 sentences, similar to 1990 study
Gray & Heuser (2003)	84 nonacademic professionals	88 sentences, similar to Hairston (1981)

Table 3.2 Post-hoc error analysis studies reviewed

Author (Year)	Participants/sources	Instrument/text
Shaughnessy (1977)	4,000 student writers	4,000 texts by community college writers
Connors & Lunsford (1988)	300 college writing instructors	3,000 academic texts marked by college writing instructors
Lunsford & Lunsford (2008)	Unspecified number of college writing instructors	827 academic texts marked by college writing instructors
Zawacki & Habib (2014)	18 university faculty members	Interviews about “disciplinary genres and the performance of L2 writers”

3.1.1 Post-hoc error analysis studies

Shaughnessy's (1977) study, for which she gathered "some 4,000" placement essays by incoming first-year university students, outlines the most common errors that "basic writers" make in their compositions, in the categories of handwriting and punctuation, syntax, spelling, vocabulary, and what she calls "common errors," or those which "have the power, when they occur frequently, to hinder or even halt the average reader" (p. 158). Shaughnessy's central point is that error is a developmental stage for basic writers, and composition instructors need to adjust their expectations in order to see them as novices who will improve, rather than individuals whose linguistic and intellectual skills are so flawed that they have no hope of producing readable prose. Though she did not explicitly question the notion of error from a sociolinguistic perspective, Shaughnessy's view of error as part of a developmental stage that basic writers pass through was influential in launching further studies of errors and how they were perceived by teachers and non-teachers alike.

Connors and Lunsford's 1988 study is perhaps the most well-known empirical error study in L1 composition; it was influential enough to be replicated by Lunsford and Lunsford in 2008 and is frequently cited as evidence of how patterns in students' composition errors have changed (or not changed) over time. Connors and Lunsford's goal was in part historical: they wanted to compare composition instructors' response to student errors in the 1980s with previous taxonomies and/or lists of the most common college writing errors created by researchers in the early 20th century. The authors collected essays that had already been written and marked by teachers; they received over 20,000 papers and analyzed a random sample of 3,000. Connors and Lunsford created a taxonomy of errors by reading 300 papers and attempting to identify every error in the papers, including those which were not marked by the teachers who had corrected

them. This produced a taxonomy of about 50 different types of errors. They used the top 20 errors from this taxonomy to train the raters of the 3,000 papers, and were able to produce a table of which errors occurred most frequently in all the essays (as determined by the raters), how often those were marked by the teachers, and a comparison of those errors identified by raters with those marked by the teachers.

Connors and Lunsford describe several findings: first, “teachers’ ideas about what constitutes a serious, markable error vary widely” (p. 402). Second, teachers on average marked only about 43 percent of the top 20 errors, and even the most frequently marked errors were only marked “two-thirds of the time” (p. 402). Third, a teacher’s choice to mark any given error is complex, and depends on “how serious or annoying the error is perceived to be at a given time for both teacher and student, and how difficult it is to mark or explain” (p. 404). Finally, the authors claim that although patterns of error may have changed since the early 20th century, students appear to be making roughly the same number of errors per composition as they have for the last century. Connors and Lunsford conclude by stating that the study “has raised more questions than it has answered” – chief amongst them being “Where....do our specific notions of error come from” (p. 407)?

Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) replicated Lunsford and Connors’ (1988) study twenty years later. Their procedures for collecting and coding the texts were very similar to the original study (though they noted that the process of recruiting participating teachers and collecting texts was much more laborious due to increased strictness in research ethics review processes). The authors noted two “major shifts” in the papers since the 1988 study: first, the 2008 papers were on average more than twice as long as those collected in 1988, and second, the 2008 papers were more focused on “argument and research” where the 1998 papers had been mainly “personal

narrative” (p. 793). They also note the presence of errors related to problems with documenting or integrating source texts, which may have been related to the shift in genres being written.

Overall, Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) noted “how little some things have changed in terms of teacher comments” in the two studies; in general the errors marked in both studies were “the highly visible and easy-to-circle mistakes” (p. 794). The number of errors per paper barely changed (2.26 in 1988 to 2.45 in 2008), and only slightly fewer of the errors were marked (38% in 2008 vs. 43% in 1988), which they attributed to the longer texts in 2008. While their focus, like the original study, was not qualitative descriptions of how teachers reacted to error, but a quantitative tally of what types of errors occurred in student essays and which were most frequently marked by teachers, their study reveals that types of errors shift depending on the genres being written, and that this requires composition scholars to “continue to work toward a more nuanced and context-based definition of error” (p. 801).

Zawacki and Habib (2014) is the only study to take an explicitly translingual approach to error. Though they do not examine specific texts, their research involved interviewing faculty members about their experiences of L2 writers in their courses, and for this paper they focused on the theme of error and how the instructors “negotiated” error. They found that for the faculty members they interviewed, “decisions about whether to ignore errors, correct them, take off points, or fail the paper became much more complicated when the errors involved lexical choices that raised worrisome questions about comprehension” (p. 192.) That is, the reason most of the instructors were concerned about student errors was that they felt some lexical and grammatical errors belied students’ lack of content knowledge. The study also addresses questions of “fairness” to L2 writers in education and the workplace – not in the sense of equitable grading (i.e., “equal” treatment of L1 and L2 writers) – but in the sense of adequately preparing them to

meet readers' expectations in other areas of their lives. Finally, the authors discuss the participants' changes in "readerly disposition" depending on the genre of writing they assign their students; the authors found that assigning reflective writing allowed the instructors to shift their focus from perceived errors, "to stop worrying about perceived external pressures and expectations, and to focus on *how* the students are learning the material and on their processes for writing about that learning" (p. 200). The authors conclude that faculty members' willingness to "negotiate" errors "derives from a complex mix of motives, including their learning and writing goals for students, their sense of what's fair to L2 students along with the other students, and their understandings – and misunderstandings – of L2 error" (p. 202).

3.1.2 Error gravity studies

Hairston (1981) was interested in the views of the "administrators and executives and business people" who "care about standard usage or at least some features of it" (p. 794). Her research asks of these people: "Do all mistakes matter? If not, which ones do? Do they [non-writing teachers] have the same priorities for writing that we do" (p. 794)? Her study was a sixty-five item questionnaire; each item was an English sentence with "one error in standard English usage" and had three options for a response: "Does not bother me; Bothers me a little; Bothers me a lot" (p. 795). This research design has much in common with linguistic AJT studies (see, for example, Ross, 1979) and some error gravity studies in L2 writing. Hairston categorized the errors (based on the number of responses each got) into "Outrageous, Very Serious, Serious, Moderately Serious, Minor, or Unimportant" (p. 796). In the "Outrageous" category were what Hairston refers to as "status markers," like the case of using "brung" instead of "brought," which 79 of her 80 participants said bothered them a lot. This category also included other verb use associated with nonstandard dialects, such as "we was," "Jones don't think," and so on. This

category also included double negatives. The Very Serious category included sentence fragments, comma slices, and parallelism problems. A number of different types of grammatical deviances from standard English were in the serious to fairly serious categories, and the minor and unimportant categories were mostly for stereotypically unacceptable usages like qualifying “unique” (e.g., “very unique), “different than” vs. “different from,” and treating “data” as a singular rather than a plural noun. Hairston’s study inspired a number of other error gravity studies; it was explicitly replicated by Grey and Hueser in 2003, and was cited as the primary inspiration for Leonard and Gilsdorf (1990), which itself was replicated by Gilsdorf and Leonard in 2001.

Grey and Heuser (2003), in their replication of Hairston (1981), identify what they take to be a number of weaknesses in Hairston’s original study, such as a lack of consistency in the number of errors from each category, a lack of explanation about why categories were included, some sentences that contained multiple or no errors, and a lack of clear reasoning for how she ranked the seriousness of errors in her results. The authors attempted to rectify this by, in part, removing some sentences, purposefully including some correct sentences (and including a “no error” response option), and re-ranking Hairston’s results in order to compare them to their own. Their instrument, based on Hairston’s, included 88 items, and was completed by 84 non-academic professionals. Grey and Heuser found that, in general, the amount of “bothers me a lot” responses decreased from the original study, while the number of “bothers me a little” responses increased. They also found that the ranking of most bothersome errors was similar between the two studies, with the most bothersome errors for both being non-standard verb forms, double negatives, object pronouns used as subjects, and subject-verb disagreement. There were some differences: the 2003 study included tense switching and spelling among the most bothersome

errors, which the earlier study did not, while the 1981 study included sentence fragments and capitalization errors, which the later study did not. Overall, the authors believe that their results suggest a “trend toward tolerance” which they encourage (p. 62). Notably, Grey and Heuser found variability in responses to two errors of the same type; for example, for two nearly identical sentences containing subject-verb agreement errors, 60% of respondents found one very bothersome, while only 28% found the other only somewhat bothersome. The authors suggest that this may be due to the content or meaning of the sentences. In general, they note that error gravity studies such as theirs are “weakened by the impossibility of researchers knowing for sure which part of the sentence participants are judging,” and that the decontextualization of sentences may influence the way errors are perceived (p. 61).

Leonard and Gilsdorf (1990) also based their study on Hairston’s, though their interest was more explicitly in the business world; their participants were drawn from members of an academic association for business communication (200) and executive vice presidents of top American companies (133). Their instrument was a 58-sentence questionnaire, using sentences that would appear “in a business context” and containing usages “seen frequently...in business students’ writing” (p. 142). They used Hairston’s three-point scale of bothersomeness. They ranked the ten most and ten least distracting “questionable elements” (notably, Leonard and Gilsdorf reserve judgment on whether the usages are errors, including some elements which are proscribed by traditional writing handbooks but may be common in contemporary usage), finding that most (7/10) of the most distracting items involved “basic sentence-structure errors” like run-on sentences, fragments, faulty parallelism, and so on. The least distracting elements tended to be related to word choices deemed improper by tradition, such as “feel” rather than “believe,” “quote” for “quotation,” “data” for “datum,” and so on. Like Gray and Heuser,

Leonard and Gilsdorf found inconsistency in the ways that pairs of errors of the same type were received by participants: of the 19 error types which had two sentences, 11 pairs had inconsistent reactions from participants. In their 2001 replication of the study, Leonard and Gilsdorf (using a new 50-sentence questionnaire and a 5-point rather than a 3-point scale) had similar results. The 2001 study involved 130 academic business communication specialists and 64 business executives, and again the most distracting usages were those involving sentence structure errors which made an “impact on readability” (p. 449). Similarly, the least distracting errors were those which involve traditional “rules” of usage which are not ungrammatical, such as “very unique,” ending a sentence with a preposition, or starting a sentence with “but.” The authors also found, once again, that the same errors were not equally bothersome when they occurred in different sentences. They also found that academics were less tolerant overall than executives, which had also been suggested by the results of their earlier study. In general, Leonard and Gilsdorf’s work suggests that changes in acceptable usage are not particularly troublesome for business professionals, and that writing teachers should be willing to be flexible as the language changes.

Wall and Hull’s (1989) study falls somewhere between the error gravity studies (which mostly examine the reactions of non-academics) and the post-hoc error studies focused on writing teachers’ reactions to errors. They ask: “How do readers— in particular, teachers—label and interpret errors in a text” (p. 261)? Unlike Hairston, they did not use decontextualized sentences, but full essays; they gave participants essays they had not previously read, and asked them to a) mark all errors, b) choose the three most significant errors and explain their significance, and c) “comment on the overall strengths and weaknesses” of the writer (p. 265). The 55 participants included elementary, secondary, and university instructors. The overarching question the authors had in mind was to discover whether all of these teachers constitute a more

or less cohesive “interpretive community” when it came to identifying and marking errors; the hypothesis was that they would share a “common vocabulary for labeling the ‘errors’ they see in texts” as well as a “common sense of when it is appropriate to do so” (p. 266).

The authors looked for areas in which there was high, medium, or low consensus in terms of errors marked by teachers. The authors identified 35 errors in the paper; the average number marked by the participants was 32.73. The most high-consensus errors were those involving punctuation: 20 of the 25 highest-consensus errors involved punctuation, usually in the form of missing commas, although there was little agreement about how to remedy these errors. The “medium consensus errors” involved what the authors call “style/structure” and “logic/clarity,” often having to do with the participants being unclear about the writer’s intended meaning and specific terms the writer used; the authors argue that this shows “how much readers depend on culturally established textual cues to guide them in constructing meaning” (p. 271). The lower consensus errors were the majority of those marked: around 75% of the places marked as errors in the text were marked by fewer than 20% of participants. Many of these responses were idiosyncratic; the authors cite the comment “Not an error exactly, but makes no sense” as a representative example (p. 273). Overall, the authors describe many of the teachers’ comments as “ambiguous,” frequently including vague descriptions of the errors as ‘wrong,’ or needing to ‘change,’ without specifying what they perceive to be the nature of the error. The authors’ conclusions are specifically intended to provide implications for how teachers should re-consider how they teach about and respond to error so as to better serve their student; they especially urge better and more training in terminology for identifying and labeled errors. One part of their conclusion, addressed to students, is instructive regarding their conclusions about teachers’ responses to errors:

- For particular teachers errors may have several different and interchangeable names
- Different teachers may name the same kinds of errors differently
- Certain jargon terms like “usage” have different meanings depending upon the teacher
- What teachers consider an error in writing may vary considerably
- A teacher’s labels may be imprecise or even missing
- Suggested revisions or comments like “wrong word” imply a version of the text that the teacher is constructing, not exactly the one a student wrote or intended
- Even if all errors are identified with labels, some require consulting a rule or convention to be corrected while others involve revisions that are more negotiable (pp. 286- 287)

Beason’s (2001) study of business people’s reactions to errors is one of the most methodologically sophisticated of the L1 error studies; it is a two-part questionnaire and interview study of 14 business peoples’ reactions to errors in a text. Beason uses a full composition (written for a business context rather than an educational one) with errors deliberately inserted and represented in bold text in order to draw participants’ attention to the errors being investigated. The participants respond to each error on an error gravity scale of 1-4 (not bothersome at all, somewhat bothersome, definitely bothersome, and extremely bothersome). In a quantitative analysis of the average ratings for each error, Beason found “widespread inconsistencies—from type of error to type of error, from person to person, and even among the responses of an individual person to errors of the same kind” (p. 46). In his analysis of the qualitative interview data, Beason found greater consistency in participants’ reactions due to what he calls “extra-textual issues” involving the “needs, biases, and intentions

of readers” (p. 46); even if different errors may elicit different qualitative reactions from the participants, they are similar enough to group together into several categories relating to how the participants construct their image of the writer and the writer’s ethos based on errors. These categories are: writer as writer (hasty writer, careless writer, uncaring writing, and uninformed writer), writer as a business person (faulty thinker, not a detail person, poor oral communicator, poorly educated person, and sarcastic, pretentious, aggressive writer), and writer as a representative of the company (representing the company to customers and representing the company in court). The names of Beason’s categories show the many ways the participants constructed a negative image of the writers; he concludes that it is necessary to understand “the myriad ways in which a writer’s ethos can be unnecessarily endangered by errors” (p. 59).

3.1.3 Summary

The studies reviewed above vary in their focus. Most use some combination of quantitative methods, such as counting the number of errors marked by participants or the ranking of errors in terms of how bothersome they are to readers, and qualitative methods, such as interviews with participants about their attitudes toward texts and writers vis-à-vis errors. They also had different purposes, with some aiming to discern which types of errors are most common and/or commonly marked by college writing teachers (e.g., Connors & Lunsford, 1988; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008; Shaughnessy, 1977) with conclusions about participants’ attitudes or judgments of errors being a byproduct of the larger study, while others sought specifically to understand how and why readers reacted to errors the way that they did (Beason, 2001; Hairston, 1981; Gilsdorf & Leonard, 2001; Leonard & Gilsdorf, 1990; Zawacki & Habib, 2014). While all of the studies suggest there is rarely agreement on which errors are most serious or even which usages in a specific piece of writing *are* errors, there are ways of talking about error which seem

to be common across the participants: perceived errors are seen as writers' lack of content knowledge or familiarity with genre expectations (Zawacki & Habib, 2014), regarded as reflecting poorly on the writer (as a writer or as other identities, as in Beason, 2001), and in general participants are willing to acknowledge grey areas when it comes to their perception of error, even as they often express strong feelings about the unacceptability of obvious "surface" errors (Gilsdorf & Leonard, 2001; Leonard & Gilsdorf, 1990; Wall & Hull, 1989).

3.2 Comparisons of NES/NNES responses to L2 writers' errors

L2 writing (and applied linguistics more generally) embraced studies of error gravity to a greater extent than L1 composition. Like L1 composition error studies, L2 writing error studies rose to prominence in the 1980s, and have gradually tapered off, with only a few studies in recent years (e.g., Hyland & Anan, 2006; Roberts & Cimasko, 2009). Perhaps not coincidentally, error gravity studies emerged in TESOL and L2 writing around the same time Shaughnessy's (1977) work began to influence first language composition. Error gravity studies occurred in L2 writing with more regularity than L1 composition in the early 80s; Rifkin and Roberts reviewed over two dozen studies of error gravity in second language studies in 1995.

The purpose of error gravity studies, which can be seen in L2 writing as being part of a broader tradition of error analysis in second language acquisition (e.g., Corder, 1967), is generally to understand how readers (often faculty in specific disciplines) view lexical and grammatical errors in L2 writing (or oral production, though I will focus on writing here), and specifically which errors they regard as more (or less) serious. This information, in turn, is meant to be useful for ESL writing instructors in prioritizing their own efforts in both pedagogy and assessment.

In addition to error gravity studies, L2 writing research also has a tradition of comparing native and non-native speakers' ratings of L2 writers' texts – what we might call, to borrow the title of Kobayashi's (1992) article, “native and nonnative reactions to ESL compositions.” Unlike error gravity studies, these studies are usually concerned with the reader's reaction to a whole composition, focusing on a variety of linguistic and rhetorical features of texts rather than being limited to reactions to lexical and/or grammatical issues; often an analytic or holistic rating for a whole piece of writing is used (as in Shi, 2001). While some of these studies deal primarily with assessment and testing, and are geared toward developing validity in language tests and other assessment procedures, some of them directly or indirectly address differences in native and non-native speakers' reactions to errors.

The studies outlined below are drawn from these two streams of research – error gravity and comparisons of NES/NNES reaction to ESL writers' texts – and were selected because they met both the criteria of (a) addressing in some way the reaction of readers to errors in L2 writers' texts and (b) specifically comparing NES and NNES participants' reactions to those errors. Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 below provide brief synopses of relevant details of these studies.

Table 3.3 Error gravity studies comparing NES/NNES responses

Author (Year)	Participants	Text/Instrument
James (1977)	17 NESTs, 17 NNESTs	50 sentences typical ESL errors
Hughes & Lascaratou (1982)	10 Greek NNESTs, 10 British NESTs, 10 British non- teachers	32 sentences w/ typical Greek errors
Davies (1983)	34 Moroccan NNESTs, 34 British non- teachers	82 sentences w/typical Moroccan errors

Author (Year)	Participants	Text/Instrument
Sheory (1986)	62 US NESTs, 34 Indian NNESTs	20 sentences with errors found in 97 compositions by ESL writers
Santos (1988)	144 NES content professors, 34 NNEST content professors	2 compositions by Chinese and Korean undergrads
Schmitt (1993)	18 Japanese NNESTs, 20 NESTs in Japan	30 sentences w/ errors collected from Japanese student compositions
Porte (1999)	16 Spanish NNEST professors, 14 NES professor working in Spain	20 sentences w/ errors collected from Spanish undergrad compositions

Table 3.4 Comparisons of NES/NNEST reactions to L2 writers' texts

Author (Year)	Participants	Text/Instrument
Takashima (1987)	1 Japanese NNEST, 2 NESTs	1 composition by Japanese English major graduate
Hyland & Anan (2006)	16 Japanese NNESTs, 16 British NESTs, 16 British non-teachers	150-word composition written by Japanese undergraduate
Rinnert & Kobayashi (1996, 2001)	127 inexperienced Japanese ESL writers, 128 experienced Japanese ESL writers, 104 Japanese NNESTs, 106 NESTs in Japan	2 compositions by Japanese undergrads
Kobayashi (1992)	145 US NESs, 126 Japanese NNESTs (various academic levels)	2 compositions by Japanese undergrads

3.2.1 NES/NNES error gravity studies in L2 writing

The earliest prominent study of error gravity in L2 writing was James (1977); the provisional nature of James' study is clear from its informal tone and the author's self-deprecating statement that the research is "crude" and "not 'scientific'" (p. 124). However, James' methods and specifically his comparison of NES and NNES reactions to errors were influential and led to a number of studies in the same vein (Hughes & Lascaratou in 1982, Davies in 1983, and Sheory in 1986). James "collected, from numerous sources, one hundred errors committed by foreign English learners" and pared this list down to 50 errors (in ten categories) which were "recognisable in no further context than the sentence containing it" (p. 116). These 50 sentences were presented to a group of 20 NESTs and 20 NNESTs (3 of each misunderstood the directions, leading to a final *n* of 17 for each group), who were asked to "(i) underline the mistake if you think there is one, (ii) write a correction in column two, and (iii) show how serious you consider the mistake by writing a number – 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – which says how many marks you think should be 'lost' for that mistake," with 5 being the most serious (i.e., -5 marks) and 0 being the least (i.e., there is no mistake) (p. 118). This method would prove to be common to many error gravity studies comparing NEST and NNEST reactions.

James' findings showed that the NNES participants were more strict in their marking, averaging -138 marks total to the NESs' -123. He found most participants in each group to be mostly consistent in their ratings, but that the two groups had different ranges, means and distributions of marks. He suggests that based on the distribution the NNEST group could possibly be split into two groups, one relatively intolerant of error, and the other relatively tolerant, though admits this is mostly speculation. Finally, James looked at particular items and types of errors which showed similarities and differences between the two groups; he found that

they tended to be mostly in agreement about errors involving articles, tense, and lexical choices, but that NNEs appeared more strict on errors of “case” (prepositions) and lexis, while the NNESTs were more strict on errors of tense and concord. By combining both gravity ratings and frequency of errors in the samples, James proposes a general hierarchy of “error types considered most serious,” which he ranks as follows: “transformations, tense, concord, case, negation, articles, order,” and finally lexical errors.

Hughes and Lascaratou (1982) conceived of their study as a response to James’, with three important differences: all errors came from a homogeneous group (secondary school-level Greek EFL learners) of which the NNEST participants were also members, a third group of NES non-teachers was involved, and participants were asked not only to rate error gravity but if they gave an error a five (the most serious rating), they were asked to explain *why*. Their instrument involved 32 sentences from Greek students’ English compositions involving eight error categories, with some correct sentences as distractors, and it was administered to ten participants each in groups of a) Greek NNESTs, b) British NESTs, and c) British NESs who were not teachers (the latter group was included to represent some sense of how non-specialist native speakers viewed non-native speakers’ errors). The authors found, confirming James’ (1977) finding, that NNESTs were stricter than both groups of NESs, although they also found NNESTs more lenient in their view of spelling errors. Their results also revealed an important distinction that would be shown in other similar studies – NNESTs focusing on rule violation as a reason for marking an error as serious, and NESTs focusing on understanding or intelligibility. The authors explain that the Greek teachers often felt that the students “should know better” or should have mastered some “simple” rules of English earlier in their studies. Finally, Hughes and Lascaratou touch on an interesting finding which they find “amusing” but which reveals the enormous

amount of individual variation in the interpretation of error (which is more fully revealed in Hyland & Anan, 2006 below) when they describe how many participants marked some “correct sentences” as containing errors: the sentence “The boy went off in a faint,” which was taken from a dictionary, was considered an error by 2/3 of the total participants, including 9/10 of both NES groups (teachers and non-teachers). The authors conclude by suggesting that NNESTs should perhaps be more aware of NES priorities regarding intelligibility.

Davies (1983) administered a very similar questionnaire, involving 82 sentences with “invented examples...typical of...Moroccan secondary school learners of English” (p. 304). Comments on the errors in this study were optional, and participants were 34 Moroccan NESTs and 34 British NESs who were not teachers. Once again, the NNEST group was seen to be more strict, with an average number of 140.3 marks deducted, as opposed to the average of 97.28 for the NES group. Davies describes the differences as in part having to do with differences in “attitudes toward the test and towards errors in general” (p. 306). The non-teacher NES participants tended to view the task as fun and interesting, and were enthusiastic to participate, while the NNESTs tended to view the task as tedious, depressing, and anxiety-provoking, perhaps a “reminder of their failure” as teachers (p. 306). In terms of differences on specific types of errors, NNESTs were more strict in their judgments of errors of morphology and tense, while NESs were more strict with errors involving subordinate clauses and the order of words in sentences. Davies describes the Moroccan NNESTs’ reactions to morphology and tense errors as being “syllabus”-related concerns which suggest “inexcusable carelessness or... a failure to grasp an elementary and frequently practised point” by students (p. 307), though these were seen as relatively unproblematic by the NES group. Finally, Davies found that for most of the sentences which contained errors that could be seen as relating to transfer from French or

Moroccan (the students' primary languages), the NES participants had a harsher rating than the NNESTs (in 24 of 28 such sentences). Davies suggests, then, that if a reader shares the writer's language background, he or she is more likely to be lenient with errors involving possible interference. However, she also notes that the opposite effect may sometimes be possible, as the NNESTs were much harsher with a few of the French-like sentences, including "He interests himself in horses." Davies perceptively concludes that error evaluation and assessment by teachers is never an objective measure, but is always likely to be influenced the teacher's "competence in both the target language and the learners' other languages, familiarity with the learners and their background, teaching priorities, the syllabus being used, in short, by the whole teaching and learning context against which he or she will inevitably view the errors" (p. 310).

The final study reviewed here which follows the NES/NNES error gravity comparison model inspired by James (1977) is Sheory (1986), who sought to investigate how NES and NNES teachers react to ESL writers' errors, whether they operate with an implicit "scale" of error gravity, and whether those scales are the same or different for NES and NNES teachers. To compile his questionnaire, Sheory used 97 randomly selected compositions written by ESL students (of various language backgrounds) at a U.S. university. He arranged these into eight error categories and created a questionnaire of 20 items based on these (the sentences in the questionnaire were invented rather than taken directly from the compositions). The participants included 62 NESTs from the U.S. and 34 NNESTs from India. Echoing previous studies, Sheory found that the NNESTs were stricter (with an average of -59.82 marks) than the NESTs (with an average of -50.19 marks). He also found that the groups seemed to operate with different implicit scales of error gravity: while both groups rated errors involving verbs the most seriously, there were statistically significant differences in how the groups rated errors involving tense,

agreement, indirect question formation, prepositions, and spelling, with NNESTs rating each category more strictly. However, NESTs were more strict with lexical errors. Sheory concludes with a call for NNESTs to change their priorities in error correction to more closely mirror NES preferences, assuming that the goal of ESL instruction is communication with native speakers, but also asks whether NESTs are too lenient and may be “short-changing” learners who may desire more correction.

3.2.2 NES/NNES reactions to texts

Takashima’s (1987) study is notable in that it was one of the first to compare native and non-native speakers’ reactions to L2 writing errors in the context of a whole piece of writing (or “free composition”) rather than attempting to statistically measure error gravity for different types of errors. In this small study, one Japanese NNEST and two NESTs (of unspecified backgrounds), all university instructors, read a composition by a Japanese university graduate (from a Japanese university) and were asked simply to “correct it” (p. 4). Takashima’s article reports the results of the corrections for three of the six paragraphs originally written, showing each of the three participants’ corrections (or, in some cases, non-corrections), and offering a short commentary on each. He then compares the NNEST’s corrections to those of the NESTs overall, showing that while both groups corrected almost all the same errors, the NNEST did not correct certain spelling, verb, and article errors, and “badly made” several corrections related to word choice and transitions. (For the most part, the author refers to NNEST corrections that differed from those made by the NESTs as “badly made,” a claim which should not necessarily be taken at face value. For example, where the NESTs wrote “I think I owe a great debt of gratitude to...” the NNEST wrote “Since I came here I have learned a lot from...” which Takashima considered a “bad” correction.) Takashima concludes that Japanese EFL teachers

need more training and need to consider the “content or discourse level” more seriously, in addition to the “grammatical or sentence level” (p. 48). While Takashima admits that his small study is “just a beginning” (p. 48) its use of a whole composition as an instrument to compare NEST and NNEST reactions to errors was innovative.

Like Takashima (1987), Santos (1988) used as her instrument two actual compositions written by L2 writers rather than the decontextualized, invented sentences used by the previous studies reviewed. Santos’ was a large-scale error-gravity study which, while one of its findings is important in the area of comparing NES/NNES reactions to ESL writers’ errors, differs in several ways from the other error gravity studies discussed here. Santos’ main goal was not comparing native and non-native reactions, but actually comparing the reactions of professors in different disciplines to ESL compositions, in particular the “hard sciences” and social sciences/humanities. In addition to looking at the disciplinary differences, Santos aimed to compare the professors’ ratings of content and language in the essays, as well as how they rated the comprehensibility (ability to understand), acceptability (whether they viewed it as approximating native-like ability), and irritation (the degree to which they found the error bothersome) of errors in the essays, as well as what factors influenced their ratings, such as age, language background, and so on. The participants were 178 UCLA professors, with 144 NESs and 34 NNEs. Participants read the two essays, and were asked to rank them on six different scales regarding language and content. They were then asked to go back through the composition and “correct everything that seemed incorrect,” and to list the “most serious” errors, which they were to rate in terms of comprehensibility, acceptability, and irritation. These procedures are notable in that, while Santos had already identified the errors in the composition, her instrument did not single them out for participants’ attention. Briefly, Santos found that participants rated

the essay's language more highly than their content; in terms of errors, they found sentences with errors to be, in general "highly comprehensible, reasonably unirritating, but linguistically unacceptable" (p. 76), with lexical errors being judged the most serious in both essays. She also found that the older professors tended to rate errors as less irritating than the younger, and most importantly for this review, that NNES participants rated the acceptability of language used "significantly lower" than the NESs (p. 81). Thus, while Santos' main focus was not a direct comparison of NES and NNES reactions, this echoes previous findings that NNESs tend to judge language use more harshly. Santos attributes this to the fact that NNES professors "have attained an extremely high level of proficiency" in English and judge more harshly "because of their investment of effort in the language" (p. 85).

Kobayashi (1992), like Santos, used two actual compositions written by L2 writers in her study of NES and NNES reactions to ESL compositions. While Kobayashi's study does not involve error gravity ratings, it does involve a comparison of various holistic ratings of the compositions (grammaticality, clarity, naturalness, and organization) as well as reactions to specific errors, between NES and NNES readers of varying academic levels (undergraduates, graduate students, and professors in the USA and Japan). Kobayashi sought to compare reactions not only across language background but also academic status, and to identify reasons for different patterns in reactions in terms of both evaluation (holistic ratings) and correction (individual errors). There were 269 participants: 145 American NESs and 126 Japanese NNESs, all involved in language-related academic fields. The procedures were nearly identical to those described in Santos' study above. Contrary to many of the error gravity studies, this study found that NESs were "more strict about grammaticality" and made "far more corrections" than the NNESs, though the NNESs were more strict with ratings for clarity of meaning and naturalness.

Kobayashi also found that the NESs were more likely to detect and correct the “unambiguous errors” that she and three NES informants identified in the essays, while the NNEs left many article, preposition, and number errors uncorrected. She found that NESs tended to provide more of a variety of possible corrections to word choice errors, and that they were more willing than Japanese participants to offer “more than mere mechanical corrections” – so much so, in fact, that NESs occasionally made corrections which directly contradicted the writers’ communicative intentions, as determined by follow-up interviews with the two essay writers themselves. Finally, she found that the Japanese participants seldom corrected usages which could be traced to the influence of the usage of English loanwords in Japanese, such as Japan-specific meanings of words like “manners” (meaning unofficial social expectations) and “master” (meaning a work supervisor), supporting Davies’ (1983) finding that usages related to L1 background are less likely to be judged harshly by those who share the same background. Kobayashi concludes by noting a certain “superiority” of NES editors of L2 writers’ texts, but warns of their inability to understand when “an English lexical item is used to express what is essentially a Japanese concept” (p. 105). She also notes that within the groups, “there were significant interaction effects between language and academic rank” (p. 106), and that the higher-status Japanese participants more “accurately” detected errors. Thus, while the NESs were seen as both stricter and more “accurate” judges, the study also suggests that those with higher academic status (and presumably more experience with academic reading, writing, and editing) tend to react to errors similarly, regardless of language background.

Schmitt undertook an error gravity study in 1993 which looked at sentences involving multiple error categories, using Lennon’s (1991) “extent/domain” classification: the “extent” of an error is the actual “linguistic unit which the error permeates,” such as “morpheme, word,

phrase, clause, sentence, or discourse,” but the “domain” of the error has to do with to what extent and how much “the reader/listener must examine to determine if an error has occurred” (p. 183). The study in part sought to examine whether the extent/domain classification was “a viable way to describe errors,” but the primary focus of the study was whether Japanese teachers judged errors more harshly than AETs (assistant English teachers, the term for the NESTs that the Japanese government recruits to work in Japanese English classrooms alongside Japanese teachers), and if so, which categories of errors they judged more harshly. Schmitt collected 14 compositions from Japanese students in a pre-college English program in Japan, from which he gathered 60 sentences containing errors (of ten different extent/domain categories), which were pared down to 30 for the instrument. Participants were asked to judge the seriousness of the errors on a seven-point Likert scale, and then to answer the question “on what basis did you judge the seriousness of the errors” (p. 185)? 18 Japanese NESTs participated, as did 20 AETs. Schmitt found that the mean of the error seriousness ratings was higher for the Japanese teachers in every error category with the exception of “word/discourse” (i.e., word choice) and “sentence/sentence,” with four of the categories having statistically significant differences. Those categories with significant differences tended to be more “local” errors, such as morpheme or subject-verb agreement. Although the Japanese teachers judged language accuracy more harshly, both groups of teachers reported that their main criterion for judging error seriousness was comprehensibility (although three of the Japanese teachers also cited grammaticality). This is in contrast to Hughes and Lascaratou (1982) and Hyland and Anan (2006), which both found that NNESTs tended to focus much more on grammaticality than comprehensibility.

Kobayashi and Rinnert undertook research similar to Kobayashi (1992) in 1996 and 2001 (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996, and Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001), which again involved groups of

NNES Japanese participants (127 inexperienced Japanese ESL student writers, 128 experienced Japanese ESL student writers, and 104 Japanese EFL teachers) as well as NESTs (106 native-speaking EFL teachers working in Japan). For these studies, the researchers again used two essays by L2 writers, but edited them to create 16 different essays (or eight versions of each) to investigate different variables, including various combinations of American or Japanese rhetorical patterns, syntactic and lexical errors, disrupted sequences of ideas, and error-free prose. While these studies are less focused on errors (and not at all on specific errors) than on participants' holistic ratings, both articles touch on findings relevant to the groups' reaction to errors. In the 1996 study, the authors found that while both the NES and NNES teachers judged essays with language use errors more harshly than the Japanese students did, the NESTs and NNESTs "did not differ in the overall severity of their judgments of language use errors" (p. 422), which the authors note contradicts both previous error gravity studies that showed NNESTs to be harsher, and Kobayashi's 1992 study showing NESTs to be harsher. In the 2001 study, the authors again note that the teachers were much more likely to make comments on language use errors than the students, showing that while the NESTs and Japanese NNESTs differed very slightly on how many of them commented on language use (57% of Japanese NNESTs and 61% of NESTs), both groups of students were much less likely to do so (32% of the inexperienced writers and 39% of the experienced writers). The error-related results of these studies suggest that there may be less of a quantitative difference in NEST and NNEST reactions to errors in ESL compositions than proposed by the authors of the error gravity studies involving decontextualized sentences.

While many of the L2 writing studies on error in the 1990s involved Japanese participants, Porte's (1999) study was carried out in Spain. Using an error gravity approach

similar to many of the other studies reviewed here, Porte surveyed 16 Spanish NNES professors and 14 NES professors using an instrument of 20 sentences drawn from a group of 79 compositions collected by the researcher (notably, Porte used the actual sentences from the compositions, rather than creating new sentences with the types of errors found in the compositions, like Sheory did in his 1986 study). The study used a scale of 0-5, with no error correction or explanations on the part of the participants. As in many previous studies, the NNEST group deducted more points than the NEST group (an average of -55.12 vs. 48.07, respectively, which was statistically significant). In particular, the groups' differences in judgments of tense and spelling were statistically significant. However, Porte ran a strength of association test which suggested that "relatively little variability between groups could be accounted for by the NS/NNS variable, and it may well be that we have to look for less obvious contrasts to explain some of these findings" (p. 431). Porte also noted that certain sentences had a surprisingly (to him) low number of marks deducted, and speculates that this may have to do with familiarity with the students' L1, which could lead to teachers being "desensitized to error" (p. 432). Finally, Porte suggests that future research should "consider what might be gained from introspective or retrospective data from subjects" (p. 432).

The most recent prominent study investigating NES and NNES reactions to ESL compositions, Hyland and Anan (2006), combines some innovative features of previous studies. It uses a composition written by an ESL university student (in this case, a 150-word text by a Japanese student) rather than decontextualized sentences, and asks participants to identify and correct all errors, including identifying which are the "most serious"; like Hughes and Lasacaratou (1982), it involves not only teachers but also non-teacher NESs and asks for explanations about *why* certain errors are ranked as the most serious. Like both Santos (1988)

and Kobayashi (1992), the researchers identified 11 “target errors” in the original composition (in nine different error categories). The essay was given to the participants (16 Japanese NNESTs, 16 British NESTs, and 16 British non-teacher NESs), who were asked to evaluate them holistically, identify and correct all errors, select and rank the three most serious errors, and give the reasons for identifying these three as the most serious. The authors found that both the NEST and NNEST groups recognized over 80% of the target errors, with the Japanese group finding just slightly fewer than the NEST group. They also confirm Hughes and Lascaratou’s (1982) finding that NNESTs are more likely to rely on (in Hyland and Anan’s words) “infringement of rules” when judging error gravity, while NESTs are more likely to cite “unintelligibility” in their judgments (p. 512). For all three groups, four types of errors in particular garnered the judgments of being the most serious: agreement, word form, tense, and word order. The most notable finding of Hyland and Anan’s study is that, in addition to their 11 target errors, a total of 42 other “errors” were noted by participants, with the Japanese group in total identifying 38 errors, the non-teacher NES group identifying 22, and the NEST group identifying 16. The authors point out that there was much less inter- and intra-group agreement about the “non-target” errors than the target errors, and identify three categories into which the non-target errors found by participants fell: *style* (e.g., formality and appropriacy), which was more notable to the NES groups, *discourse* (e.g., cohesion and organization), which was more notable to the Japanese NNEST group, and *semantics* (e.g., meaning and clarity), which was common to all groups.

3.2.3 Summary

All of the L2 writing studies reviewed here have the common property of comparing native English speakers’ reactions to L2 writers’ errors to the reactions of non-native English

speakers. While many of the error gravity studies seem to clearly show that the overall strictness or harshness with which NNESTs regard writers' errors is greater than that of NESTs (and non-teacher NESs), several of the findings point to a more nuanced picture: NESTs actually found more errors when they were given a whole composition (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 1992; Takashima, 1987), and sometimes there was no real difference in the extent to which native and non-native speakers noticed or commented on errors (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996). There was great variability both between and within groups of NEST and NNEST participants when they were not reacting to errors that were already "targeted" by researchers (Hyland & Anan, 2006). Taken together, the findings of the studies above suggest that while NNESTs may, on average, judge errors more harshly, NESTs may be likely to notice and correct more errors. Perhaps most importantly, the various methodologies of these studies reveal gaps in what kinds of knowledge can actually be obtained from such studies, and the use of whole texts with no *a priori* determination of errors by Takashima, Kobayashi, and Hyland and Anan (and the wide variety of responses they received) further sheds light on the limitation of error gravity studies if the researcher desires a picture of how both NES and NNEST readers react to what they perceive as errors when they read L2 writers' texts. It seems clear that a fuller and more complex picture of how readers react to language usage in texts can be obtained by giving readers the opportunity to read whole compositions and identify particular instances they find unacceptable.

3.3 Acceptability studies in world Englishes and ELF

The final category of studies reviewed here, acceptability studies in World Englishes and ELF, has roots in sociolinguistics, and is more directly related to traditional (socio)linguistic studies of acceptability than the previous two sections. Although these studies seldom claim an explicit link to acceptability studies in linguistics (e.g., Quirk & Svartik, 1966) and

sociolinguistics (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977), their use of AJTs (a term discussed in detail in the previous chapter) and their authors' participation in the tradition of WE scholarship places them firmly in the descriptive tradition in linguistics from which AJTs first emerged as a method. Crucially, unlike the studies in L1 and L2 composition mentioned above, AJT studies in WE and ELF do not operate with a notion of error; the authors are more interested in determining participants' reactions to features that are assumed to be in some way typical of (potentially) legitimate varieties of English. While the methodologies and participants' reactions can be similar to those of error studies, these studies focus on differences between English varieties and what people's reactions to these differences can tell us about the participants' attitudes toward particular usages, or the varieties themselves.

It is important to note that these studies have not been specifically oriented toward written language (except in the case of Gupta, 1988, Ivankova, 2008, and Parasher, 1983), but tend to use written texts as a proxy for "language" in general – a potentially problematic conflation, but one that is by no means unique in the domain of linguistics, as discussed in Chapter 2. Where they differ from the error studies reviewed above is that the studies below are much more likely to use a two-part, mixed-methods approach to probe the participants' reasons for their judgments and their attitudes toward the usages in order to answer a variety of different research questions. I have divided the AJT studies into four basic types:

- 1) Micro-level, which includes studies that use traditional AJTs (i.e., ones with decontextualized sentences, similar to error gravity studies) for the purpose of investigating a particular feature of a variety;

- 2) Macro-level, which includes studies that use traditional AJTs in order to investigate to what extent a particular variety of English is emerging as acceptable by speakers or non-speakers of the variety;
- 3) Discursive, which includes studies that use AJTs primarily as a tool to produce participant discourse which is analyzed to investigate their orientation toward or “ownership” of English (an application of AJTs unique to WE, though it was also used in a sociocultural SLA study by Goss, Zhang, & Lantolf in 1994);
- 4) Open-ended textual, which comprises studies done using whole texts rather than decontextualized sentences (but without “target errors” as in Hyland & Anan, 2006, above). The tables below outline the studies reviewed.

Table 3.5 Micro-level AJTs reviewed

Author	Participants	Texts
Bautista (2004)	205 Philippine university students	20 sentences (11 common to Philippine students; 9 ‘correct’)

Table 3.6 Macro-level AJTs reviewed

Author	Participants	Texts
Murray (2003)	253 English teachers in Switzerland (138 NES, 104 NNES, 11 ‘bilingual’)	11 “typical Euro-English sentences”
Chen & Hu (2006)	21 international business people working in China	11 sentences typical of Chinese English; 6 Chinese idioms in English
Mollin (2005, 2007)	435 European professors	20 sentences “alleged to be typically Euro-English”
Y. Wang (2013)	769 Chinese ESs (502 university students, 267 professionals)	10 sentences with “deviations” from ENL, typical of CE use
Yang & Zhang (2015)	14 Chinese NNESTs	20 sentences (10 with putative features of C, 10 distractors from literature or student essays)

Table 3.7 Discursive AJTs reviewed

Author	Participants	Texts
Higgins (2003)	12 Outer Circle ESs (India, Malaysia, Singapore), 4 Inner Circle ESs (US)	24 sentences attested in various WE varieties
Bokhorst-Heng, Alsaqoff, McKay, and Rubdy (2007)	8 Singaporean Malay ESs	Same as Higgins
Rubdy, McKay, Alsaqoff and Bokhorst-Heng (2008)	12 Singaporean ESs (4 Chinese, 4 Malay, 4 Indian)	Same as Higgins
Wiebesiek, Rudwick, and Zeller (2011)	20 South African Indian ESs	3 sentences (2 typical of SAIE, 1 not)

Table 3.8 Open-ended textual AJTs reviewed

Author	Participants	Texts
Parasher (1983)	2 British NESs, 2 American NESs, 2 Indian NNESTs	188 professional letters from India
Gupta (1988) (reports two mini-studies)	Researcher & her students; 5 NESTs (2 British, 2 US, 1 Australian)	89 texts from Singapore; 1 text from Singapore
Ivankova (2008)	Russian ESs (n not specified)	“passages of written texts in China English produced by educated Chinese speakers of English”

3.3.1 Micro-level AJT

Bautista (2004) makes acceptability the focus of her study on the modal verb *would* in Philippine English. She presented an AJT focused on *would* to 205 college freshmen, who were given the options “correct, not correct, and can’t decide” and told to make corrections when necessary (p. 116). The author examined the corrections and analyzed the results with descriptive statistics and some discussion of individual items of interest. Results showed that higher-proficiency students tended to judge “standard American English”-style sentences as correct and to “correct the deviant sentences better than the students with low proficiency” (p. 122). Bautista

suggests that proficiency, as well as the fact that “modals have been taught poorly” in the Philippines might account for nonstandard usage, but also notes that ideas of “uncertain future, especially hopes, are expressed with *would*,” which is attested in a corpus of Philippine English and was considered acceptable by most participants (p. 124). Bautista concludes that the “non-standard” use of *would* “could have come from a convergence of imperfect learning, non-assertiveness, and simplification” (p. 126). She recommends that future research use AJTs “made up of items appearing in discourse, not in isolated sentences” (p. 126). Overall, this study shows the usefulness of AJTs when presented alongside other data: Bautista considers her results in light of an informal analysis of local textbooks, other studies of Asian Englishes, and the Philippine section of the International Corpus of English. This suggests that sociocultural context should play an important part in WEs studies involving AJTs, as it does in the studies reviewed below.

3.3.2 Macro-level AJTs

Another area in which AJTs have been used in WEs research is to investigate whether “developing” varieties of English are becoming institutionalized or gradually accepted. Since acceptability (by a variety’s own users) is one of the major factors in the development of a variety, AJTs administered to either those who are putative users of that variety or to other speakers can help researchers to discern whether particular innovations, or indeed the variety as a whole, is accepted by them. The two main varieties in which these studies have been used are Euro-English (Mollin, 2005, 2007; Murray, 2003) and China English or Chinese English (Chen & Hu, 2006; Y. Wang, 2013). While these studies are clearly important in establishing the status of these varieties, their theory and methodology of AJTs has not always been clearly stated.

Murray (2003) carried out a survey of Swiss English teachers in order to both “find out about teachers’ attitudes to changes which Euro-English might conceivably bring to ELT” and “explore the acceptability of certain types of Euro-English formulations” (p. 154). Her participants were 253 English teachers in Switzerland of varying language backgrounds, though nearly 55% identified as native speakers of English (p. 154). The results of the attitude portion suggest the teachers held a fairly “tolerant” view of non-native English usage, though native speakers expressed more favorable views of Euro-English than did non-native speakers. The AJT portion of the survey found respondents tending to reject “violations of rules” (see similar findings in L2 writing studies reviewed above) such as “the film who I saw,” but tending to accept “possible but unusual structures” such as “that is the car of my dentist” (p. 160). Murray believes that the general acceptability of the “unusual” structures is an indication of Euro-English’s possible future development in education: “non-rule breaking Euro-English usage will increasingly find its way into listening and reading materials, which will serve as indirect models for learners’ speaking and writing” (p. 160). While her conclusions are intriguing, Murray’s AJT itself is problematic for several reasons: first, for her purposes, authentic language is necessary, yet the source of the sentences is not provided, nor is a rationale for their inclusion in the task. In order for the participants’ acceptance or rejection of the sentences to be valid, the widespread usage of the linguistic features given needs to be attested. Similarly, she lists a “standard ENL version” in contrast to each of the “Euro-English” items, but in some cases it is unclear why the ENL version is considered standard.

Mollin (2005, 2007), in a comprehensive three-part investigation into whether Euro-English can be considered a legitimate variety, adapts Murray’s AJT, referring to the items as examples of “what the literature has alleged to be typically Euro-English” (2007, p. 180). She

also states that the use of items from a corpus of Euro-English would have been preferable (2005, p. 164). Mollin's explanation of the AJT's purpose seems to conflate a cognitive/linguistic view with a social/ideological view: "to reflect the norm of English that respondents follow, the standard in their mind" (p. 165). Mollin compares the results of the AJT to the participants' (435 European professors from varying countries and disciplines) self-reported competence in English; she reports that more "native-like" responses on the AJT correlated with self-reports of higher competences, and that more acceptance was correlated with lower competence, which "shows that speakers do not accept the allegedly Euro-English forms because this is the standard they wish to adhere to, but because they do not know any better – were they told that native speakers consider this an error, they would in all likelihood try to avoid these forms" (p. 182). Mollin also includes an attitude section on macro-level acceptability of Euro-English on her survey, in which only five percent of participants reported aiming to speak "English as it is spoken in mainland Europe" (p. 182). The prominent place of an AJT in Mollin's study and its explanatory power when combined with other measures of attitude and competence suggests the AJT is particularly suited to studies of controversial varieties of English.

Another such variety, Chinese English, has also been investigated with the use of AJTs. Chen and Hu (2006), in a study of non-Chinese English speakers, administer two AJTs as part of a larger attitude-based questionnaire which is similar to Hu's work with Chinese students (2004) and teachers (2005). While those studies focus on macro-level acceptability, asking questions about whether participants have heard of Chinese English and whether they accept it, Chen and Hu's study adds AJTs with samples of putative Chinese English, eliciting native speakers' judgments of these sentences as another measure of macro-level acceptability. This section of the

questionnaire, however, suffers the same problem as Murray's: the choice of sentences is not attested or explained, which is particularly problematic in the context of China, where a distinction between "Chinglish" (as learner error) and "China English" (as standard English with some Chinese characteristics) has been posited by Hu (2004). In the first AJT section, sentences like "Is this seat empty?" and "I'm a public servant" seem puzzling choices for a study about Chinese English (p. 235). A second task on "Chinese sayings," which asks participants to guess the meaning of a Chinese idiom rendered in English, seems more suitable. Overall, although the authors convincingly claim that the results of all their questionnaire items point to the acceptance of Chinese English by the participants, the lack of rationale for including AJT items causes that part of the study to seem less credible, and underscores the unique importance of authentic language for AJTs in WEs studies.

Y. Wang (2013) fills this gap in her own China-based acceptability study by specifically choosing sentences for her AJT which have been attested in various sources (e.g., online publications, corpora, etc.). While Wang situates her work in the ELF rather than the WE tradition – and frames her work as investigating "non-conformity to ENL norms" rather than strictly "China English," I include her study here because its methodology and concerns are very similar to those of Chen and Hu (2006). The study involved administering an AJT to 769 Chinese participants (502 university students and 267 professionals), followed by interviews with 35 of them (12 English majors, 12 non-English majors, and 11 professionals). Wang found that participants' average rating for all the items on the AJT (on a 5-point scale) was slightly closer to 3 (mildly acceptable) than 2 (mildly unacceptable), and that the mode of all responses to all items was firmly within the "mildly acceptable" range, suggesting a "positive orientation" to the sentences (p. 265). In the qualitative data (which included comments on the AJT and

interviews), however, Wang found a greater ambivalence, with participants sometimes favoring a more native-like standard, and sometimes a more local one. In interview data, she found participants had views of ENL as “the essence of English” (p. 269), as being more “norm-based” (p. 270), and “socially preferred” (p. 272), but that they also felt more ELF-like (or endonormative) usage was suitable for communicative purposes and the expression of “Chinese cultural identity,” which was viewed as positive (p. 276). The ambivalence of the results again shows the usefulness of following a quantitative AJT with a qualitative data collection procedure.

The final study in this section, Yang & Zhang (2015), was in part inspired by a preliminary analysis of some findings from my own doctoral study (published in Heng Hartse & Shi, 2012), and is both a macro-level AJT study (aiming to see whether features of CE index acceptance of CE as a variety) and a discursive AJT (using a method similar to that of Higgins, 2003, described in detail in the section directly below). Seeking to find out how the participants reacted to features of CE and whether they actually associated them with CE, the authors presented 14 Chinese English teachers with a 20-item AJT (including putative features of CE and distractors, with response options OK, Not OK, and Not Sure) which they discussed in dyads. Interestingly, the phrase “China English” was never mentioned, and “Chinese English” only by one dyad, while there were numerous mentions of “Chinglish.” The authors found that participants were likely to accept lexical features of C but reject most syntactic features, and that in general their acceptance of putative CE was more likely when the feature resembled standard (inner circle) English. Yang and Zhang conclude that “the notion of CE is esoteric” to participants, and its putative features are paradoxically either very similar to standard English or too stigmatized to be considered legitimate by participants, seeming to leave no room for actual

features of CE. These findings differ from earlier studies which implied a growing acceptance of CE among teachers.

3.3.3 Discursive AJTs

The first study to fully appropriate the idea of AJTs in WE research, representing perhaps the first instance of the social/ideological AJT I described in Chapter 2, was Higgins (2003), which employed the “concept of ownership to see how speakers’ talk enacts identities that carry legitimacy as English speakers” (p. 623). Higgins administered an AJT to 16 speakers of English from both Inner and Outer Circle countries; participants, who were international students from India, Malaysia, and Singapore in an advanced ESL composition course at a U.S. university (n=12) as well as white middle-class Americans (n=4), were paired in dyads by their country of origin. Higgins used conversation analysis to examine the talk produced by the dyads’ discussion of how to respond to each sentence on the AJT. Her “purpose...was not to see whether participants accepted specific forms, but to elicit and record talk that might contain within it their stances toward English” (p. 625). In her conversation analysis, Higgins examined “the language of the actions the participants took as they shifted their footing from receptor to interpreter to evaluate the sentences,” focusing on “references to the speakers’ own English usage” as well as the use of modals and human subject pronouns (p. 629). Higgins found that all groups “displayed similar indicators of authority over English” such as using the phrase “*you can say...*” although Outer Circle speakers “displayed less certainty” (p. 640). She suggests that this may be due to “multiple and conflicting norms” which circulate in some contexts and calls for a more nuanced alternative to simply seeing English users as native or non-native speakers (p. 641).

Higgins’ innovative use of AJTs to investigate “ownership” and “orientation” to English suggests that the process of making acceptability judgments can be used to investigate a variety

of attitudinal aspects of WEs. Two related studies have taken up Higgins' methods: Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, and Rubdy (2007), and Rubdy, McKay, Alsagoff and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) both adapt Higgins' framework and research questions for the specific context of Singapore: the first study examines the ownership of English among Singaporean Malays, while the second does the same with Singaporean Indians. The studies use Higgins' AJT and are likewise more interested in the process of decision-making than the judgments themselves. In both studies, the dyads are grouped by social class (upper-middle or lower-middle) and age (older or younger) for a total of four groups. After a discussion about the uses of English for each ethnic group (Malays tend to have less cause to use English in Singapore, while Indians are the only group which uses it as an intraethnic lingua franca), the authors report on each dyad, offering excerpts of their discussion followed by conversation analysis, attending to the same features as Higgins (2003). The authors found that the Malay groups tended to rely more on exonormative rules than the Indians, and that generally the younger dyads in both groups seemed more confident about their own judgments. While the scope of both studies is limited, they do suggest that local English norms tend to be more accepted by the young in Singapore, and that the Malays may have been more influenced by their classroom learning of English while Indians may have been more influenced by their non-school usage of English. Like Higgins, the authors suggest that their work calls the native/nonnative dichotomy into question, and additionally, that the officially promoted government view of English relies too much on this and other stereotypical views of English which ignore the more nuanced reality of usage and ownership of English among Singaporeans.

Wiebeseck, Rudwick, and Zeller's (2011) exploration of South African Indian English (SAIE) is also an innovative social/ideological AJT study, in that the researchers use the

acceptability task as part of an interview study. Like the studies above, discourse about the participants' judgment is analyzed, this time in the context of semi-structured interviews, beginning with an AJT which "provided an entry point into a discussion about SAIE and what they perceived as good/proper English" (p. 258). The study involved individual interviews with twenty South African Indian university students, each of which began with an AJT in which students read or were read three sentences (two SAIE and one "standard" English) and asked whether they or anyone they knew would use such a grammatical construction. The participants could then choose one of four possible responses to each sentence:

- A) I use this kind of grammatical construction myself.
- B) I don't use this grammatical construction, but other English speakers do.
- C) I've never heard anyone use a construction like this, but I would guess that some native speakers do use it.
- D) Nobody would say this. (p. 257)

The AJT here worked as a way to index attitudes toward SAIE and the "standard" white South African English. The students' choices showed that some acknowledged the existence of SAIE while distancing themselves from it, while others both recognized it and admitted to using it. The comparison of the thematically analyzed interview data with the results of the AJT revealed, according to the authors, the ambivalence of the participants toward SAIE; while they generally seemed not to want to be associated with SAIE, their attitudes were "fluid" and could be "re-negotiated" (p. 11). In this and the other discursive studies, the AJT proves an important catalyst in prompting participants to reflect on their attitudes and judgments not only about discrete grammatical items, but also about their relationship to a particular variety of English.

3.3.4 Open-Ended Textual AJTs

The final category of studies reviewed here, the open-ended textual AJTs, contains the few WE-related acceptability studies which specifically concern themselves with written usage. Parasher (1983), using a corpus of 188 business letters written in India, asked British, American, and Indian speakers of English (two each) to offer “acceptability judgments” on the language usage. Parasher tallied the total number of all unacceptable usages by all participants, finding that syntax was the most unacceptable (48.24% of all unacceptable forms), with lexis and style accounting for 23.47% and 28.29%, respectively. Within syntax, the highest percentages of unacceptable items were determiners and modifiers (10.84% of the syntax group), verb tenses (8.31%) and prepositions (7.41%). For particular items, Parasher compared the reactions of the British and American participants to the Indians’ in order to determine whether the usage was established as Indian English. After discussing some 86 different items from the corpus, Parasher concludes that although syntax was the most frequently unacceptable category, there was wide agreement among both the NES and Indian readers about which were unacceptable, meaning that most of the syntactic features rejected are not part of Indian English, but that there was considerably more disagreement on matters of lexis and style. He confirms his hypothesis that “educated IndE conforms to the major syntactic rules of the language and has peripheral differences in syntax and marked differences in lexis and style as compared with native educated varieties” (p. 163). While Labov (1972) has warned that metalinguistic judgments cannot necessarily be used as proof of the features of the research participants’ own varieties of English, Parasher’s study is innovative in its methods and appears to be sound in its claims.

Gupta (1988) undertakes a similar approach to written WE usage in a paper which appears to report on two small-scale studies; her goal was investigating whether a standard

written Singapore English can be said to exist. The first study involved assembling a corpus of 89 texts of Singapore English and analyzing it (along with her students) for “nonstandardisms,” which she grouped into 30 categories. She found that they “occurred most frequently in verb group choice, proposition choice, vocabulary, use of articles, clause lineage, punctuation, number, word order, anaphora and pronoun choice, use of idioms, and subject-verb concord” (p. 35). The second study employed five NES linguists (two British, two American, one Australian) working in Singapore, who read a single Singaporean English text. The participants identified 48 nonstandardisms in total (with each identifying at least 15), but only three of the nonstandardisms were identified by all five participants, and only another three were identified by four participants – a very high level of disagreement about what constituted a nonstandardism in written Singapore English. After reporting on these two studies, Gupta offers a list of putative features of standard written Singapore English (seemingly selected by her) and concludes by noting that there exists in Singapore a “de facto local standard side by side with a climate of opinion which would reject an official endonormative standard” (p. 45). While the presentation of empirical data and the author’s own speculation are conflated in a confusing way in this paper, it is notable for its use of authentic texts and its finding that there is very little agreement among NESs as to what constitutes an unacceptable written usage.

Finally, Ivankova’s study of China English (presented at the International Association for World Englishes conference in Hong Kong in 2008 and eventually published in Russian – references here are to Ivankova’s 2008 PowerPoint Slides) positions itself as one which examines intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability of Chinese English, and looked at “native speakers’ and non-native speakers’ perception of and tolerance towards non-standard or deviant linguistic features of China English” and their reasons for their judgments. Ivankova

used “passages of written texts in China English produced by educated Chinese speakers of English, such as students majoring in English, journalists, translators, and scholars... from collections of students’ essays, books translated from Chinese into English, English language newspapers,” and so on. This innovative usage of whole published texts in a variety of genres is noteworthy. Ivankova instructed participants to “underline words and/or phrases unfamiliar to [them],” and “highlight words or word combinations whose meaning is unclear to [them] in these contexts.” Her results suggest that some “non-standard” linguistic features “will be unproblematic in case they are found in a context which provides more information on the purpose of the utterances.” This study, though all the results were not presented, again underscores the need to look at acceptability judgments in “real-world” rhetorical contexts in order to obtain more meaningful judgments from participants.

3.3.5 Summary

Because the studies reviewed in this section had a variety of different purposes, the findings are not always comparable. In general, it seems that non-speakers of WEs were fairly likely to accept non-standard varieties of English (Chen & Hu, 2006; Ivankova, 2008; Murray, 2003), but speakers of those varieties were more likely to have an ambivalent relationship with those varieties, vacillating between acceptance and preference for native speaker standards (Higgins, 2003; Y. Wang, 2013; Weibeseck, Rudsick, & Zeller, 2011) which may be related to their own proficiency (Bautista, 2004; Mollin, 2007) or their sociolinguistic background (Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, & Rubdy, 2007; Rubdy, McKay, Alsagoff & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). While obvious violations of grammatical rules were often rejected (Murray, 2003; Parasher, 1983), there were also disagreements among participants about what constituted unacceptable usage in writing (Gupta, 1988; Parasher, 1983).

Since WE places importance not only on describing the “features” of particular Englishes but also the ideological or attitudinal “acceptance” (of both particular linguistic variations and varieties of English as a whole), AJTs are a useful method for studies adopting a WE perspective on local variations from standard Inner Circle English and readers’ attitudes about these variations. The different uses of AJTs in the studies above shows that AJTs can be useful when combined with other methods, particularly interviews, and that this combination can reveal complexity and ambivalence where a traditional AJT focused only on specific usages may present a more limited picture. It is also evident that AJTs are particularly useful when administered with authentic language in its original context, rather than merely with decontextualized sentences. The last group of studies (involving whole texts) seems especially prudent for sociolinguistic studies of WEs, since they truly offer a “level playing field.” With no external source guiding the participant to regard certain types of usages as more worth scrutiny than others, researchers have a better chance of learning about participants’ own subjective judgments.

3.4 Conclusion

Taken together, the studies reviewed above suggest a move away from a straightforward error gravity or AJT research design (in which participants rank usages exemplified by a list of sentences) to a more complex design involving qualitative data such as open-ended judgment tasks, interviews, group discussions, and research questions beyond the basic “Is this OK or not?” instrument. In addition, there is a trend in the results of the studies from the fairly unambiguous results of some studies (i.e., NNESTs judge errors more severely than NESTs) to more nuanced results in recent studies which suggest ambivalence, contradiction, and wide variability in participants’ judgments of language use.

The trend toward more qualitative, open-ended studies makes it difficult to state with certainty any common core to the findings in all of the studies reviewed in this chapter. In general, it appears that NESs are harsher judges of nonstandard usage, especially when it comes to speakers who share their own linguistic background, but it is also true that widespread agreement about types of nonstandard uses that are widely rejected is rare; it does seem true that “surface errors” (Gilsdorf & Leonard, 1990) or more obvious “rule violations” (Murray, 2003) are more likely to be rejected by participants than unconventional lexis or turns of phrase, but it is difficult to see any pattern in *which* more “obvious” grammatical violations are rejected.

The current study is inspired in part by many of the different types of studies above: it could be described as an open-ended textual AJT with an NES/NNES comparison element and an error gravity-inspired concern with which usages are most frequently selected as unacceptable by participants. It also takes up the useful addition of interviews to the basic judgment task as a way to generate richer, fuller data regarding reasons for particular judgments (e.g., Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982), orientations toward varieties and usages (e.g., Y. Wang, 2013; Wiebeseck, Rudwick, & Zeller, 2011) and notions of authority (e.g., Higgins, 2003). In the following chapter, I describe in detail the methods and methodology for this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and methodology of this study, which involved two phases of data collection – an acceptability judgment task (AJT) and follow-up interviews. Since the current study is inspired by concerns similar to those of L1 and L2 composition error studies as well as the more variation-based acceptability judgment studies in world Englishes and ELF, both writing research (L1 and L2) and sociolinguistic research (WE and ELF) studies as described in the previous chapter influenced the decisions made for the methodology of this study. Below, I describe the research design in relation to the research questions, as well as the recruitment of participants, the places they worked, and their demographic information. I then describe the creation of the AJT and how it was administered, as well as follow-up interviews and how they were conducted, and describe the data analysis procedures. Finally, I briefly discuss issues of validity and the limitations of this type of study, and discuss my own position as a researcher working on a project involving English writing in China.

4.2 Overview of the study and research design

This study, like many of those described in the previous chapter, involved collecting data from two different groups of English language teachers: Chinese-speaking English teachers from China (n=30) and non-Chinese English teachers from other countries (n=16). The Chinese participants were recruited from three Chinese universities, and the non-Chinese from one joint Sino-foreign university in China and from my personal contacts and a Canadian professional association. Both groups completed an AJT in which they responded to seven essays written by Chinese university students; for each essay, they were asked to identify no more than ten instances of language use they found unacceptable for any reason. (For the instructions, please

see Appendix C; there is also a more detailed description of the process below.) There were then follow-up interviews with volunteer participants (n=20) discussing their responses to the AJT as well as English writing, criteria for judging language as unacceptable, English in China, and other relevant issues.

Before discussing the details of the research design, it is useful to revisit the three research questions this study is investigating:

1. What lexical and syntactic features in Chinese student writing do Chinese and non-Chinese English teachers identify as unacceptable, and why?
2. How do participants react to chunks which evince features of either Chinese English or English as a Lingua Franca, and why?
3. By what authority do participants make judgments about the acceptability of English usage in writing?

As I have alluded to earlier, the first two questions are related in that they approach issues of acceptability – first in a bottom-up way, with no assumptions about what features of writing or types of deviations from presumed standards of written English are likely to be noticed by participants, and second in a top-down way, looking at specific features that have been considered typical of Chinese English or English as a Lingua Franca. These two questions are complementary because they both deal with how participants judge deviations from standard written English in the unique sociolinguistic context of China. The first question investigates

what might be missed by looking *only* at CE and ELF when it comes to readers' reactions to written English in the Chinese context, while the second question looks at English in China based on existing theory and research on CE and ELF. If the first two questions ask *what* and *why* about the judgments, the third question asks *how*, in the specific area of authority. I have described in Chapter 2 why authority is an important question in language ideology (of which acceptability is a facet).

There were two methods of data collection, AJT and interview, and research questions one and two involved both; the third question involved primarily the interviews, though the interviews themselves are based on participants' responses to the AJT (they are, in a sense, text-based interviews). Thus the study roughly follows a cross-sectional mixed methods design with a survey (AJT) component and an interview component, which has been identified as one of the most common types of mixed-methods designs in education (Bryman, 2006) and applied linguistics (Dörnyei, 2007). However, it should be noted that while the study includes two different methods of gathering data – the survey-like AJT and the semi-structured interview – unlike most “mixed methods” studies, the survey portion is only partially quantitative; the AJT, rather than being analyzed with inferential statistics as in some linguistic acceptability studies, is approached through both descriptive statistics and a thematic analysis (see Braun & Clark, 2006). The relationship of the AJT and interview data is similar to Bryman's (2006) categories of “explanation,” where one method (the interviews) “is used to help explain findings generated by the other” (the AJT), and “enhancement,” whereby the more in-depth interview data is used in “making more of or augmenting” the AJT data (pp. 106-107).

I take a view of the “research interview as social practice” in which “data cannot...be contaminated” (Talmy, 2010, p. 3). Thus, while the study involves participants giving accounts

of their judgments via two different methods – self-administered AJT and interview – both can be analyzed in terms of their being “situationally contingent and discursively co-constructed” (p. 3). The purpose of interviews is not for interviewees to access their previous psychological states when they were completing the AJT, but rather to discuss the general themes and issues brought up by the study and by their participation in the AJT in particular.

My approach to interviews is one which “uses interviews primarily to collect data about the insights or perspectives of research participants, with less attention paid to the actual linguistic or textual features of the discourse,” and thus “content or thematic analysis, rather than a linguistic or interactional analysis, is primary” (Duff, 2008, p. 133). The way I choose to analyze and handle the data is ultimately a synthesis created by myself; I make decisions about what to include from the interview transcripts, and I draw conclusions based on my own perspective and analysis.

I hope that the finished product will be received by the participants in the spirit with which it is intended: I interviewed them in order to learn more about their perceptions involving language use and English writing in the Chinese context, in order to enrich my own and others’ understanding of how teachers make judgments of acceptability in writing. The interviews were conducted with a spirit of curiosity, collegiality, and openness to the participants’ perspectives; the analysis of data and the writing of the dissertation, though it filters the interview and AJT data solely through my own lens, is undertaken with that same spirit.

4.3 Recruiting participants

My goal, initially, was to recruit a more or less equal number of Chinese and non-Chinese English language teachers to facilitate comparing their responses on the AJT – perhaps 40 in each group. The main interest I have in separating the two groups is looking at the

reactions of Chinese NNESTs vs. non-Chinese NESTs. Whether all the non-Chinese participants are “native speakers” in the traditional sense is debatable; not all are monolingual English speakers, but all are from Inner or Outer Circle countries. For this reason I prefer “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” to refer to the groups, rather than NNEST and NEST. This is not to essentialize groups based on nationality or origin, but to emphasize the difference between “insider” and (relative) “outsider” status vis-à-vis English education in China.

Recruiting participants proved more difficult than I had anticipated, and I ended up with 30 Chinese participants (around 10 from each of the three Chinese universities I contacted) and 16 non-Chinese (from a joint Sino-foreign university and from personal connections in Canada). Since this is not a quantitative study aiming to make widely generalizable claims, but a primarily qualitative study which aims at a kind of “snapshot” through examining participants’ reactions to texts, having equal numbers of participants from each group was less important than being able to look for general patterns in the participants’ subjective responses to the AJTs, which were then used for further qualitative analysis.

Sites for recruiting participants were selected based on my previous experience and/or personal connections. Participants from the Chinese institutions were recruited initially via an email message to department heads at the respective sites (see Appendix G for an example), and later attending department meetings to introduce the project. After some initial participants expressed interest, snowball sampling was used and earlier participants assisted in recruiting others in their departments. Chinese participants who completed only the AJT were given a 100 *yuan* (approx. \$20 CAD) gift card to a local supermarket, while those who also volunteered to participate in interviews were given 150 *yuan* gift cards.

I had initially intended to separate the non-Chinese participants into two groups: those

working in China (from the joint-venture university) and those who had never worked in China (from my connections in Canada), and those were the eligibility criteria I submitted to my university's ethics review board. As the study progressed, this became a less important concern, and the two groups were collapsed into one. The non-Chinese participants who worked at the joint-venture university in China were recruited in a similar manner to those at the Chinese university; I approached the director of their department, and emailed all the instructors after obtaining permissions to do so. The Canadian participants were recruited through personal networks, described below. The non-Chinese participants were not compensated for their participation; although the time that both sets of participants invested in the project was short (1-2 hours at most), I made the decision to compensate the Chinese participants because they were, on the whole, sacrificing more by giving up their time, due to their busier schedules and lower salaries compared to many of the non-Chinese participants.

Often personal networks were the only way in which I could proceed fruitfully. For example, at one research site I had trouble recruiting participants because my only contact was busy with other commitments. Though my contact was able to help me recruit several participants, I was frustrated by my lack of ability to find others and resorted to emailing professors whose profiles on the university website revealed research interests similar to mine. One of the professors I emailed had spent a previous summer at a course given by one of my dissertation committee members, and was happy to help with recruitment, recruiting nearly ten more participants. This type of convenience sampling also happened when a mentor of mine working at another site casually mentioned that he knew the dean of an English department at a neighboring university. He contacted the dean, and within about a week, another nine participants were recruited from that department. (See Appendix G for an example of an email to

a department head.)

Recruitment of Canadian participants proved to be slightly more difficult. My original plan had been to recruit through a local professional association, but they considered my call for participants to be an advertisement, which I did not have the funds to place. I spoke to some colleagues in person at the association's local conference, which led to the recruitment of a few participants. Eventually, I posted a call on their website's social network (see Appendix H), which led to the recruitment of several more; a colleague at a university where I had been teaching part-time also saw the call and forwarded it to her MA students. This allowed me to recruit several more Canadian teachers.

4.4 About the participants

In total, there were 46 participants – 30 Chinese and 16 non-Chinese – recruited from five different sites, in this study.

Table 4.1 and

Table 4.2 below describe the participants' general demographic information and other details.

Participants' ID numbers refer to their institutions, described in more detail in section 4.5.

Table 4.1 Profiles of the Chinese participants (n= 30)

ID	Interview?	Sex	Age	Years teaching	Highest degree	Degree field
SIC1		M	30	5	MA	Translation
SIC2	Y	F	30	8	BA	English
SIC3		F	36	11	BA	English
SIC4	Y	M	30	5	MA	Translation

ID	Interview?	Sex	Age	Years teaching	Highest degree	Degree field
SIC5	Y	M	30	3	MA	English
SIC6	Y	M	35	10	MA	English
SIC7	Y	F	32	9	MA	(not provided)
SIC8		F	28	2	MA	(not provided)
NKU1		F	33	10	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU2		F	47	26	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU3		F	39	15	MA	Education
NKU4		F	45	22	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU5		M	37	15	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU6		F	39	13	MA	English
NKU7		F	50	27	BA	English
NKU8		F	45	27	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU9	Y	F	38	12	PhD	Education
NKU10		F	38	14	MA	Applied linguistics
NKU11	Y	F	38	17	MA	Applied linguistics
ATC1	Y	F	30	9	MA	English & Applied linguistics
ATC2	Y	F	45	23	PhD	(not provided)
ATC3	Y	M	30	7	MA	(not provided)
ATC4	Y	F	31	8	MA	Applied linguistics
ATC5	Y	F	38	16	MA	Applied linguistics
ATC6		F	31	9	MA	Applied linguistics
ATC7		F	32	9	MA	(not provided)
ATC8		F	31	9	MA	Applied linguistics
ATC9		F	35	15	MA	(not provided)
ATC10		M	35	10	MA	(not provided)
ATC11		F	32	6	MA	Foreign Languages

Table 4.2 Profiles of the non-Chinese participants (n = 16)

ID	Interview?	Sex	Age	Years teaching	Highest degree	Degree field	Country of origin
JVU1		F	58	7	BA	TESOL	Scotland
JVU2		F	42	20	MA	TESOL	Fiji
JVU3	Y	M	54	15	MA	TESOL	Ireland/UK
JVU4	Y	M	34	12	MA	English language & education	UK
JVU5	Y	M	39	16	MA	TESOL	USA
JVU6	Y	M	54	20	MA	Applied linguistics	UK
JVU7		F	41	18	MA	English literature	India
CAN1	Y	F	23	1	MA	TESOL	Canada
CAN2	Y	F	46	17	MA	TESOL	Canada
CAN3		F	58	4	BA	general studies	Canada
CAN4		F	55	24	MA	TEFL	USA
CAN5	Y	M	41	5	MA	TESOL	Canada
CAN6		F	49	23	BA	Linguistics / Spanish	Canada
CAN7		F	(Participant did not provide this information)				Canada
CAN8		M	34	10	MA	Education	Canada
CAN9	Y	F	60	32	PhD	English	USA

The typical participant in this study is a woman in her mid-30's with a master's degree in applied linguistics or another field related to English language teaching, with around ten years of teaching experience. On average, the Chinese participants were younger (average age of 36) than the non-Chinese (average age 46), and the non-Chinese participant group had a slightly higher average number of years of teaching experience (almost 15, to the Chinese group's 12). Most

participants were female (seven Chinese and seven non-Chinese men participated in total, so less than a third of the participants were male) and most had a master's degree (though there were three BAs each in the two groups, with two PhDs in the Chinese group and one in the non-Chinese group.) Two of the non-Chinese group reported being in the process of working on PhDs. Each group had both younger and more experienced teachers.

4.5 Research sites

The institutions where I recruited Chinese participants for this study are all in the same province. Although the province where I collected data in China may not be representative of the whole country, it is on the more affluent, economically developed, and “progressive” East coast of China, which seems to be leading the way toward the middle-class society the Chinese government is currently promoting. It is one of the provinces that are increasingly more urban, educated, white-collar, and foreign-language-speaking than the rest of the country.

I have divided the participants among the different institutions they work for, more for purposes of identifying them than any methodological need to keep their institutional affiliations separate – though the institutions are different and in some cases their individual characteristics are salient in the participants' responses. Below I enumerate the pseudonyms for the different sites and offer a brief description of each. The first three are the sites the Chinese participants are affiliated with, while the latter two are those the non-Chinese teachers are drawn from.

4.5.1 SIC (Small Independent College)

SIC is one of a relatively new type of higher education institution in China, which is technically privately funded; these are referred to as *minban* (non-state) institutions; because the “notion of ‘private education’ remains politically incorrect in socialist China, scholars and government officials tend to use the term *minban* to refer to institutions not run by the state

actors” (Ong & Chan, 2012, p. 168). At the time of the data collection, SIC was located on the campus of a local provincial university, though it has since moved to a suburban university district of the type that some Chinese provinces are currently promoting. SIC enrolls approximately 8,000 students, and the foreign language department enrolls nearly 1,000 students, many of whom are English majors. I had previously worked at SIC as a foreign teacher and had collegial relationships with the administrators and several teachers in the department.

4.5.2 NKU (National Key University)

NKU is one of China’s larger universities (it enrolls around 50,000 undergraduate and graduate students), and is one of a select group of universities under the direct supervision of the Chinese Ministry of Education (formerly known as “National Key Universities”). It is consistently ranked among the top universities in the country, and all of its faculty members have master’s or PhD degrees. I had also previously worked at NKU, though I was less intimately familiar with its foreign language department(s), since it was much bigger than SIC’s and I rarely had contact with my Chinese colleagues.

4.5.3 ATC (A Technical College)

The third participating institution, ATC, is a technical college affiliated with NKU, enrolling approximately 10,000 students. All deans (and a few professors) at ATC are drawn from the faculty of NKU, and graduating students are awarded NKU degrees. In practice, however, ATC is a wholly separate institution, located in a different city, and largely employing its own academic staff. I was put in touch with the English department at ATC by a professor at JVU (see below). SIC and ATC were actually very similar institutions, and what I think of as “typical Chinese universities,” at least of the type I am familiar with – many large, grey buildings, arranged in quadrangles, and large offices where a department’s entire English

teaching staff shares a single office, stacks of yellow composition books in mountains on every teacher's desk.

4.5.4 JVU (Joint Venture University)

This is one of a growing group of what I call “joint-venture universities” (also called CFCRS, or “Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools”; see Ong & Chan, 2012), partnerships between Chinese and non-Chinese universities. While there are hundreds of agreements between Chinese and foreign higher education institutions, ranging from exchange programs to jointly issued diplomas, there is a small number of CFCRS institutions which themselves issue degrees. JVU has been operating for a little less than a decade; its faculty are largely international, while its student body is overwhelmingly Chinese. It is part of a larger university system based in a western country. The department where I recruited participants was the university's English Language Center, which is tasked with teaching preparatory English for Academic Purposes to all of the university's students. Academically, I was based in the English department of JVU during the data collection for this study, and participated in various research and teaching activities there.

4.5.5 CAN (Canadian Participants)

The final category is not a “site” but a group of Canadian participants recruited in the way described above. I was interested in recruiting teachers working at the postsecondary level who did not have experience working in China, because I was considering a comparison between JVU and CAN participants; in the end, due to the relatively small numbers of each, I elected not to make this comparison. None of the CAN participants had any experience teaching in China, though one (CAN1) had briefly taught in Hong Kong.

4.6 Creating the AJT

The AJT was created using essays taken from the Written English Corpus of Chinese Learners (WECCL) published by Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press in Beijing (Wen, Liang, & Yan 2008). This is a corpus of some 4,000 essays written by Chinese university students at various stages in their college careers, in several different genres, some for exams (timed) and others in class (untimed). Because I was interested in seeing participants' reactions to compositions written by actual students (as opposed to decontextualized sentences or essays that were specially prepared to display certain errors), *which* essays were selected was less important than it might have been in similar studies with more of a focus on particular linguistic forms, for example. After skimming some of the essays, I selected seven essays with similar characteristics: all were argumentative essays written by fourth-year English majors at Chinese universities. (See Appendix C for the actual essays used.) The essays I selected were, in my opinion, readable due to a relative lack of major spelling errors or extremely ungrammatical sentences, which might have been too distracting to readers. In a sense, I was aiming to present participants with texts that are representative of the abilities of the type of English major most Chinese university English departments would hope to graduate; that is, texts written by young people with a fairly sophisticated grasp of English writing in an EFL context. Whether the texts are “good” is, essentially, beside the point: the important thing for this study is that they are actual writing samples from fourth-year Chinese university English majors. The topics of the essays and the letters I used to identify them in the study, along with their word counts and whether they were timed or untimed, are shown in

Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Information about the AJT essays

Prompt	Topic	Word count	Timed/Untimed
A	Cost of education	387	Timed
B	Animals: pets or resources?	402	Timed
C	Government spending	389	Timed
D	E-dictionaries	379	Untimed
E	Competition vs. cooperation	413	Timed
F	Living off campus	340	Timed
G	Electronic greeting cards	421	Untimed

The intent of the AJT was to encourage participants to focus more specifically on language use issues that were the focus of the study: namely, lexical and grammatical usage that the participants deemed to be nonstandard or “unacceptable.” Nevertheless, many participants did point out features of the texts that were related not only to lexis and grammar, but also discourse, content, and even, in some cases, the appropriateness of the writing prompts or what they perceived as a disconnect between the essays and the very nature of academic writing.

Administering an AJT, rather than studying teachers’ reactions to their own students’ writing in a “natural” way, as in the studies by Connors and Lunsford (1988) and Lunsford and Lunsford (2008), creates something like “lab conditions.” By removing the writer from the

equation (or at least removing the relationship between the teacher and writer), I hoped to tap into the participants' judgments of linguistic acceptability rather than their pedagogical diagnosis of any one particular student. Predictably, some participants did report completing the task in a way that they would have if they had been reviewing their own students' papers, as indeed often seems to be the case in this type of study.

4.7 Collecting the data

4.7.1 AJT

Participants were sent the AJT via email and asked to complete it within a two-week period. I asked participants to spend no more than 90 minutes on the task, but I could not strictly enforce this, since the task was completed independently. The instructions emphasized spending as little time as possible on each essay by limiting the number of comments to only those the participants felt were the most salient – i.e., the ten “most unacceptable” instances of language use (referred to in the analysis as “chunks,” as discussed in Chapter 1). Participants completed the AJT using Microsoft Word's comment function to identify perceived unacceptable usage of lexis and syntax; the instructions they were sent (see Appendix C for the full document) asked them to “read each essay, and using Microsoft Word's comments features, select any word, phrase, or arrangement of words which [they] consider[ed] unacceptable” and to briefly explain why in the comments.

Participants were not initially told that the essays were written by Chinese undergraduates; they were told the essays came from “English majors in their fourth year of university in a non-English-speaking country” and that the purpose of the study was to investigate their “perception of acceptable features of written English.” It was probably clear to most of the participants that the essays were written by students from China due to their content,

and in many of the interviews I explained that the essays were written by Chinese students. My thinking in not introducing the fact that the writers were Chinese at the outset of the study was not to “hide” this fact, but to, hopefully, allow the participants to begin making judgments without having been expecting any features they may have believed to be stereotypical of Chinese students’ writing.

The use of the term “unacceptable” to describe the chunks that participants rejected was not one chosen lightly, nor was it necessarily well-received by all participants. Because of my theoretical approach to variation from standard written English, and my desire to collect more bottom-up data with no a priori definition of errors, I purposefully avoided using words like “error,” “incorrect,” or “wrong” in both the instructions on the written AJT and my face-to-face or email discussions with individual participants when explaining the focus of the AJT. (In interviews, I did sometimes use these words, since they often naturally come up in conversations between English teachers.) In many cases I was asked to clarify what I meant by unacceptable, and I often replied to this by saying something like “just identify anything that, for any reason, seems unacceptable, unusual, or ‘not OK’ – it could be for lexical or syntactic reasons, or spelling, or grammar, or style, or appropriateness in the context, or your own personal pet peeves – really any reason.” I remember repeating sentences like this one many times during the course of data collection. While some participants still felt uncomfortable with the label “unacceptable,” it was clear to me after looking at the AJTs that almost all of the participants had in fact marked uses of language they disliked for a variety of reasons of the types I mentioned above.

4.7.2 Interviews

Those participants who were willing to participate in a follow-up interview checked a box on the AJT stating their availability. A total of 24 participants agreed to be interviewed.

However, one short interview was with a participant who had not appropriately completed the AJT (there were no comments) and the discussions in the interview were mostly irrelevant to the study, so it was not used. In addition, three interview recordings (two from NKU and one from JYU) were inadvertently lost during the process of transferring files from the recorder's SD card to my laptop. Therefore, a total of 20 interviews were included in the project: 5 SIC, 2 NKU, 5 ATC, 4 JYU, and 5 CAN. The primary topic of discussion was their responses, their reasoning, their reactions to the texts in the AJT, as well as more general discussion of their attitudes and beliefs about standard English, English in China, and the like. (See Appendix F for the interview guidelines used.) There was often a short turn-around time between the AJT and the interview, so in many cases I briefly read through the participants' responses before the interview, highlighting comments I thought were interesting or unique, to ask about them. Interviews were open-ended and the topics discussed varied, depending on the context and my relationship with the participant. Sometimes participants chose to bring up comments I had not previously deemed notable. While I aimed to be open to allowing the participant's responses to "lead" the interview, I also recognize that as an interviewer, I played a major role in shaping responses. When I quote excerpts from interviews in the data analysis chapters, I often include my own half of the conversation.

Each participant was interviewed in person for approximately one hour, with the exception of one of the Canadian participants who was interviewed via Skype. Most interviews took place in the participants' own offices or classrooms on their campuses; some took place at coffee shops. Interviews were audio-recorded using a Zoom H2 Handy recorder. All interviews were conducted in English, which has been a somewhat controversial practice in applied linguistics research; Jin and Cortazzi (2011) advocate being clear about which languages were

chosen and why for interviews with participants who are Chinese English language teachers. In this case, I chose English both for convenience, as my Chinese ability is intermediate at best, and because I view the Chinese participants as competent English users and teachers. Most appeared, from my perspective, to be comfortable conversing in English, though it was also clear that their proficiency varied. Interviews were transcribed in a more or less “naturalized transcription” (Bucholtz, 2000, p. 1461), in which oral speech is recorded in a way that is in accordance with written discourse conventions, such as conventional spelling and punctuation. However, I attempted to preserve what I perceived to be the general sense of “flow” of both my and the interviewees’ speech, including false starts, laughter, some nonverbal sounds, and so on.

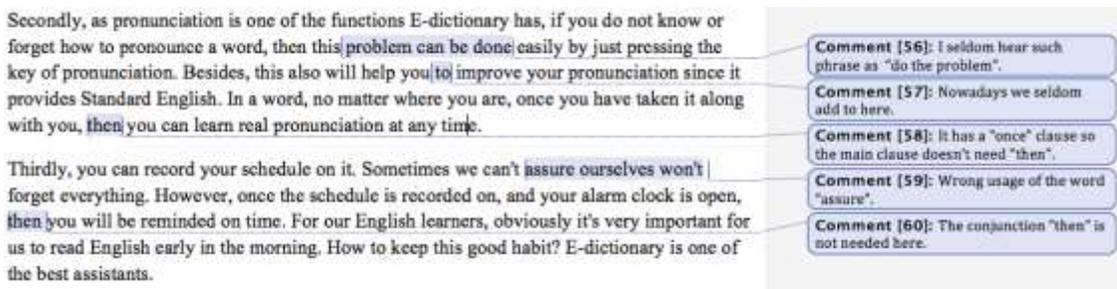
4.8 Managing the AJT data

Before I describe more specific data analysis procedures for each of the research questions, some description of how the AJT data was managed and analyzed is necessary to give a better idea of the size and scope of the project. There were 46 participants each reading and commenting on the same seven essays, for a total of 322 different unique commented-upon documents (46 x 7). Each participant was asked to limit himself or herself to ten comments per essay, prioritizing based on what he or she felt were the most important ‘unacceptable’ features (though some gave fewer and some went over this number). In the end, there were 2,843 comments coded (this number is slightly higher than the actual number of comments in the original documents, because if a comment seemed to be dealing with multiple “issues” in the text, I duplicated it and coded each duplicate comment as being connected to a different chunk).

As mentioned above, the essays were emailed to participants as Microsoft Word documents which included instructions on the AJT procedure as well as the seven essays in randomized order. Participants were to use Word’s “Comment” feature to select chunks of text

they deemed unacceptable, and provide comments as to their reasons. Figure 4.1 below gives an example of what each selected chunk and comment looked like.

Figure 4.1 Example of AJT



The comments, along with their related chunks of text, were exported from Word to Excel through the use of a Visual Basic macro (a short, simple computer program designed to automate a task) written by a colleague. Using data such as which prompt (the seven prompts were labeled A through G) the essay was and which line of the page each chunk began on, I was able to arrange all of the comments in more or less a linear order in Excel, from beginning to end of the essay, for each prompt.

The next step was to determine in which cases participants were selecting the same “issue” in the text. First, I printed out the Excel sheets for each prompt, showing data for prompt, participant, chunk, and comment. Then, looking at each chunk/comment, I judged which of them were describing the same basic ‘complaint.’ Some cases were easier to judge than others.

For example, one sentence in Prompt B about the treatment of animals reads: “if you think that they [animals] are heartless, dirty and ugly, you can treat them just as animals.” Five participants selected the same word (“heartless”), and all of them made comments that were clearly related to questioning whether the word appropriately conveyed the meaning intended by

the writer. The chunk, labeled B064 based on its prompt (B) and position in the text (it was the 64th chunk selected), was selected and given the following comments by the five participants:

Table 4.4 Comments on “heartless” (B064)

Participant	Comment
CAN6	Wrong word. Used for people. “without feeling/have no feeling”. Check parallel structure: BE without feeling vs. HAVE no feeling.
ATC8	Word choice
CAN4	What is meant by this?
SIC6	soulless?
NKU11	“Heartless” means cruel, not appropriate here.

Thus, the common selection of the same chunk, combined with the fact that all the participants made comments related to questioning the appropriateness of this adjective in this context, made it easy to confidently label all of these as belonging to the same chunk, B064. Each comment, then, got a “chunk ID” which labelled it as belonging to the same chunk as other related comments, beginning with A-G depending on the prompt. (CE and ELF chunks that were not selected by any participants, discussed in Chapter 6, are given a chunk ID beginning with the prompt but with “XX” instead of a number, e.g., FXX.)

Some of the chunks and comments from participants were more difficult to interpret, as when participants selected only one word but their comment indicated they were referring to an entire phrase or sentence, or when participants selected chunks of varying lengths.

In addition, sometimes participants referred to multiple unacceptable ‘issues’ in the same comment. For example, they might have selected the verb phrase “feel sense of inferiority” and mention both a missing article (e.g., “it should be ‘feel *a* sense’”) and their preference for “have”

rather than “feel” in this expression. In this case, the comment was copied and pasted again into the spreadsheet, so that it appeared twice. These were color-coded (for my reference) to ensure that they were noted as two different comments, and then each was coded as belonging to a different chunk.

4.9 Data analysis procedures for the research questions

This section will describe the procedures I undertook to analyze data for each of the three research questions.

4.9.1 RQ1

The first part of analysis for the first research question involved arranging the chunks in an Excel document in such a way that the frequency with which each chunk was being marked by each group of participants could be discerned. I experimented with a number of different ways of looking at this data: seeing which chunks were the most selected overall and for each of the seven essays, looking at those chunks which had a high degree of “disagreement” (marked by a fairly large percentage of one group but not the other), and so on. This also yielded some general data about how much consensus there was overall.

Because there were so many chunks, it was necessary to find productive ways to determine which chunks or groups of chunks would be useful answering the research question. After careful examination of the data, I elected to focus on the following groups of chunks, which I have named “high consensus” and “differing priorities” in order to provide a convenient shorthand to describe the contents of each group:

1. **High Consensus:** Those chunks which were marked unacceptable by more than 50% of each group; that is, chunks that were marked unacceptable **both** by more than 50% of Chinese participants (or at least 15 of the 30) and by more than 50% of non-Chinese

participants (or at least 8 of the 16).

2. Differing Priorities: A chunk was considered noteworthy if it fit one of two criteria:

- a. It was marked unacceptable by over 50% of one group, but less than 50% of the other group, or
- b. It was marked unacceptable by at least 20% of one group but by 0% of the other group. (The idea here was to look for chunks which were selected by at least a sizable minority, or more, of one group while seemingly “ignored” by the other.)

I began to look through chunks and comments that fit these criteria for patterns. Certain types of chunks or types of complaints of unacceptability were noticeable as either common to both groups or unique to one of them, and these were selected for further qualitative analysis. Using participants’ comments and relevant interview data, I interpreted the reasons for the similarities and differences in the groups’ priorities.

4.9.2 RQ2

The second research question involved identifying existing features of Chinese English and English as a Lingua Franca to look for in the AJT texts, and then analyzing participants’ reactions to them. After extensive reading in the CE and ELF literature, I identified a list of features that have been identified or proposed for each. Below, I detail these features.

4.9.2.1 Features of CE

There are roughly four categories of lexical features of CE mentioned in previous literature: semantic shifts in which words’ meanings change due to recontextualization in the Chinese cultural setting; translations of Chinese idioms, proverbs, or slogans; loanwords; and loan translations. A number of CE studies mention these features, sometimes with different

emphases which overlap. The table below describes those scholars' categorizations of those features.

Table 4.5 Proposed lexical features of China/ese English

Feature	Example(s)	Author(s)
Semantic shift	Propaganda (with a positive connotation); "open" to mean "turn on"	Cheng, 1992; Gao, 2001; Xu, 2010
Idioms and slogans	Long time no see; good good study day day up	Cheng, 1992; Fang, 2008
Loanwords/borrowings	<i>Baozi</i> (steamed bun), <i>mantou</i> (steamed bread), kung fu, ginseng	Cheng, 1992; Xu, 2010; Yang, 2005; Yang, 2009
Loan translations	Special economic zone, red envelope, paper tiger	Gao, 2001; Xu, 2010 Yang, 2009

In terms of grammatical or syntactic features, I rely on Xu's (2010) detailed list of features of CE based on both spoken and written data. Table 4.6 and Table below show those features. (Note that for the written features, the latter two were found in short story dialogue, while the others were found in news writing.) Not all of these features were found in the texts used in this study; those which were are described in more detail in Chapter 6.

Table 4.6 Proposed grammatical/syntactic features of CE by Xu (2010) based on spoken data

Feature	Example
Adjacent default tense	Yesterday I write a letter.
Null subject/object utterances	Sometimes just play basketball.
Co-occurrence of connective pairs	Because I X, so I Y.
Subject pronoun copying	My mother she likes to do that.
Yes-no response	"You don't like sports?" "Yeah." [Meaning "I

	don't."]
Topic-comment	Cigars, the president never smokes them.
Unmarked object-subject-verb (OSV)	Both languages I can't speak well.
Inversion in subordinate finite wh-clauses	I don't know what should I learn.

Table 4.7 Proposed grammatical/syntactic features of CE by Xu (2010) based on written data

Feature	Example
Nominalization	Many types of nominalized noun phrases (see pp. 224-228)
Multiple-coordinate construction (done with “Chinese pragmatic motivations” and tending to “come in threes” (p. 91))	“The ministry will maintain the principle of supporting overseas studies, encouraging the return of overseas Chinese students, and lifting restrictions on their coming and going” (p. 91)
Modifying-modified sequence (preference for forward-linking, subordinate clauses first)	“If she goes home, she cannot bear the sorrow of coming back to work” (p. 96)
Use of imperatives (as opposed to questions) to express commands or requests	“Go buy a carp. Stew it tomorrow afternoon and take it to my office” (p. 101)
Tag variation	Wide variety of tag questions

4.9.2.2 Features of ELF

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there have been a number of features claimed to be a part of ELF since scholarship on this topic began. According to Jenkins (2014), in Seidlhofer’s original publication outlining the probable features of ELF (2004), the publisher omitted the “scare quotes” or quotation marks indicating Seidlhofer’s “skepticism towards the pejorative terms” used (p. 33), such as “‘dropping’ the third person present tense -s” or “‘inserting ‘redundant’ prepositions.” Below I summarize Seidlhofer’s list, using non-pejorative descriptions as far as I am able.

Table 4.7 Proposed grammatical features of ELF (Seidlhofer, 2004)

Feature	Example
Unmarked third person present verbs	He go to the store.
Interchanging who/which	The man which I know...
Omitting and adding articles	I live in the China.
Invariant or “incorrect” tag questions	You got a new job, is it?
Redundant prepositions	Let’s discuss about that.
Feature	Example
Overuse of verbs of “high semantic generality”	Today we will do basketball.
Replacing infinitive constructions with that-clauses	I want that we go swimming.
Over-explicitness	The car was black colour.
Making traditionally non-countable nouns countable (see Jenkins, 2014)	Informations, researches

4.9.2.3 Analysis procedures

After coming up with these lists of features from my reading of the literature, I read through the seven AJT essays and identified chunks which corresponded to the features of CE and ELF. In some cases, these chunks corresponded to those which had been identified by participants as unacceptable; in others, they had not previously been mentioned by any participants. I then looked at each category of features of CE and ELF that occurred in the texts and noted how many of each of the groups (Chinese and non-Chinese) had marked them as unacceptable. Using the participants’ AJT comments, relevant interview data, previous literature on CE and ELF, and knowledge of the context of English in Chinese higher education, I qualitatively interpreted and analyzed the possible reasons that some features of CE and ELF seemed more likely to be marked than others.

4.9.3 RQ3

For the third research question, I undertook a thematic analysis of the interview data (interviews were discussed in section 4.7.2 above, and a full list of interview questions is in Appendix F). This is in contrast to the micro-level conversational cues such as pronouns or modals used in other qualitative studies which use AJTs as a basis for soliciting interview data about “ownership” of English from participants (as in Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, & Rubdy, 2007; Higgins, 2003; Rubdy, McKay, Alsagoff & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). I decided to approach coding in a way that combined “descriptive coding,” which describes “the basic topic of a passage” with the spirit of “initial” or “open” coding, which encourages researchers to “code quickly and spontaneously” but also “pay meticulous attention,” coding line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence, or paragraph-by-paragraph (Saldaña, 2009, p. 70). I first coded a sub-section of the data (the four JUV interviews) by this method, and began to take note of codes that struck me as unexpected. I had been expecting most of the data to deal with metalinguistic descriptions of language and writing, but I found I had generated codes like “how English is taught at my institution,” “students as novices,” “telling a story to make a point,” “my own education,” and others which were not related to the more expected categories such as “errors,” “Chinglish,” “grammar,” and so on. What the “unexpected” categories had in common is that they often involved the participant drawing on his or her own experience to show why he or she was someone who was credible or had the authority to make an acceptability judgment.

After thinking about these codes, and reading the language ideology literature and finding resonant concepts in Cameron (2012) and Milroy and Milroy (2012) described in Chapter 3, I settled on the notion of “authority.” I then began reading through each of the transcripts looking for examples of ways in which participants described how or why they were able to make a

judgment, especially noting instances where they seemed to be describing things like their own credibility, the source of their judgment, their educational, pedagogical, or linguistic ability or proficiency, and so on. I coded these by hand at first, and then began to cut and paste relevant sections of text into a Word document. I labeled the relevant utterances as relating to “authority,” because they all had some description of the participant’s own knowledge, identity, ability, or ethos, especially in relation to the text, the (real or imagined) writer, and the judgment itself. Comparing these experts allowed me to identify several ways in which participants claimed authority to make judgments, and to explain similarities and differences in how the Chinese and non-Chinese participants did this.

4.10 Validity, limitations, and related concerns

The study is methodologically unique among studies of writing for the way it combines a survey-like AJT with follow-up interviews, and the methods of analysis described are appropriate for the data and the context in which it was collected. The research traditions from which the study primarily draws methodological inspiration – L1/L2 composition error studies and acceptability judgments in world Englishes/ELF – have not had a particularly robust methodological footing. I have endeavored, in the preceding chapters, to tease out some of the theoretical and methodological implications of using these approaches. One final area it is necessary to comment on, however, is the question of “validity” in this type of research.

It has been observed that “qualitative research has come of age in applied linguistics, where it continues to flourish” (Lazaraton, 2003, p. 1) and that there is a “growing enthusiasm” for many different kinds of qualitative applied linguistics research (Duff, 2010, p. 50). The goal of this research is usually “to produce an in-depth exploration of one or more sociocultural, educational, or linguistic phenomena” and/or “participants’ and researchers’ own positionality

and perceptions with respect to the phenomena” (Duff, 2006, pp. 73-74). As such, traditionally quantitative, positivist criteria for evaluating research are often not applicable to this type of research – the highly contextual nature of qualitative research involving, for example, multilingual learners of various languages, in various cultural, geographical, and education settings, is unlikely to produce the type of research that will be or can be “replicated.”

The notion of “validity,” which “is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2001, p. 30), is relevant to qualitative research, though the traditional areas in which validity of research is assessed tends to be focused work which seeks generalizability. Alternate terms for similar constructs have been proposed for qualitative research, such as trustworthiness, credibility, and rigor (see, for example, Rolfe, 2006) to avoid the theoretical entanglements with positivism that validity implies; for qualitative research, the question of whether a research project can be judged as trustworthy or credible has much more to do with the internal coherence and transparency of the work. This is why, in studies such as this one, it is important to make explicit things like theoretical frameworks, detailed methods of data collection and analysis, descriptions of decision-making processes and various pathways which are followed (or created) by the researcher at every turn, from conceiving the project to collecting the data to analyzing it and drawing conclusions. This explicitness is something I aim for in this chapter and this dissertation.

On a related note, and as I have mentioned, this study does not aim for generalizability, but seeks to offer one particular and contextualized account of an important area in studies of L2 writing, which is a non-error-oriented approach to readers’ reactions to texts’ perceived variations from standard written English. Similar methods can be used for similar studies in similar – or indeed different – contexts. The current findings will only reveal information about

this particular set of participants, who *are*, I believe, individuals who can be seen as “representative” of others in similar positions, in the sense that they are practicing teachers of English who deal with L2 students’ writing on a regular basis. Though I identify them as “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” for convenience, their perceptions and responses should not be taken as prototypical for others who share their national or linguistic backgrounds.

4.11 My position as a researcher

When I began this project, I very much saw myself as a “foreign teacher” in China, a native English speaking teacher (NEST) working in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, since I had just spent two years in that job. However, I felt and feel affinity with a number of different communities, and this has changed and expanded as I have gone through my doctoral studies, taught in Canada, and carried out research and data collection in China. A number of academic identities resonate with me: I am an applied linguist, an English language teacher, a (former) “foreign teacher,” a NEST who has worked in an EFL context, a PhD candidate, and an emerging scholar anxiously thinking about job prospects. I also see myself as having affinities with Chinese English teachers and other scholars who do research about English in China, as well as people who do research on world Englishes, ELF, and L2 writing.

In terms of the identities and affinities I bring to this research project, I have a kind of insider/outsider status that has been both useful and limiting. I am not Chinese, nor am I fluent in the Chinese language, and so remain an obvious outsider when I am in China. I will never be a “Chinese English teacher” in the way that my Chinese friends and colleagues are. This outsider status has led me to make certain decisions in this project: choosing to conduct interviews in English, for example, and choosing to be based at the western-style JYU while I carried out my data collection. However, I have experienced living and working in several different settings in

China and am familiar with scholarship and research on language in China. This insider status has helped me to build rapport with research participants, to find participating institutions and individuals in the first place, and to find my place in a scholarly conversation. Above all, my insider/outsider status has perhaps given me a unique perspective from which to observe sociolinguistic issues of English in China.

Another area that may be of interest is my understanding of my own ideological position vis-à-vis variation from standard written English. Obviously, I took pains to distance myself from the concept of “error” to an almost unrealistic degree during the study; in the instructions to the AJT I even wrote that the task was “not necessarily” to find and correct “errors” in the text, even though I wanted the participants to select language that was “unacceptable,” which begins to sound like a politically correct euphemism for “error.” Despite the occasional awkwardness of describing language use this way, I think it captures the tension I – and perhaps other – scholars and teachers of writing find myself in; I have training in a perspective which views language use as a fluid, changing, social practice, and I am very sympathetic to the translingual and other perspectives influenced by sociolinguistics. However, I also teach second language writing and I frequently tell students they are using language incorrectly, pointing out “mistakes” and “errors” like any other teacher who does not sympathize with alleged “progressive” perspectives. (This is dealt with in the conclusion of Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014.) I am interested in pursuing the possibilities that emerge when teachers and researchers alike reserve judgment on unconventional language use, though I freely acknowledge that most of us, myself included, are likely to revert to “common sense” notions of error when the subject comes up in everyday practice, and this seems natural and unavoidable to me.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the research design, recruitment, participants, and methods of data collection and analysis for the study. Although each research question approaches the data from a slightly different angle, the questions are related and by answering them, this study will explore and illuminate the ways in which both Chinese and non-Chinese participants make their judgments of (un)acceptability, and some general differences in their approaches to the task. The following three chapters will detail the findings for each of the three research questions described above.

Chapter 5: What gets marked: Differences and similarities between Chinese and non-Chinese participants in the AJT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis and discussion of the results of the acceptability judgment task (AJT) from a “bottom-up” perspective (Research Question 1); that is, rather than starting with *a priori* theoretical notions to guide the investigation of which types of “errors” in written English are noticed by the participants, or what “features” of Chinese English (Xu, 2010) or English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2004) are noticed by them (see Chapter 6), it simply looks at all “chunks” that were designated as unacceptable by any participants and describes chunks with which there is a high degree of consensus (or lack thereof) between the Chinese and the non-Chinese groups.

The main goal of this chapter is to identify both similarities and differences in the chunks (and types of chunks) that Chinese and non-Chinese participants mark as unacceptable, as well as the reasons they chose those chunks. I begin with a description of the “big picture” – an overview of the results, quantitative and qualitative, briefly describing the total number of chunks selected, explaining notable features of the overall set of data, and explaining procedures for reducing the data to be more manageable for analysis. Next, I look at chunks which were marked by a majority of both the Chinese and non-Chinese groups and describe them. Finally, I look more specifically at those chunks which were more marked by one or the other group and describe unique trends in the pattern of each group’s most marked chunks.

5.2 Overview of chunks

The total number of chunks identified as unacceptable in this study by participants was 748. From the beginning of the analysis, it was clear that there was not a high level of consensus

between the two groups: of the 748 chunks, 304 of them (41%) were only unacceptable to one or more participants from the Chinese group, while 202 (27%) were only unacceptable to one or more of the non-Chinese group, leaving a total of 241 (32%) which were common to at least one participant from each group.

Perhaps the most notable initial finding is that nearly half of the chunks – 359 of the 748, or 48% — are instances in which *only one* of the 46 participants labeled a particular chunk as unacceptable. Even if we add the next lowest level of consensus – 112 chunks with only 2 participants rejecting them – we get a total of 471/748, or 63% of chunks, which have only one or two participants deeming them unacceptable. Of course, it is important to remember that participants were not asked to look for every possible use of language they deemed unacceptable, but those they select are meant to represent those they deem the “most unacceptable” – i.e., the “top ten” language uses in the essay they objected to – to make the data more manageable and help me identify any possible pattern or trends.

In contrast, only 18 chunks, or less than 2.5% of all chunks, were marked as unacceptable by over half (at least 23/46) of all participants. Even if we were to look for a more modest level of consensus – for example, chunks which at least 20% of all participants (10/46) agreed were unacceptable — this is still only 73/748, or a little less than 10% of the total number of chunks.

These preliminary findings already point to the deeply subjective nature of acceptability judgments in writing, which should give us pause when we think about traditional monolithic definitions of good writing, error, well-formed sentences, proper word choice, and related concepts. If nearly half of the “unacceptable” chunks are unacceptable to only one in forty-six participants, it seems clear that the source(s) of unacceptability are not black and white, but that unacceptability must be produced in the reader’s encounter with the text in relation to the task

they are given (for example, an AJT like this one, or the marking of a student's paper in an instructional setting). While some previous studies (Hyland & Anan, 2006; Wall & Hull, 1989) showed that the process of making judgments of language use is idiosyncratic, they did so with a single text. By looking at how chunks were marked as unacceptable across seven texts, the present study confirms even more decidedly that there is likely to be little agreement between readers of a text on what constitutes unacceptable language use.

5.3 Comparison of groups' responses to chunks

5.3.1 Introduction

The rest of this chapter focuses on comparison of how the participants responded to specific chunks. There are three sections. The first, which I refer to as "high consensus" chunks, includes those chunks which were marked by more than 50% of the Chinese group *and* more than 50% of the non-Chinese group. The next two sections are what I call "differing priorities" for the Chinese and non-Chinese groups: those chunks that stood out as more clearly marked by one group than the other, each including 1) chunks which were chosen by over 50% of one group but less than 50% of the other, and 2) chunks which were chosen by at least 20% of one group but by no one in the other group. Each of these categories is analyzed below, using descriptive statistical data from the AJT, as well as the participants' comments from the AJT and relevant excerpts of follow-up interviews. (Because there are more chunks in the "differing priorities" categories than can easily fit on a page and be readable, these can be found in Appendices A and B.) Previous studies in error gravity and comparisons of NES/NNES reactions to L2 writing have suggested that NNESs tend to focus more on "rule violations" while NESs focus on "meaning" or "intelligibility" when choosing what to reject (e.g., Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Hyland & Anan, 2006; Sheory, 1986). The findings below, however, show that in this open-

ended task, both groups appeared to place a high priority on rule violation (including syntax and/or collocation as well as (potential) typographical mistakes). In terms of “differing priorities” for determining unacceptability, I highlight two for each group. For the Chinese group, this was 1) rejecting what they perceived as Chinese-influenced syntax, and 2) rejecting collocations that conflicted with a narrow interpretation of words’ semantic content. For the non-Chinese group, this was 1) a dislike of “dictionary words,” or writers’ use of unfamiliar or obscure lexical items, and 2) rejection of the use of certain discourse markers, sometimes labeled by the non-Chinese participants as clichéd or incorrectly used.

5.3.2 High consensus: Chunks marked by 50% of both groups

Nine chunks were marked by more than 50% of both groups (that is, over 15 participants in the Chinese group and 8 in the non-Chinese group). These included six issues related to rule violations and three potential or probable typographical errors. (I should note that I did not see these as “typos” when I first read the essays, but the consensus of the participants suggested many of them viewed them this way; see below.) These two categories are described below using representative examples of each.

5.3.2.1 Rule violations

Table 5.1 shows the chunks in what I call the “rule violation” category and how often they were chosen by each group, while Table 5.2 shows the same chunks along with representative comments from those participants who selected the chunk. Below the tables, I highlight several cases in this category.

Table 5.1 “Rule violation” chunks

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
D066	Sometimes we can’t assure ourselves won’t forget everything.	22 (73%)	11 (69%)	33 (72%)
C007	For the purpose of satisfying the people's need, with developing quickly in construction , the government offers lots of funds to build theaters, sports stadiums, etc.	22 (73%)	9 (56%)	31 (67%)
E028	Besides, China is a large family with more than 1.3 billion people, and the growth of the service sector, the increasing demand for skilled workers which adds pressure to the intensifying competition.	19 (63%)	12 (75%)	31 (67%)
A074	So degree certificates are a most factor to find job.	18 (60%)	9 (56%)	27 (59%)
D005	However, there are still some arguments thinking that the overuse of E-dictionaries might have more disadvantages than advantages for our English learning.	19 (63%)	8 (50%)	27 (59%)
G006	Nowadays, we are using computers more often, computers are becoming more and more important in our daily life, and some people would say that their life and work can not going on without computers.	16 (53%)	10 (63%)	26 (57%)

Table 5.2 “Rule violation” chunks and representative comments

ID	Chunk	Rule violated	Representative comments
D066	Sometimes we can’t assure ourselves won’t forget everything.	Reflexive pronoun used as subject	<p>“Misuse, sounds like Chinese” (SIC1)</p> <p>“Wrong word: maybe she means ..we can’t be sure we won’t...” (CAN7)</p> <p>“Missing something – interfering with meaning – we can’t ensure we won’t forget things?” (JVU2)</p> <p>“Grammatical mistake: two verbs in the sentence. Beside, “assure” cannot be used this way. Should be “we cannot ensure that we remember everything.”” (NKU11)</p>
C007	For the purpose of satisfying the people's need, with developing quickly in construction , the government offers lots of funds to build theaters, sports stadiums, etc.	Use of a verb phrase in a prepositional phrase where a noun phrase is preferred (i.e., “with the quick development of construction”)	<p>“Chinese students’ common mistake of preposition phrase. “ (ATC7)</p> <p>“Confusing as written, I suggest ‘by quickly developing construction projects” (CAN2)</p> <p>“this would be better as a noun phrase” (JVU6)</p>
E028	Besides, China is a large family with more than 1.3 billion people, and the growth of the service sector, the increasing demand for skilled workers which adds pressure to the intensifying competition.	Compound-complex sentence with no main verb in the second clause.	<p>“this is not a sentence.” (SIC5)</p> <p>“The sentence is not grammatically correct. It’s better to say: the growth of the service sector and the increasing demand for skilled workers add pressure on...” (NKU6)</p> <p>“awkward and unclear” (CAN8)</p> <p>“sentence structure” (JVU1)</p>
A074	So degree certificates are a most factor to find job.	Misuse of “most” as an adverb – it should be modifying an adjective, not a noun	<p>“Most what?” (NKU1)</p> <p>“Awkward: word missing? ‘important’ maybe?” (CAN8)</p> <p>“Meaning is unclear – the most important factor in finding a job?” (JVU2)</p>
D005	However, there are still some arguments thinking that the overuse of E-dictionaries might have more disadvantages than advantages for our English learning.	Collocation, or attributing agency to something that has no agency.	<p>“Arguments do not think.” (JVU7)</p> <p>“‘Arguments’ cannot ‘think’!” (ATC9)</p> <p>“Anthropomorphism” (CAN8)</p> <p>“we never say arguments thinking what, but I frequently saw Chinese students tend to use this, because they are not used to English” (NKU9)</p>
G006	Nowadays, we are using computers more often, computers are becoming more and more important in our daily life, and some people would say that their life and work can not going on without computers.	Verb form following a modal (“can”) would normally be the base form of the verb, not the present progressive	<p>“can + base form” (CAN3)</p> <p>“We use the original form of a verb after the modal verb ‘can.’” (ATC5)</p> <p>“Grammatically it should be ‘can not go.’” (NKU3)</p> <p>“wrong verb form, though meaning still clear” (JVU6)</p>

As Table 5.1 shows, most of the chunks marked by a majority of both groups are identifiable as violations of grammatical rules of English – usually syntax – as opposed to, for example, informal “violations” which do not actually violate the linguistic structure of the language (the latter of which are often complained about in public discourse, according to Milroy & Milroy, 2012). Not surprisingly, it seems the English language teachers in this study are more apt to recognize uses which actually violate the rules of English syntax, as they understand them as in the case of Leonard and Gilsdorf (1990), whose participants were more likely to be distracted by “basic sentence structure errors” (p. 145) than by usages which contradicted writing handbooks’ advice but were not strictly ungrammatical. (In fact, these types of basic “rule violation” comments are also common in the “differing priorities” groups discussed below). It is to be expected that many of the most frequently marked chunks would be violations of grammatical rules familiar to both native and non-native expert users of English, since “acceptability” is easily interpreted as a judgment of correctness at the level of grammaticality, especially in the this study which asked for judgments at the word or sentence level.

Most participants seemed to be in accord regarding the specific reasons each of these chunks was marked. The types of comments presented in Table 5.2 are representative, ranging from simple declarations like “wrong verb form” or simply “sentence structure” (implying a problematic sentence structure) to more detailed suggestions of what would make the chunk or sentence better (such as many of the comments on D066, the first chunk in the table). The high degree of rejection of these rule violation chunks, and the comments relating to grammar, shows the priority that both groups placed on rejecting usages that violate rules of English syntax.

However, several of the Chinese commenters directly referenced Chineseness, whether this had to do with Chinese language (“sounds like Chinese,” SIC1) or Chinese students

(“Chinese students tend to use this,” NKU9). While references to Chinese are not plentiful for these chunks, they are mentioned by some Chinese commenters above, which suggests that some of them, at least, are “on the lookout” for Chinese influence in the essays. This is also suggested by some comments on those chunks which belong to the “differing priorities” section for the Chinese participants, discussed below.

There are two chunks above that stand out for further scrutiny; the first is the “with developing quickly in construction” chunk (C007). While both groups reject the chunk for similar (grammatical) reasons, it seems likely that the Chinese teachers are more familiar with this type of clause in general. Here is one perceptive comment made by NKU8 in his original comment on the AJT:

The first problem is the meaning the phrase wants to convey. Here it might mean that “the infrastructure of the country has been developing quickly”, but this structure is very confusing. It can be changed to “with infrastructural construction developing quickly”.

The second problem is even with this correction, the phrase seems to be incoherent with the preceding sentence. It may be changed into “and with the rapid development in the construction of infrastructure.”

NKU8’s suggestion that the student intends to write about the infrastructure of the country and its rapid development suggests that she is familiar with this kind of political/socio-economic discourse in student writing. It is common in contemporary Chinese academic writing at the university level to begin an essay with a reference to China’s rapid economic development; for example, 407 of the essays in the WECCL include the phrase “with the development,” and 52 include “with the rapid development.” So while the reactions to this chunk may not be substantially different for the different groups, the Chinese teachers may be more able to

recognize this as a variation of a common phrase rather than (only) a simple grammatical error.

The second case is that of “arguments thinking.” This is the only “rule violation” which may not be a primarily grammatical or syntactic rule violation; participants’ objections to “arguments thinking” can be seen as one of two types: first, as an inappropriate or uncommon collocation (“arguments thinking”), and second, as a semantic problem, an inappropriate “anthropomorphism” which attributes agency to a conceptual entity. Two of the commenters specifically referenced collocation, but the majority included comments along the lines of the first quoted in the table: “arguments cannot think.” Thus, “arguments thinking” is clearly a “violation” felt strongly by both Chinese and non-Chinese commenters, not unlike a sense of grammatical rule violation.

5.3.2.2 Possible Typos

The possibility of student writers making typographical errors seems familiar enough to most of the participants that many of them assumed some chunks were not cases of choosing the wrong word or misusing a word, but accidental typing mistakes. The three “possible typo” chunks are shown in Table 5.3 and are described below.

Table 5.3 Possible typos

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
E002	Nowadays, with the rapid development of our society and economy, competition is becoming more and fierce , while cooperation, as a traditional idea, is losing its position in our society.	21 (70%)	11 (69%)	32 (70%)
F067	This is quite a heavy burden to ordinary families and also will cause some students to compare living conditions with each other, which will lead to bad earning environment for a university.	21 (70%)	10 (63%)	31 (67%)
C051	According to the official statistics, nearby half of children in rural regions are unable to finish their elementary education and some of them fail to go to school because of lack of money.	17 (57%)	9 (56%)	26 (57%)

“More and fierce” (E002) was one of the most widely marked chunks in the study, and many of the comments point to readers interpreting this as a typo or a forgotten word, assuming that the writer intended to write either “more fierce” or “more and more fierce.” (In fact, I later discovered that this may have been a typo on my part, as the original essay from the WECCL corpus reads “more and fiercer,” so the loss of the “r” must have occurred when I cut and pasted the text to my own AJT document.) As ATC4 wrote, “This writer probably forgot to write the second ‘more’ due to his or her carelessness.” While only one specifically called this chunk a typo, eight of the commenters assumed that the writer intended “more and more fierce,” and four assumed he or she meant “more fierce.” While one other commenter (CAN8) speculated as to whether “more” suggested that the writer was using “competition is becoming more” to mean “competition is increasing,” the majority of the remaining comments were either simple declarations of confusion or incorrectness (e.g., CAN1: “awkward phrase,” SIC2: “more cannot be used this way.”) or suggestions to rewrite the sentence with a meaning similar to “more fierce.”

Another one of the most widely marked “high consensus” chunks, “bad earning environment” (F067) is also a candidate for a likely typo. Of the 31 participants who marked it, 12 of them commented either that it was likely a typo (SIC2: “Clerical error here I think,” ATC3: “Maybe a typo here?”) or that the writer probably intended to write “learning” (NKU11: “Should be learning,” CAN1: “Letter deletion. Should be ‘learning.’”). There were 12 more participants who simply stated that “earning” or “earning environment” was confusing or hard to understand (CAN6: “Meaning unclear,” NKU3: “It does not make sense,” NKU10, “Inappropriate use of earning.”) Finally, a few participants suggested changing the word to express a different meaning, or tried to come up with a way to change the sentence to be more related to the

university's financial situation. It seems, though, that the majority of participants interpreted "bad earning environment" as a typo or possible typo.

For the "nearby half" chunk (C051), 17 of the 26 participants marking it assumed that this was a spelling mistake and/or that the writer had intended to write "nearly", or simply mentioned that "nearly" was the preferred word here. The remaining commenters mentioned word choice or grammatical inaccuracy, but taken together, the vast majority seemed to assume this was a matter of simply confusing two similar words, possibly as the result of a typo. As JVU2 wrote: "Easy mistake to make as [Microsoft] Word does not pick it up – she means 'nearly'. One could still bypass it and get her meaning as 'nearly.'"

5.3.2.3 Summary

There were relatively few chunks which were widely marked by both the Chinese and non-Chinese participants in this study; of the nine that were marked by at least 50% of both groups, three were primarily interpreted as typing mistakes, while five were obvious violations of the rules of English grammar. The one exception was the "arguments thinking" chunk, which many participants rejected because "arguments cannot think." The findings – that the most widely marked chunks that both groups agree on are rule violations and typos – are not surprising, as these are perhaps the most "obvious" types of errors or variations from accepted standard written English that tend to be noticed by teachers or other readers. In the case of the apparent typos, although they are sometimes dismissed as simple "carelessness," the fact that they were among the most marked chunks does suggest that both groups of participants are on the lookout for language that obscures meaning due to being grammatically or semantically irrelevant in context. Rule violations are among the most widely marked chunks in the "differing priorities" sections below as well, but new and different categories do emerge.

5.3.3 Differing priorities for the Chinese group

There were a total of twenty-one “priority” chunks for the Chinese group. The majority were also rule violations, though two of these were perceived to be “Chinglish” and will be described in more detail below. The next largest category was collocations marked due to semantic interpretation of lexical items (six), also described below. The remaining chunks are not described in detail, but can be viewed in Appendix B. These included some which involved participants disagreeing with the writer’s word choice, one perceived typo, and one chunk perceived as “wordy.”

5.3.3.1 Perceived Chinglish

As mentioned above, many of the priority chunks for the Chinese group were related primarily to conventional grammar or syntax rule violations. The apparent reasons for marking these chunks were similar to those in the “high consensus” category; we might expect these types of rejections from either group, since we know that the most marked chunks by both groups tend to relate to either violation of rules and/or typos. However, two of these appear to be specifically motivated by the presumption of Chinese influence, or “Chinglish.”

Two of the most marked chunks by Chinese participants occurred in the same sentence in Prompt B, shown in Table 5.4 below. The original sentence is: “On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being.” In both cases, these involve words that can be directly traced to their Chinese counterparts; in the first case, 有(*you*) can be translated as ‘to have’ or ‘there be,’ while in the second, 让(*rang*) can be translated as ‘to let’ or ‘to make.’ “There also have” (B039) was marked by 19 of the Chinese group, while “let them more comfortable,” (B042) was the most marked chunk for the Chinese group in the whole study, with 26 of 30 Chinese participants

rejecting it.

Table 5.4 Perceived Chinglish

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
B042	On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being.	26 (87%)	6 (38%)	32 (79%)
B039	On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being.	19 (63%)	5 (31%)	24 (52%)

The fact that these were both widely marked by the Chinese group but only marked by around one-third of the non-Chinese group suggests that while both groups found these chunks objectionable, suppression of Chinese influence was a unique priority in some of the Chinese teachers' judgments. In fact, no non-Chinese participants used the word "Chinglish" in their AJT comments for any chunk in the study, and only on one occasion did a non-Chinese participant describe a chunk as being "Chinese" (for more on marking unacceptable language use as "Chinese," see Heng Hartse & Shi, 2012).

Further examination of the comments and interview data lend credence to the notion that suppressing Chinese influence was a priority for the Chinese participants. In the case of "let them more comfortable," two participants referred to this chunk as having Chinese influence, ATC9 calling it "Chinglish" and SIC1 a "typical Chinese way to organizing words." In interviews, several other participants also identified this use of "let" as "Chinese," as in this interview excerpt with ATC5. She made the assertion that this use of "let" is "Chinese," while I pointed out that as a non-Chinese speaker, this distinction is less important to me when making this judgment.

ATC5: Hmmm so, I think that is Chinese. Quite Chinese. "Let" in Chinese, that's *rang*.

JHH: So, it's a problem of distinguishing between *let* and *make*. So these are the things I

wouldn't notice, so that's good.

In the case of “there also have,” there were five Chinese participants who mentioned Chinglish or Chinese in their AJT comments, including NKU4 (“Wrong sentence structure. This is Chinglish. A “there-be” structure should be used here.”), ATC11 (“It is very odd. But it is the common mistake by Chinese students.”), NKU9 (“Chinese tend to say ‘there have,’ while it should be ‘there be.’”), NKU7 (“This Chinglish. Should be ‘there are also some people’”) and SIC4 (“Chinglish”).

In the follow-up interview, SIC4 and I discussed the use of this “there be” structure further. He brought up the Chinese word *you* (to have, or there be), I mentioned *haiyou* (also have, or there also be), and he described his desire to eradicate this Chinglish structure from his students' writing by going so far as to forbid the standard English equivalent:

JHH: Oh, here is where you specifically said Chinglish: “on the other hand there also have”...?

SIC4: Yeah, there also have. *You*. There be, right. There have.

JHH: Oh, *zheshi you*, so *you*, in Chinese this whole thing would just be *you*.
[Oh, just *you*.]

SIC4: *You*. *Dui*, *you*, *yi ge ci*. *You*.
[*You*. Right, *you*. One word. *You*.]

JHH: Or it could be *you*, *haiyou* 'cause also...

SIC4: *Haiyou*. There also have, Chinglish.

JHH: OK.

SIC4: So, in our writing class, “there be,” this structure is forbidden in writing. To avoid the mistakes, the students are not allowed to use this!

JHH: OK, interesting. So in standard English you would prefer what?

SIC4: “On the other hand,” just “some people”...

JHH: Yeah, OK, just take that out.

SIC4: Yeah, take that out.

For SIC4, the outright removal of the “there be” structure, even when grammatical, was preferable to allowing the possibility of ungrammatical Chinese influence in English writing. Because the Chinese group have expert knowledge of the grammar of both Chinese and English, they seem to be more likely to reject usages which are perceived to be influenced by Chinese. (This metalinguistic use of Chinese in making judgments is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, which shows how Chinese teachers use their bilingual knowledge as a way to bolster their authority and credibility as judges of linguistic acceptability).

5.3.3.1.1 Pronoun shift: Is it Chinglish?

However, the perception of Chinese influence being the “reason” for the unacceptable usage is not always clear. For example, while most of the comments for the chunk B055 (“In my opinion, **we** should decide the status of animals according to **your** own condition,” see Appendix B), a sentence in which the pronouns “you” and “we” are used to describe the same referent, simply mention “pronoun shift,” ATC11 wrote: “Although it is acceptable in Chinese, in English it is not suitable to use the different pronouns in a very mixed way.” NKU9 referenced Chineseness, though not agreeing that this was ‘acceptable’ in Chinese, when she wrote: “Many Chinese students commit those mistakes.” Similarly, when we discussed this chunk in the interview, SIC4 came to the conclusion that while this might be a common occurrence, it was not acceptable in English or Chinese:

JHH: Do you think they would do the same thing in Chinese?

SIC4: Yeah, yeah, perhaps. (*speaking to himself*) I think – this is also unacceptable in Chinese writing!

JHH: Yeah.

SIC4: You cannot change the subject.

While the participants showed different views of the acceptability of pronoun shifts in Chinese (as opposed to English), it was clear from some Chinese participants' comments that they feel their students frequently write this particular nonstandardism. This echoes some of the findings of Davies (1983), who suggested that NNESTs may be harsher judging certain errors they often see in their students' work, which they hope their students would have moved beyond.

5.3.3.2 Collocations marked due to narrow semantic interpretations of words

There were also a number of high-priority chunks for the Chinese group involving collocations marked due to narrow semantic interpretations of words, none of which were marked by non-Chinese participants. Table 5.5 lists these chunks. Below, I detail the ways in which the Chinese teachers' judgments of these collocations as unacceptable are related to the suppression of variation in lexical meaning. (The final chunk in this group, "the alarm clock is open" (D071), is dealt with in the next chapter as an example of reactions to Chinese English.)

Table 5.5 Collocations

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A068	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job , the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability	14 (47%)	0	14 (30%)
B068	You can eat them, wear the clothes which are made from them, and use them to make things. But you should also have a limitation .	10 (33%)	0	10 (22%)
G042	When you miss that friend or you feel alone , you can take out that beautiful card, touching the paintings and characters on it, you'll find out why you love paper cards so much.	9 (30%)	0	9 (20%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
D085	Sometimes we can't avoid calculating some complicated questions , especially when the time is very limited and urgent, E-dictionary will be necessary, and apparently much time will be saved.	7 (23%)	0	7 (15%)
E082	If we encourage students to rent an apartment off campus, these students may feel sense of inferiority , which may leave a bad influence for their future development.	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
B061	If you are fond of them and like to raise one, you can feed one, play with it and treat it as your own lovely pet. But you should have a limit .	6 (20%)	0	6
D071	However, once the schedule is recorded on, and your alarm clock is open , then you will be reminded on time.	6 (20%)	0	6

5.3.3.2.1 “Find job”

“Find job” (A068) was the most often marked chunk in this group. There were other chunks that were selected in the original sentence: some Chinese and non-Chinese participants marked the phrase “find job” as ungrammatical, preferring “find a job” or “find jobs.” However, nearly half the participants in the Chinese group also marked the verb “find” due to what they construed as its semantic inappropriateness in this context. Table 5.6, showing comments from all 14 of those rejecting this usage, illustrates that nearly every objection is related to the meaning of “find”:

Table 5.6 Comments on “find job” (A068)

Participant	Comment
ATC1	Apply for a job. Inaccurate expression.
ATC5	It is not a result. It's an action. So “look for” is more appropriate.
NKU10	inappropriate use
NKU3	It should be “are looking for”.
NKU4	people are looking for a job

Participant	Comment
NKU5	“Find” is not appropriate. It should be changed to “look for” or “hunt for”.
NKU7	Wrong choice of word. Should be “look for”
NKU8	Changed into “look for”, because “find” means “succeed in locating a job”
NKU9	(hunt jobs. One has not found the job yet.)
SIC2	Inappropriate word choice. “looking for” is a good choice.
SIC3	it should be look for or hunt for
SIC4	Wrong verb
SIC5	Try to secure themselves a job. “find” means it has been done.
SIC7	are hunting a; “find” means it has been done.

These comments, and the suggestions of “look for,” “hunt for,” and other alternatives as an appropriate replacement show that many of the Chinese teachers find an expanded or shifted meaning for “find” (the traditional definition of which suggests, for example, to “succeed in obtaining” something) to be unacceptable. Given the close semantic relationship between “find” and “look for,” the fact that a significant proportion of the Chinese participants selected this chunk, while no non-Chinese did, strongly suggests that the Chinese teachers are much more likely to reject usages of words that deviate from a particular interpretation of their meaning.

5.3.3.2.2 “Have a limit” and “have a limitation”

“Have a limit” (B061) and “have a limitation” (B068) are similar and occur close to each other in the original essay and are worth examining together. Below are the relevant passages and accompanying comments given by the Chinese teachers:

Table 5.7 Comments on “have a limit” (B061)

Participant	Comment
ATC5	It is not “someone” who has a limit, but “there is a limit to sth.”
ATC6	It does (<i>sic</i>) make sense.
ATC7	a wrong expression
NKU1	Doesn’t really know how to use words like ‘limit and limitation (see below)’.
NKU3	It should be a noun.

Participant	Comment
SIC4	Bottom-line will be better

For the “limit” chunk, ATC5 asserts that a *person* cannot “have a limit,” but a *thing* can. This seems to be the complaint of most of the commenters (some suggested alternatives like “setting a limit” in interviews) apart from NKU3 (“it should be a noun”), who appears to be interpreting “limit” as a verb, preferring a(nother) noun – presumably a word like “limitation.” In the case of the “limit” chunk, the meaning does not appear to be unclear to those who reject it, but the reasons given for the marking of “limitation” (see below) suggest that the main factor at work is the unacceptability of the substitution of one for the other, due to their semantic overlap and morphological similarity.

Table 5.8 Comments on “have a limitation” (B068)

Participant	Comment
ATC8	Unclear meaning
ATC2	This sentence is not native.
NKU11	The writer seems to confound the use of “limit” and “limitation”.
ATC11	It sounds odd. It should be “three must be a limit”.
ATC9	It should be “limit” to parallel with the expression in the former paragraph.
NKU10	Inappropriate use of "limitation"
ATC1	Inaccuracy in expression. Limit may be a better diction.
NKU9	This is Chinglish. Many Chinese students prefer this statement which is rare in English.
ATC3	“limit” is preferable.
ATC5	“Limit” is a more appropriate choice.

Regarding the “limitation” chunk, it may seem contradictory that some participants suggest using “limit” instead of “limitation,” since some gave the opposite suggestion for the previous chunk. On the one hand, six of the commenters (NKU11, ATC11, ATC9, ATC1, ATC3, and

ATC5) preferred “limit” to “limitation,” at least one (ATC9) for reasons of parallelism with the writer’s earlier usage.

However, the rejection seems to be more closely related to the commenters’ interpreting “limit” and “limitation” as semantically different. “Limit” and “limitation” can have different connotations depending on context, and it is likely that the meaning of “limit” is being understood by participants as *restriction* while “limitation” is read as an *inability to do something* or a *failure*. An excerpt from an interview with ATC5 supports this interpretation; she considers the first chunk to have a problem with structure, while for the second, she distinguishes between the meanings of limit and limitation.

ATC5: (*reading sentence*) ... “you should have a limit.” Oh yeah. I think limit is all right, but we do not say *you* have a limit. *There is* a limit to something. The limit for you to do something.

JHH: OK, so something like “there is a limit” or “there should be a limit.” OK. And then similarly we have “limitation” here.

ATC5: “But you should also have a limitation.” I think the meaning is different, limitation is quite different from limit, but here limit is OK.

JHH: OK, so, I mean, would you do the same thing, would you want it to be something similar to this sentence, I mean we have “you should have a limit,” here we have “you should also have a limit.” So, this one is OK?

ATC5: No, I don’t think limitation is OK.

JHH: OK. But limit is OK.

In saying “so, this one is OK?” I was asking ATC5 to distinguish between the earlier “you should have a limit,” which she rejects due to sentence structure, and her suggestion that “limitation” replace “limit” in the second sentence, which would hypothetically result in an almost identical sentence to the earlier one she marked. Her response – “no, I don’t think limitation is OK” – suggests that she is in fact focused on the semantic differences between

“limit” and “limitation” in this second case, rather than the sentence structure.

Similarly, ATC1, who commented on both chunks, distinguished the meanings of the two words, specifically referring to a negative connotation of “limitation”:

JHH: And you also have a limitation...

ATC1: Yeah, well, I think, there is difference between limit – the author used limit.

JHH: Yeah. I see.

ATC1: Yeah, I think, the limit is different from limitation. So, if you want to use limit, keep using limit.

JHH: Ah. So, it’s a matter of, if this isn’t here, do you think this is OK or...

ATC1: Um, limitation?

JHH: It just has a different meaning?

ATC1: (reading quietly) *you should have a limitation*. Limit is better. It’s a better word. I won’t use limitation. You have a limitation means you – yeah, you are dis—disfect? Or...

JHH: Oh, there’s something wrong with you, right?

ATC1: Yeah, yeah.

JHH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ATC1: Instead of you have— you *set* a limit to something, instead of you have a limitation. Limitation is not correct.

JHH: Gotcha.

ATC1: And are you expecting this kind of a correction? The mis-choice of words?

Here, ATC1 considers “limitation” a “mis-choice” of words connoting “disfect,” (i.e., “defect” or “defective”) which I interpret as meaning “something is wrong with you,” a meaning she confirms. Like ATC5, she is less concerned with the sentence structure in the second case, acknowledging that even though it is not ideal, the writer has already used “you should have a limit” once, so he or she might as well “keep using limit” in order to make the meaning more

clear.

5.3.3.2.3 “Feel alone”

The Chinese participants who marked the chunk “feel alone” (G042) did not accept “alone” in a context which calls for a meaning closer to the conventional use of “lonely” to convey emotion rather than “alone” to connote a solitary state.

Table 5.9 Comments on “feel alone” (G042)

Participant	Comment
ATC5	One does not “feel alone”. He might “feels lonely”.
ATC7	Wrong word
ATC8	word choice
NKU11	Better “lonely”
NKU3	“lonely” is more appropriate.
NKU5	“Lonely” is more appropriate.
SIC3	Should be “lonely”
SIC4	part of speech
SIC7	Lonely

Of the nine commenters, six explicitly suggest replacing “alone” with “lonely”; as ATC5 commented: “one does not ‘feel alone.’ He might ‘feels lonely.’” One of the functions of language standardization (and standard language ideology), according to Milroy and Milroy (2012), is fulfilling a “need for uniformity” (p. 22) and limiting vagueness or ambiguity (particularly in writing); the participants here appear to reject a reading of “alone” which could be read as more figurative or poetic. (“Alone” does not always connote “lonely,” and in this case the writer could be making a choice to emphasize the depth of feeling by using “alone.”)

It is possible that the writer’s use of “feel alone” was considered a kind of poetic license by the non-Chinese participants, though not the Chinese. The possibility of the writer intending to write in a “poetic” style seems to be taken up in the comments by the non-Chinese participants in their rejections of the whole sentence itself as a chunk (though not singling out the “feel

alone” chunk) that was “flowery” (CAN6), “dramatic” (JVU2), or a kind of fairy tale in which “we can all live happily ever after,” as JVU4 sarcastically wrote. Therefore, while the non-Chinese did not mark “feel alone”, some did reject the overly emotional and “flowery” tone of the whole sentence; in contrast, the Chinese participants focused on regulating the semantic ambiguity of “feel alone” as unacceptable for describing an emotional state.

5.3.3.2.4 “Feel sense of inferiority”

While several participants from both groups pointed out the missing article in this chunk (F082), only the Chinese group marked “feel a sense” in favor of “have a sense.” Six of them did so in total, with three of them attributing this usage to Chinese influence:

Table 5.10 Comments on “feel sense of inferiority” (F082)

Participant	Comment
ATC4	Wrong vocabulary. It should be “have a sense of inferiority”. This id influenced by the Chinese language habbit.
ATC6	We can not say “ feel sense”. The word “ have” is a better choice
NKU9	this is Chinese English. He thought in Chinese and then translated in English. The student seldom read good passages aloud or fluently. Have sense of... or just feel inferior
SIC3	“have a” is more acceptable
SIC5	Have. Or feel inferior.
SIC7	have a

The fact that three participants asserted Chinese influence here where the non-Chinese did not select “alone” again suggests the Chinese group is more likely to suppress variation even when there may be very little semantic difference, especially, perhaps, if Chinese influence is perceived.

5.3.3.2.5 “Calculating some questions”

The prompt for the essay itself reads, in part: “For example, like the use of calculator affecting the skill of calculating, reliance on E-dictionaries may lead to the deteriorating of our spelling ability.” The one non-Chinese participant (CAN2) who selected a chunk from this

sentence did not have a specific complaint, but suggested that the meaning was unclear and that this may have been because the “student is trying to use cues from the prompt above.” Whether the prompt’s use of “calculating” influenced the writer is uncertain, but the Chinese participants marked the collocation of “calculating” and “questions.” Their comments are shown in Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11 Comments on “calculating some questions” (D085)

Participant	Comment
ATC8	Word usage, you do not calculate “questions”
ATC6	“Calculate” and “question” is not a good collocation
NKU1	‘complicated calculation’ would sound better.
NKU10	Calculating
NKU7	collocation problem. “questions” should be changed into” ffigures”
SIC2	“Questions” can not be calculated.
SIC6	Problem with collocation. questions ----figures.

Just as a person cannot “have a limit” in the earlier chunk, to these participants, ““questions’ cannot be calculated” (NKU10). Two Chinese commenters (NKU7 and SIC6) suggest the specific change to calculating “figures.”

5.3.3.3 Summary

While many of the high-priority chunks for the Chinese group were related to rule violations, and some others were predictable types of usage likely to be noticed by any teachers of writing, two categories of chunks emerged as a priority for the Chinese group that was largely uncommented upon by the non-Chinese group: the first was rule violations which were perceived to be “Chinglish” or in some way influenced by the Chinese language, and the second was the marking of collocations due to narrow interpretations of some lexical items. For the latter category, some of these also seemed to be related to the perception of Chinese influence, even if the chunks might not be identified as unacceptable by non-Chinese readers. In the conclusion of

this chapter, there will be further discussion and comparison of these priorities in contrast to those chunks that were uniquely prioritized by the non-Chinese group.

5.3.4 Differing priorities for the non-Chinese group

There were 29 “priority” chunks for the non-Chinese group (for the full list, see Appendix A). Like the Chinese group, the priority chunks for the non-Chinese were dominated by rule violations, and included other common features that are frequently identified as problematic in L2 writing, including word choice and ambiguous or unconventional phrases. The unique categories I will highlight below include marking of discourse markers, of which there were eight, and what I call “dictionary words,” of which there were three.

5.3.4.1 Discourse markers

The largest unique category that emerged in the high-priority chunks for the non-Chinese group involves a number of what participants variously referred to as “sentence beginners,” “connectors,” “cohesive devices,” or what I call “discourse markers.” The table below shows the discourse marker chunks in the high-priority group for the non-Chinese participants, and several examples are described in more detail below.

Table 5.12 Discourse markers

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
E049	Whereas , just knowing how to compete is not enough, cooperation is also needed.	7 (23%)	11 (69%)	18 (39%)
A003	It is known to all that Edison, a great American inventor, was not a good student at school and he didn't even finish primary school.	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)
A058	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability.	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
D049	Secondly , as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation. Besides, this also will help you to improve your pronunciation since it provides Standard English.	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)
A018	As a result, some people think that education is expensive, it just only wastes our money our time. On the contrary , some people think that the consequences of a failure to educate, especially in an increasingly globalized world, are even more expensive.	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
E020	China is in the process of reforming itself, establishing and improving a socialist market economy which is the reason why competition is becoming fierce. Besides , China is a large family with more than 1.3 billion people...	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
C071	Last but not least , it is necessary for the authorities to furnish the financial assistance to medical care	0	4 (25%)	4 (9%)

The selection of discourse markers as unacceptable occurs at the lexical or phrasal level; that is, the participants do not select whole sentences or groups of sentences in these cases. The reasons for selecting the discourse markers include participants' disliking usages seen as cliché, overused, or unnecessary, and marking of discourse markers for "logical" reasons, or the belief that they are being used inappropriately. (One exception is "whereas" (E049) which was the only discourse marker chunk in the high-priority for the non-Chinese group that was also marked by a substantial minority (7/23) of Chinese participants; most of those who marked this usage drew attention to the fact that "whereas" is "a subordinating conjunction" (CAN8) which "should not be separated from the clause with comma" (NKU8). This could therefore be considered more of a "rule violation.") Representative examples of the discourse marker chunks are described below.

5.3.4.1.1 “It is known to all”

“It is known to all” (A003) was marked by over 1/3 of the non-Chinese group. Adjectives participants used to describe the phrase (shown in the table below) included *overused*, *meaningless*, *false*, *not necessary*, and *presumptuous*.

Table 5.13 Comments on “it is known to all” (A003)

Participant	Comment
CAN4	well-known (otherwise this is a bit presumptuous)
CAN5	“to all” . Best to avoid superlatives and absolutes in a serious essay-unless there is strong supporting evidence. Try “it is commonly known”, or “many people know”
CAN6	Proper expression: “common knowledge”
JVU4	Not necessary – if its known to all then why state it
JVU6	I didn’t know that! I always advise students to avoid this kind of phrase
JVU7	Overused, meaningless expression that makes a false claim (it may not be known to all).

CAN5 referred to the phrase as an example of “superlatives” and “absolutes” that should be avoided in a “serious essay.” JVU6 responded directly: “I didn’t know that!” In the follow-up interview, JVU6 responded to the question of why this chunk was unacceptable by saying: “Don’t presume. Don’t presume,” and calling it “very firm language...when it’s not appropriate.” He assumed that this type of usage was related to “L1 plus culture,” which he also believed was the reason he frequently encountered what he saw as equally inappropriate “vague language”(e.g., “maybe,” “some”) in, for example, summaries of texts. While JVU6 was not a Chinese speaker (though he was taking lessons), he surmised that the use of the phrase “it is known to all,” though it seemed inappropriate and unnecessary to many non-Chinese teachers, may have been a product of Chinese linguistic or cultural influence (see Shi, 2004).

5.3.4.1.2 “Last but not least”

“Last but not least” (C071) was described by the four non-Chinese participants who marked it as *inappropriate*, *non-academic*, *cliché*, and *overused*, as shown in the table below.

Table 5.14 Comments on “last but not least” (C071)

Participant	Comment
JVU3	Inappropriate expression / non-academic
CAN6	Cliché /overused. “Lastly,” or “Finally,” signals final argument nicely.
JVU4	Bad cohesion
JVU1	Avoid cliches like this

In an interview, JVU3 described his reasons for selecting this use as unacceptable:

JHH: “Last but not least,” so here, a “non-academic” “inappropriate expression.”

JVU3: Well, I mean that’s the old Chinese favorite – every coin has two sides and...

JHH: That’s the biggest one I always see, yeah.

JVU3: Last but not least...Having said that, having said that, I mean every day, I mean, I read the western press, and I go to a library and I read textbooks and it’s used quite often.

JHH: That’s what’s funny to me because yeah...

JVU3: So, you can’t really penalize them for that...

JHH: I will rail against things like this and then I will find myself doing it yeah, and not because yeah, not because it’s just – I wonder sometimes if we are influenced by we see oh, they did it again.

JVU3: Yeah, you know, like, maybe we’re worrying about something that’s not really a problem. But it’s just when you see it all the time and just kind of grates on your nerves...

What we both seem to be objecting to here is not the use of this particular phrase in the context of the essay, but our perception that it is overused by Chinese students – JVU3 brings up “every coin has two sides,” a phrase many non-Chinese English teachers in China recognize as common. We agree that “last but not least” is a conventional expression that we would both use, and that is seen regularly in writing in Inner Circle contexts or by native speakers, but I say that I “rail against things like this,” while JV3 says it “grates on your nerves” when you “see it all the time.” In another interview excerpt, JVU3 discussed his opinion of such fixed phrases:

I want them to think about what they are writing about, actually are they using that as a shortcut because that's something they – OK, if we put this in, I'm going to get a good mark, whereas actually in this context, they are probably not, because the lecturer will turn and say, well what do you mean by that, it's actually easy, it needs to be more detailed, you need to say what it is.

By labeling chunks like “it is known to all” and “last but not least” as cliché, overused, or meaningless, the participants seem to select them based on beliefs about the need for specificity and the rejection of general, generic phrases.

5.3.4.1.3 “Besides” (x2)

Some participants' marking of both uses of “besides” (D049 and E020) above are recognizable as the suppression of optional variation in discourse markers. “In addition” is one of the accepted meanings of “Besides” (according to most dictionaries), but “besides” was marked by some non-Chinese participants and in its place, words like “in addition,” “furthermore,” or “moreover” were suggested, as shown in the tables below.

Table 5.15 Comments on “besides” (D049)

Participant	Comment
CAN5	Informal usage, a more formal connector such as “in addition” or furthermore will give a more appropriate tone.
CAN9	Unnecessary with “also”
JVU1	Wrong linking word
JVU2	Wrong cohesive device – moreover?
JVU3	Inappropriate marker
JVU4	This not besides in addition would be better

Table 5.16 Comments on “besides” (E020)

Participant	Comment
CAN3	... not a connecting word... a preposition
CAN5	Besides sounds too oral, informal. Better to use more formal connectors such as “in addition, moreover, furthermore”- due to convention of use in essays.
JVU1	Incorrect linking word
JVU2	Wrong sentence connector for expanding an idea
JVU3	Inappropriate marker / cohesive device

In some cases, it appears that participants interpreted “besides” to mean “apart from,” its other traditional meaning, and thus viewed it as inappropriate in the context in which it was used, while in other cases, participants viewed it as an informal or oral usage which was unacceptable in writing. In either case, the reasons for rejecting “besides” are not dissimilar from the marking of semantic shift found in the Chinese participants’ comments. Taken with all the other non-Chinese marking of discourse markers, it seems more likely that it is a perceived *lack of variety* which is being rejected, which suggests that acceptability is related not only to the immediate linguistic context of a word or phrase, but also the reader’s previous experience and perceptions of the community of which the writer is a member – in this case, Chinese college students.

5.3.4.2 Dictionary words

The other category highlighted here is what I call “dictionary words,” or words labeled unacceptable by non-Chinese participants because they perceived them to be illegitimate or inaccurate even though the words are codified as being part of standard English. Two of the most frequently selected “priority” chunks for the non-Chinese group belong to this category: “cocker” (11/16, or 68.75%) and “discretionarily” (8/16, or 50%). Another chunk involving the word “improvident” was selected by 6 non-Chinese participants but no Chinese participants. These chunks are shown in Table 5.17 below, followed by a description of the comments and interview data which illuminate the ways in which the non-Chinese participants talked about the writers’ use of “dictionary words.”

Table 5.17 Dictionary words

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
B058	Don't cocker it so much. It is just an animal after all.	4 (13%)	11 (69%)	15 (33%)
B027	On the one hand, in the past, we think that we are the masters of the earth, so we polluted the environment discretionarily and took advantage of the resources improperly.	1 (3%)	8 (50%)	9 (20%)
A059	I just want to say these people are improvident .	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)

5.3.4.2.1 “Cocker”

The comments given for “cocker” by the non-Chinese participants who marked it are vehement: they are marked by multiple question marks and exclamation points (such as “??? Coddle?” by CAN4), or by assertions of incredulity like “no idea what is meant here!” (JVU6) “Not sure what this word means!” (JVU7) or “Huh?! That’s a new one” (JVU2). One participant, CAN2, was the first to bring up the issue of a dictionary in her comment: “This was a new word for me but I did find it in the online dictionary.” The full list of comments is in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18 Comments on “cocker” (B058)

Participant	Comment
CAN1	Incorrect word
CAN2	This was a new word for me but I did find it in the online dictionary.
CAN4	??? coddle?
CAN6	Wrong word: “coddle”
CAN7	Wrong word?
CAN9	Incorrect word – wrong meaning
JVU2	Huh?! That’s a new one.
JVU3	Word choice
JVU5	What?

Participant	Comment
JVU6	no idea what is meant here!
JVU7	Not sure what this word means!
NKU9	What is cocker?
SIC5	never heard of this word
SIC6	What's this?
SIC7	?

Indeed, “cocker” is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2011) as “to pamper, spoil, or coddle.” So, while “cocker” is codified, a majority of the non-Chinese participants selected it due to their unfamiliarity with the word. This echoes Henry’s (2010) finding that such “judgments are predicated upon the intersubjective dynamic between the Chinese speaker and foreign listener” (p. 672). (Un)acceptability, then, is not only a matter of whether native speakers would *use* a word or phrase or sentence (as in the definition from Greenbaum, 1992), but here, whether or not they have *knowledge* of a word. The non-Chinese participants’ marking of these words seem to be predicated on two related issues: the *reader* not knowing the word and/or the *writer* not knowing the word (which is assumed because it did not somehow “match” the rest of the text).

I myself was preoccupied with the “cocker” chunk, and I asked almost all of the participants about it. I found the word funny, confusing, and strange when I encountered it in the original text, and was curious about how both the Chinese and non-Chinese teachers would react to it. I found that many of the Chinese teachers, though they were unfamiliar with the word, did not place a high priority on marking it, while the non-Chinese teachers (including myself) placed a high priority on it precisely *because* they were not familiar with it. In my discussion with JVU6 below, I introduce the possibility that the writer used a dictionary and we discuss that.

JHH: ...Briefly if you can remember this, can you describe sort of what happened when you encountered this or what happens when you encounter something like this?

JVU6: Well, I mean, I just didn't have a clue. Normally teachers can guess, can't we? We've, from experience, from a bit of knowledge of L1, maybe you can guess what they are going at. I have no clue.

JHH: No, I also, yeah, I had a number of different reactions to this and mostly confusion.

JVU6: I did – did any of the Chinese teachers come up with something for it?

JHH: None of them, some of them guessed the meaning from context. And, in fact I asked a few teachers, why didn't you mark that? And they said, well, I didn't know the word, but I figured out the meaning. And, actually it turned out they were right. I went back and looked it up and it's some bizarre archaic word that's vaguely related to spoiling or coddling or something like that. So, it's probably the student went to a dictionary. I don't know what dictionary gave that as the first choice.

JVU6: Because coddle was probably closest from the context I would have guessed, which is pretty unusual word to use anyway.

JHH: Exactly, yeah, so it's a very, very interesting. I think there's a whole issue of how are students looking up words and how are they translating words that could...

JVU6: Well, I mean I'm – this is my next job here now is to do my Chinese homework for this afternoon – and I do exactly what I tell the students not to do with the dictionary.

JHH: Where is that word, here it is OK, cut, paste. I do it too. I use Google Translate so much.

We both agreed that we were unfamiliar with the word and not sure what it meant – he described having “no clue” while my reaction was “mostly confusion.” We agreed that the student must have used a dictionary, which JVU6 says he “tell(s) the students not to do.”

However, we agreed that we use online dictionaries in our own dealings with foreign language.

In my interview with JVU5 excerpted below, when the “cocker” chunk came up, we broached the issue of the writer possibly not knowing the word, which reminded JVU5 of an anecdote from his teaching:

JV5: Yeah, um...well, as a little side thing like I had a very low student who – the question was what do you do on the weekend and he said (laughing) “I watch movies and eat cock...”

JHH: Ha, right.

JV5: And, he was trying to say drink Coke.

JHH: Ah, ha ha. OK, ha ha ha.

JV5: But he – yeah he made a little – the word choice was improvident.

JHH: Ha, right. So, the situation like this where we are treading on similar ground or...?

JV5: What I – I’m personally a big fan of minimal marking, like I’m not wildly crazy about correction symbols. I would rather have them figure it out. In this kind of situation I would underline that and put an exclamation point over it and that would almost guarantee that they’re going to ask me and then I would just say that’s, “that almost sounds bad.”

JHH: Yeah, yeah.

JV5: “It’s very similar to bad word,” and probably go back to, you know, you’re relying on the dictionary when you shouldn’t. Like, yeah, don’t spoil it so much, don’t coddle, is maybe the one that comes up close to cocker, but yeah.

Interestingly, JVU5’s anecdote is nearly identical to one told by Henry’s (2010) participants as an example of an anecdote about “Chinglish” that “circulated throughout the community of foreign teachers... and typically focused on the unintentionally embarrassing or humorous particulars of Chinese students’ linguistic production” (p. 675). Here the issue of potentially embarrassing or humorous usage is treated by JVU5 as a symptom of “relying on the dictionary.”

5.3.4.2.2 “Discretionarily”

Some of the non-Chinese participants expressed unfamiliarity with the word “discretionarily” (CAN5 jovially wrote: “I think this word it is interesting, I kind of like it, unfortunately it is not currently recognized as a word”), while others described it as semantically inappropriate in context. The full list of comments is below.

Table 5.19 Comments on “discretionarily” (B029)

Participant	Comment
ATC3	Not an appropriate adverb. “Arbitrarily”?
CAN5	I think this word it is interesting, I kind of like it, unfortunately it is not currently recognized as a word – “at their discretion” or “whenever they wanted”
CAN6	Opposite needed: “without discretion”
CAN7	Wrong word: may be opposite to the intended meaning: maybe indiscriminately is what she meant?
CAN8	Awkward: dictionary word
CAN9	Wrong word interferes with writer’s intended meaning
JVU3	Word choice
JVU6	this is the wrong word
JVU7	Word form

Several participants (CAN7, CAN9, and JVU6) called “discretionarily” the “wrong word” to use in this context, or suggested “without discretion” (CAN6) or “indiscriminately” (CAN7) instead. Thus, although “discretionarily” is, like “cocker,” codified as a standard English word, it is rejected as either not being a real word, being used awkwardly and without the writer’s knowledge of its meaning, or, unique to this case, actually not connoting what the readers believe to be the intended meaning. However, like “cocker,” “discretionarily” can be found in most dictionaries and appears to have a meaning that makes sense for the context: “Available for use as needed or desired” is one meaning of “discretionary,” which has the adverb form “discretionarily” (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011). Nevertheless, half of the non-Chinese commenters considered it inappropriate or simply not a word.

5.3.4.2.3 “Improvident”

Reactions from some of the non-Chinese participants to “improvident” – which JVU5 brought up jokingly in the interview discussion of “cocker” – were surprisingly negative. I had assumed it would be a word familiar to most native speakers. In fact, it was one of the only

words I changed in the original essays in order to avoid the appearance of an obvious error: the original sentence read “I just want to say that these people are improvidence.” Wanting to minimize the number of obviously ungrammatical usages, I changed the sentence to “I just want to say that these people are improvident” before assembling the AJT. As the study took shape, this became less of a priority for me, but I happened to leave “improvident” in the essay, and even though it was grammatical, reactions to “improvident” were strong:

Table 5.20 Comments on “improvident” (A059)

Participant	Comment
CAN3	??
CAN6	Uncommon, literary. Register does not match the rest of the writer’s voice. Appears “plucked” from the dictionary. Try “short-sighted”.
CAN8	Word choice: dictionary word used; stands in stark contrast to the tone and flow of the essay thus far.
JVU2	? is this a word in English?
JVU4	????
JVU5	Your word choice here is improvident

The reactions to “improvident” illustrate both reasons for rejection of dictionary words – the writer not knowing the word and the reader not knowing it. The second and third comments are indicative of how non-Chinese participants make the decision that a certain item is a “dictionary word”: “improvident” is seen as “in stark contrast” to or “does not match” the “tone,” “flow,” or “voice” of the rest of the essay. Other commenters, however, state (JVU2) or imply (the question marks from JVU4 and CAN3) that they do not know the word or even that it is not a legitimate word.

It is impossible to speculate whether participants would accept “improvident” if they were reading a text in another context, but these reactions suggest that the non-Chinese participants are less likely to accept words they perceive as having been found in the dictionary – or, perhaps, words they regard as “uncommon” or “literary.”

5.3.4.3 Summary

Like the Chinese group, the non-Chinese group tended to select various chunks that were rule violations or other conventionally noticeable usages relating to diction. However, two unique categories emerged in my analysis of the data: the marking of “dictionary words,” which were marked due to either the reader’s not knowing the word or the reader’s perception that the writer did not know the word, and the marking of a number of discourse markers which were interpreted as overused or incorrectly used where other discourse markers would be more appropriate. What this reveals about possible differences in the groups’ priorities in making judgments of linguistic acceptability in English writing is discussed in the conclusion below.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of all the chunks that were selected as unacceptable in this study and a brief discussion of the relative lack of agreement between the groups, within the groups, and even between individuals. Simply put, very few chunks in this study were even partially agreed to be unacceptable. By focusing only on those chunks which had a high number of selections from either both groups or one or the other of the groups, I found that while the most common reason for rejecting a chunk for both groups was the violation of the rules of English syntax or the perception of a typographical error, there were also several differences in priorities between the Chinese and non-Chinese groups when it came to other types of rejections. For the Chinese group, the selection of chunks they viewed as “Chinglish,” or particularly influenced by Chinese grammar, was unique. In addition, the suppression of semantic variation played an important role in their selection of a number of collocations. For the non-Chinese group, the selection of “dictionary words” or words was unique, as was the rejection of discourse markers which were seen as cliché, overused, or inappropriate.

Based on the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter 3, we can assume that anyone who makes a judgment of language use is taking part in an ideological process that is a natural part of any language user's repertoire. However, the ways in which different people enact either language "complaints" (Milroy & Milroy, 2012) or "verbal hygiene" (Cameron, 2012) are likely to differ depending on a number of social and individual factors. In this case, there appear to be differences between Chinese and non-Chinese participants' priorities in part due to their language backgrounds and positions as NEST and NNESTs.

The areas of priority for the Chinese group highlighted in this chapter – Chinglish and collocations marked due to narrow (or different) semantic interpretations of lexical items – suggest an orientation to English and to English teaching which takes a native-speaker-oriented, correctness-centered approach. Because the Chinese teachers are bilingual in Chinese and English and are able to recognize what they perceive to be common errors made by Chinese students due to L1 influence, they seem to be more ready to mark perceived Chinglish usages, anxiety about which is common among learners of English in China. This echoes many of the findings of L2 writing error gravity studies which show that NNESTs tend to more harshly judge errors viewed as common to students with whom they share an L1, and studies of NEST/NNEST difference in reactions to L2 writing which show that NNESTs tend to judge "errors" more harshly than NESTs (Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; James 1977; Sheory, 1986). What I have referred to as "narrow semantic interpretations" of words seems to me also to be related to an understanding that these words have specific, predetermined meanings which should not be deviated from in order to avoid ambiguity. The lack of attention given to collocations of words by the non-Chinese group suggests that Chinese English teachers may be more likely to view English words as having particular inflexible meanings – this may in turn be related to the

frequently cited exam-oriented system of English teaching in China (discussed more in Chapter 7).

For the non-Chinese group, the unique selection of “dictionary words” similarly suggests an orientation to language which views native speaking teachers as the ultimate arbiters of usage even when the words are codified in dictionaries. The teachers place their own judgments of usage in direct opposition to dictionary definitions, suggesting that they view authority as inherent in their own native-speaker intuition rather than institutions or resources. (The concept of authority will be further explored in Chapter 7.) The non-Chinese group also paid special scrutiny to discourse markers, the phrases used by writers to create transitions between sentences, and they often viewed the “overuse” of such phrases as unnecessary or clichéd. Some participants admitted there was nothing technically incorrect about these phrases; they were marked less out of a sense of (in)correctness and more, perhaps, out of a sense of overuse or misuse as compared to native speaker usage.

Chapter 6: Participants' reactions to Chinese English and ELF

This chapter, influenced by theory and research in world Englishes (specifically, Chinese English) and English as a Lingua Franca, takes a “top-down” approach to participants’ reactions to chunks they deemed unacceptable. In this chapter, I specifically compare data from this study with previous research on CE and ELF, examining how teachers react to chunks that evince “features” claimed or proposed in the scholarly literature on CE and ELF, which were described in Chapter 4. Thus, while Chapter 5 examined which chunks were marked by both Chinese and non-Chinese participants overall, this chapter looks at participants’ reactions to chunks that are identifiably typical of CE or ELF. This type of investigation has been undertaken in previous studies, including Chen and Hu (2006) and Y. Wang (2013), those have tended to use decontextualized, stereotyped versions of “Chinglish” rather than attested usage from a “real world” context. By using essays from the WECCL, which were composed by real students in an educational setting, this study aims to get a better sense of how participants react to CE and/or ELF usage when they encounter it in its “natural habitat” – that is, the language as it was used in its original discourse context (even if the participants were not a part of this original context.)

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the number of CE and ELF-like features that occurred in the texts used in this study and a few observations about this. The majority of the chapter comprises two sections in which I take an in-depth look at each category – CE and ELF – and the specific chunks evincing features of both. Finally, in the conclusion I make some observations about which chunks were marked and which were ignored in an attempt to make some generalizations about CE and ELF in the context of this study. Implications of these results for theory and research on CE and ELF will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

6.1 Overview of CE/ELF features in the AJT texts

This section briefly describes the overall occurrence of potential CE and ELF features in the seven essays used for the AJT (the features themselves were enumerated in the tables in Chapter 4). Throughout this chapter, I use terms like “potential,” “putative,” and “CE-like” or “ELF-like” to emphasize the fact that it is controversial to refer to stable, fixed features of either CE or ELF, as I mentioned in Chapter 4. Although scholars of both CE and ELF disagree about whether either can be said to have a stable set of features that reliably appear where they might be expected, the features mentioned in Chapter 4 have indeed been claimed in the extant literature, so my goal in this chapter is to examine what happens when the participants encounter these usages.

In total there were 12 CE-like features found in the seven essays, and 30 ELF-like features. Overall, then, the number of chunks corresponding to features of CE or ELF is quite small – 42 in total – when compared to the number of chunks identified as unacceptable by participants in the data reported in Chapter 5 (748 total). (I do not make any claims about whether this is representative of most texts, but am simply interested in understanding how participants react to whatever does happen to occur in these texts.) The two sections below discuss the specific chunks in the ELF and CE categories, respectively, using AJT and interview data to analyze participants’ reasons for rejecting chunks, and, when applicable, attempting to discern why certain chunks appeared to be more (or less) often identified as unacceptable to some participants than others did.

6.2 Participants’ reactions to ELF

This section deals with participants’ reactions to the ELF-like chunks that appeared in the AJT essays. As mentioned above, there were 30 ELF-like chunks in total (an average of about

four per essay). However, a sizable minority (1/3) of ELF-like chunks were not commented upon at all by any participants – of the 30 chunks, ten were not selected by any participants (possible reasons for this will be discussed further below). Table 6.1 below shows how many chunks of each of the putative features of ELF (described earlier in Chapter 4) occurred in the AJT essays.

Table 6.1 ELF-like chunks occurring in the essays

Feature	Number of chunks
“Unnecessary” articles	11
“Missing” articles	8
Verbs of high semantic generality	4
Countability	2
Overexplicitness	2
“Redundant” prepositions	1
That/who distinction	1
Total	29

Below, I look at each of these categories in some detail, in order of most frequently occurring to least frequently occurring features of ELF.

6.2.1 “Unnecessary” articles

The most commonly occurring ELF feature in the essays used for this study was “unnecessary” articles, or articles used in places where they would traditionally not appear in standard written English (see Seidlhofer, 2004). Traditionally, when a noun is being discussed as a general description of a type of thing rather than a specific noun, a definite article is not used (e.g., “he likes dogs” not “he likes the dogs”). However, there are several examples of the use of the definite article with general nouns in the essays, and many of them were not commented on. Table 6.2 below lists these chunks.

Table 6.2 “Unnecessary” articles

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
F019	The college students need to prepare themselves for future careers, especially in the abilities of communicating and mutual understanding.	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
A002	Many successful people didn't have a good schooling.	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
G024	Nowadays we just simply type some words with the keyboard, and click a “send.”	0	4 (25%)	4 (9%)
B071	Moreover, they are the most important resources of our food and clothing, so the nature and our life both need them.	0	3 (19%)	3 (7%)
A062	If one has a higher education, accordingly he can get a good job and he can earn much more money.	1 (3%)	0	1 (2%)
C052	According to the official statistics, nearby half of children in rural regions are unable to finish their elementary education and some of them fail to go to school because of lack of money.	1 (3%)	0	1 (2%)
B071	Don't kill them arbitrarily, because the balance of the nature needs them.	0	3 (19%)	3 (7%)
CXX	There is a phenomenon that many people are unable to go to see the doctor, let alone to cure the disease, especially for these who live below the poverty line	0	0	0
EXX	And living in the society filled with competition, everyone should learn to compete.	0	0	0
EXX	No one can exist alone in the society.	0	0	0
FXX	Firstly, the dormitory life will help students to get along with others much better.	0	0	0

For the most part these “unnecessary” articles were rarely commented upon – four were not selected by anyone, and another three had at most one participant from each group reject it. Those chunks which were somewhat more frequently selected were marked only by some in one group or the other: The “college students” chunk was in the priority group for the Chinese participants (with no objections from the non-Chinese group), while the “a good schooling” and “click a send” chunks were in the priority group for the non-Chinese (with no objections from the Chinese) (see Chapter 5). In addition, the chunk including “the nature” was marked by three non-Chinese but no Chinese participants.

For chunks with the most Chinese commenters, such as “the college students” (first in the table above), participants appear to be applying a kind of rule which could be described as “plural nouns that refer to a group of people/things in general do not require articles.” The six Chinese participants’ comments are shown in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Chinese participants’ comments on “the college students” (F019)

Participant	Comment
ATC1	“The” should be omitted. Wrong usage of articles.
ATC5	They are “college students” in general. So the definite article “the” is not necessary.
ATC8	Grammatically wrong
NKU1	This article here is not necessary.
SIC3	not necessary
SIC7	College; college students in general

The comments from ATC5 and SIC7 suggest that the likely source of most of the other objections is the perception that “college students” here refers to students in general, not specific students, and that therefore there is no need for an article.

For the two priority chunks for the non-Chinese group (“a good schooling,” A002, and “click a send,” G024), the objections seemed to be related to participants’ perceptions of

countability. For example, the comments for the “a good schooling” chunk are listed in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4 Comments on “a good schooling” (A002)

Participant	Comment
CAN1	Extra word “a”
CAN3	“Education” is more appropriate for academic writing.
CAN5	Unusual phrase – perhaps Receive good schooling, or have good schooling without the “a” as “schooling” is uncountable
CAN6	Article usage: “good schooling” – no article; OR “a good education”
JVU5	Schooling is uncountable/gerunds do not take articles

Two of these commenters (CAN5 and JVU5) specifically mention uncountability, while two (CAN1 and CAN6) simply point out that the “a” should not be used here. Two of them (CAN3 and CAN6) also posit “a good education” as an acceptable alternative, differentiating between “schooling” as uncountable and “education” as countable. These comments suggest that, for at least some of non-Chinese participants in this case, the perception of whether a noun is countable or uncountable can lead to deeming it unacceptable if an article is used in a way that is deemed to be incompatible with the noun. This may be the cause of these non-Chinese participants’ rejecting this ELF-like usage of articles.

A similar situation seems to have occurred with “click a send,” comments for which are shown in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5 Comments on “click a send” (G024)

Participant	Comment
CAN3	There’s only one “send”.
CAN4	no article necessary
CAN5	Delete “a”
CAN6	Omit. Article usage. No “a” before a command such as “send”, “delete”, etc.

In this case, the perception seems to be that there cannot be “a ‘send,’” because “send” refers to the name of a particular command, or perhaps an on-screen button, that can be clicked on by a computer user. The perception here seems to be that there is no such thing as “send,” but that “clicking send” is something one does.

Although even fewer non-Chinese participants selected it, “the nature” represents an interesting case because it contrasts with some comments made by Chinese participants on a similar case (“the society,” described below”). Comments on “the nature” are shown in Table 6.6 below.

Table 6.6 Comments on “the nature” (B071)

Participant	Comment
CAN1	Unusual phrase
CAN3	After telling students to use articles, we sometimes have to say, “don’t!” “Nature,” when referring to the environment, does not take an article.
CAN4	no "the" before abstract nouns (in this sentence and the next)

In her comment, CAN4 offers a succinct description of the “rule” that there is no need for “the” before an abstract noun. While this stood out enough to two other Canadian participants for them to reject it, it was not selected by most non-Chinese participants, and by no Chinese participants. I noticed that two other chunks in the “unnecessary articles” group, both involving “the society,” were also not selected by any participants. I had assumed that at least some non-Chinese (if not Chinese) would have found this non-standard, so I decided to look into the question of article usage with abstract nouns – specifically with “society” – elsewhere in the data.

6.2.1.1 “(The) society”: A special case?

The lack of comments made on either of the “the society” chunks shown in Table X below initially surprised me, since I viewed these as nonstandard; I decided to look at how participants dealt with “society” throughout the data. As it turns out, in the AJT, some Chinese participants made arguments in favor of adding an “unnecessary” article to “society” where it did not have an article in the original text. A total of five different Chinese participants described their preference for using an article with the word “society” in five different chunks from Prompt A, which are shown in Table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7 Other chunks involving “society” and participants’ comments

A027: Educated people consider that education is essential to an individual as well as to **society**.

Participant	Comment
ATC1	the society. Before an ordinary noun, an article is needed.
SIC2	Add “the” before “society”. We need a definite article here.
SIC7	a society
NKU7	“the” needed

A031: Illiterate people can hardly have a livelihood in **modern society**.

Participant	Comment
SIC2	In “the” modern society. Reason has already been given above.
SIC7	a modern

A040: On the other hand, ignorant people tend to do something foolish and harm others and **society**.

Participant	Comment
SIC7	the society

A042: As far as **society** is concerned, uneducated people can hardly make contribution to the development and progress of society.

Participant	Comment
SIC7	a society
ATC3	“the” should be added.
ATC5	“Society” is countable. So it’s necessary to use an indefinite article to modify it.

A090: Secondly, education can advance one’s ability, and teach you some skill for survival in **society**.

Participant	Comment
ATC7	The society

For at least some of the Chinese participants, then, it seems that “society” actually requires “the” because of a rule that “ordinary” countable nouns require articles. In several of the interviews, I had long discussions with Chinese participants about their preference for using articles with “society.” I remember thinking that our disagreement had to do with an article-less “society” representing “society in general” (which is the meaning I ascribed to society with no article) whereas “the society” might represent a specific society, but the interview data suggests that for those teachers, article-less “society” was unacceptable because it violated a well-known grammatical rule about article use with countable nouns. Among these participants was SIC2, who discussed her reasons in an interview:

JHH: You also suggested, you want *the* society, you want *the* society here and you want *the* modern society here, *education is essential to an individual, as well as to society.*

SIC2: Yeah.

JHH: *People can hardly have a livelihood in modern society.* So, the same reason? Uh, it’s – because it’s specific society or what?

SIC2: Nooo, because we believe that society is countable. “The society.” “A society.” “The American society.”

JHH: Oh, it’s countable, OK.

SIC2: The – so there should be some kind of articles in front of a noun.

JHH: Because of – because it’s countable, is that –

SIC2: I just like you know – “a book,” “my book.”

JHH: Right.

SIC2: You can – you shouldn’t just say “book.”

Another Chinese participant, SIC7, gave a detailed explanation of chunk 0A31:

SIC7: So, I think here it is more general, so we can use “**a** society,” but maybe this is more specific, it refers to our today’s modern society. So, maybe we can say “in **the**

modern society.” So, OK, so we also can say anything – oh, sorry, I cannot – I don’t know how to express it in English. So, *illiterate people can hardly have a livelihood in modern society*. Maybe “in *today’s* modern society” or “in *tomorrow’s* modern society,” so we can—if we say *today’s* or *tomorrow’s* or *in a society in the future*, then we can use **a** modern society. If that just refers to **today’s** modern society we can use in **the** modern society.

JHH: Yeah, yeah, yeah, OK. So, would there ever be, I mean, would you ever accept just “society,” like without an article, like without or even without an adjective, so like...

SIC7: It’s OK, yeah. I think if it is uh, oral English, then it’s OK.

JHH: Ah, OK.

SIC7: Yeah, if it is the written English – maybe today’s grammatical rules are different – so when I was, I’m learning English, usually we say before the countable noun, we’d better use “a” if it is used in singular form.

SIC7’s assertion that she would accept “society” without an article in oral English but not in writing suggests that she saw the use of an article in writing as necessary to ensure linguistic accuracy. In her final turn of this excerpt, she referred to her own experience learning English, but perhaps responded to my many questions about “society” when she said “maybe today’s grammatical rules are different.” She, like several of the other teachers, seemed to be confident in the rule that, as SIC2 stated, “there should be some kind of articles in front of a noun” that is countable. It is possible that the acceptance of this rule, whatever its source may be, could lead Chinese teachers to be more permissive of some articles that might otherwise be seen as “unnecessary.”

In general, the ELF-like “unnecessary” articles in the essays appear not to have been a major concern for either group of participants, becoming noticeable to only a minority of each group when a specific rule seems to be violated – e.g., “no need for articles with general nouns” for some in the Chinese group, or “no articles with uncountable nouns” for some in the non-Chinese group. However, these rules seem to be applied inconsistently, since few participants

commented on these “violations,” and many of the article uses in these chunks were not selected by any participants. In addition, looking further into the data actually showed that some members of the Chinese group may have preferred *more* ELF-like article usage with the noun “society” due to the perceived rules described in the interview data above.

6.2.2 “Missing” articles

The next ELF feature with the most chunks in this study is that of “missing” articles, of which there were eight instances. Four were for the same noun (“E-dictionary”) in the same prompt (D), none of which were commented on, while the others had more than a few objections from various participants, as shown in Table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8 “Missing” articles

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
E047	So, in order to improve the ability of children, we should teach them how to compete and how to live and succeed in such competitive society .	8 (27%)	5 (31%)	13 (28%)
E053	In football game , for example, one team is competing against the other, but each member of the team must cooperate with his teammates.	9 (30%)	2 (13%)	11 (24%)
F090	Beside three key reasons mentioned above, there are also some other advantages of living on campus, such as easy management of students for colleges.	8 (27%)	3 (19%)	11 (24%)
F102	Although renting an apartment will improve their living conditions, I believe they may lose spirits of fighting against difficulties because of too comfortable life .	4 (13%)	1 (6%)	5 (11%)
DXX	For example, when we meet some new words while communicating with others, it will be very convenient and prompt to check their meanings once you have brought E-dictionary .	0	0	0
DXX	Secondly, as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation.	0	0	0

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
DXX	E-dictionary is one of the best assistants.	0	0	0
DXX	Sometimes we can't avoid calculating some complicated questions, especially when the time is very limited and urgent, E-dictionary will be necessary, and apparently much time will be saved.	0	0	0

The first four “missing” articles listed in the table were marked by a fairly high percentage of participants by the standards of this study (remember that it is very rare to have even 20% of participants agreeing that a chunk is unacceptable); all but “too comfortable life” were marked by over 20% of them. The most selected overall was “such competitive society,” which, given the discussion of “society” above in which Chinese participants argued for the necessity of articles with “society,” is perhaps not surprising. A relatively high number (over 25% of each group) commented on the need for an article here, seen in Table 6.9 below.

Table 6.9 Comments on “such competitive society” (E047)

Participant	Comment
ATC11	Such a competitive society is commonly used.
ATC3	“a” should be added
ATC4	The article “a” is missing. It should be “such a...”.
ATC5	“”Society” is countable. So “such a competitive society” is a better choice.
CAN3	Society is a count noun, so the student should add “a”.
CAN4	such a
CAN8	Article or plu[r]alization needed
JVU5	Missing article, or make it plural
JVU6	needs ‘a’ here
NKU1	Should have ‘a’ before the noun phrase.
NKU2	Need “a”.
NKU6	According to grammar, this should be: such a competitive society.
NKU7	Such a competitive society

Overall, it seems that while “unnecessary” articles were mostly not a priority to mark as unacceptable for most participants, “missing” articles were more noticeable to both groups.

ATC5, a Chinese teacher with many years of experience, discussed her opinion about Chinese English teachers' understanding of articles in English writing in an interview:

ATC5: Yeah, yeah, but that's a biggest problem now, even for teachers. Sometimes I don't know when to add an indefinite article, some definite article, that's –

JHH: So you think articles is the biggest problem?

ATC5: Yeah, very big problem.

JHH: Why, why do you think that is?

ATC5: Well because I think, if you would use *a* or *the* or sometimes you do not use that, you should know that this noun is countable or uncountable, or if it belongs to, you know, one kind of things, then – I think we are not conscious of that with the nouns.

JHH: Yeah, well sometimes I ask myself how could I explain that to a student, and often I can't think of an explanation, I mean I can't.

ATC5: Yeah, some of them I think now – you just use it because you use it in your language.

JHH: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ATC5: But, we do not have that habit.

At first, both of us use the word “problem” to describe the teachers' knowledge of article use in English, but toward the end of this excerpt, ATC5 refers to a “habit” – she says that my (Joel's) knowledge of articles is “just because [I] use it in [my] language,” while Chinese teachers “do not have that habit.” The relative lack of consensus in the Chinese teachers' marking of “missing” articles as unacceptable (that is, while a fairly high percentage – by this study's standards – did mark them, still over 2/3 did not) does lend credence to ATC5's statement that the Chinese teachers are “not conscious” of standard article use, but her overall point seems to be that she sees native speakers' judgments as more habitual or intuitive, whereas Chinese teachers need to rely on rules. While this may sometimes be the case, what we have seen so far suggests that in fact both groups may employ perceived “rules” when making comments.

It is difficult to speculate about why “E-dictionary” went without comment while other “missing” articles were more readily selected. The third chunk in the table (“E-dictionary is one of the best assistants”) could be interpreted as using “E-dictionary” as a kind of personal name, which would not traditionally require an article, but each of the other sentences would seem to require an article or at least a change to plural (as in, for example, “pronunciations is one of the functions E-dictionaries have”). One possible explanation is that because the writer used either a plural or an article with “E-dictionary” in the first two paragraphs, participants were less apt to notice it once they encountered the nonstandard uses. It could also be that “E-dictionary” was a neologism for participants, who may not have been sure what kind of noun it was and thus whether it should be accompanied by an article or not – for example, the fact that it was capitalized might have signaled that “E-dictionary” is meant to be a proper noun.

6.2.3 “Overuse” of semantically general verbs

Another feature of ELF identified in the present data is the ‘overuse’ of “verbs of high semantic generality” such as *have, do, make, take, and put* (Seidlhofer, 2004). Some scholars have taken this to mean that these verbs will occur more frequently in ELF usage than in native speaker or Inner Circle usage; Mollin (2006), for example, found that when comparing her own corpus of European English to the British data set of the International Corpus of English, the European speakers showed “a much stronger preference for *have*,” and a “slightly stronger preference for *make* and *take*” (p. 50). Since the present study is not a corpus study, it is not necessary to count every instance of any of these high-frequency verbs; I have only noted uses where they appear to differ from standard English.

Table 6.10 below shows these usages as they occurred in the text.

Table 6.10 “Overused” verbs of high semantic generality

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
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D048	Secondly, as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation.	19 (63%)	7 (44%)	26 (57%)
A030	Illiterate people can hardly have a livelihood in modern society.	4 (13%)	1 (6%)	5 (9%)
D019	Comparing with the traditional English dictionaries such as Oxford Dictionary, the E-dictionary is easy to take as it's light but contains thousands of words, including two languages at least.	3 (10%)	2 (13%)	5 (9%)
C000	Some people say the government shouldn't put money on building theaters and sports stadiums; they should spend more money on medical care and education.*	0	2 (13%)	2 (4%)

(*Note: this sentence occurred in the writing prompt itself, not in the writer's text.)

The marking of high-frequency verbs appears to be related to the participants' beliefs that there are more appropriate collocations available for the verbs (see Chapter 5 for how this may have also influenced some of the Chinese group's prioritization of rejecting certain other collocations). For example, the first chunk, "this problem can be done," was in the priority group for the Chinese participants and was also marked by over 40% of non-Chinese; in their AJT comments, 12 of the 19 Chinese participants recommended "solved" as an alternative, while four of the seven non-Chinese did the same. Clearly, in the understandings of a majority of the participants, "solve" is a better collocation for "problem" than "do" is. As NKU6 succinctly wrote: "We don't 'do' a problem." Similarly, 4/5 commenters on the "easy to take" chunk suggested "easy to carry," and 2/5 commenters on "have a livelihood" suggested "earn a livelihood."

In contrast, "put money" was only briefly commented on by two non-Chinese participants: JVU5 wrote "spend," while CAN4 simply wrote "???" While this use of "put" would seem like a prime candidate for rejection due to its unconventional use of a high-frequency verb in place of a well-known collocation (i.e., "spend money"), it is worth noting that

this phrase occurred in the writing prompt itself and not in the writer’s essay. (Most participants did not comment on the prompts and may have ignored them or considered them outside the scope of the AJT.) In fact, later in the essay, the writer uses the verb “put” in this way again, but no participants marked that use; this is probably because the full phrase (“the government...put money into” something – see Appendix C.3 for the full sentence in the Prompt C essay) is a more common collocation: to “put money into something” is conventional, while to “put money on something” is less so (except in the context of gambling).

6.2.4 Countability

The question of non-countable words becoming countable in ELF is a more recent development in ELF research, and is only beginning to emerge as a possible feature of ELF communication (Jenkins, 2014). Jenkins argues that the shift from non-countable to countable nouns is part of an ongoing “regularization” process that may be taking place in both native and non-native Englishes (p. 31). The table below shows two examples of plural nouns in the AJT which are conventionally non-countable: “woods” and “families.”

Table 6.11 Unconventional countability

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
G070	If we want to protect our environment, we should ban those used-for-once chopsticks and those unnecessary packages, because those things are really wasting woods , and we have not solved that problem.	2 (7%)	11 (69%)	13 (28%)
B052	We can treat them as friends, but not children or families .	1 (3%)	1 (6%)	2 (4%)

The use of “families” in the second chunk, the meaning of which would be written as “family members” in most, if not all, standard Englishes, may be familiar to some readers of L2 writing, but it went uncommented on by most participants. The one Chinese and one non-Chinese

commenter both recommended changing it to “family members,” with the non-Chinese (CAN4) explicitly stating that “families” was “not countable with this meaning (you can say family members if you want to use plural).”

On the other hand, “woods” was a priority chunk marked by a large majority of the non-Chinese participants, but very few of the Chinese, as shown in Table 6.12 below.

Table 6.12 Comments on “woods” (G070)

Participant	Comment
CAN1	Unnecessary pluralization
CAN2	Confusing. I suggest ‘natural resources’.
CAN3	“Woods” carries a different meaning from “wood”.
CAN4	uncountable
CAN6	Word choice: “resources”
CAN8	NC Noun
CAN9	Can be confusing if countable/uncountable forms are mixed up with this word.
JVU1	The meaning here is the uncountable form of wood (meaning wood in general)
JVU3	Inappropriate
JVU6	should be uncountable
JVU7	Uncountable noun
NKU8	“wood” is a better word
SIC3	Wood

Many of the non-Chinese commenters specifically mentioned that “wood” (meaning “pieces of wood”) is not countable (e.g., JVU1, “The meaning here is the uncountable form of wood (meaning wood in general),” and CAN1, “unnecessary pluralization”). Two of the comments alluded to the different meanings of “pieces of wood” and “woods” (as in a forest); CAN9 wrote it “can be confusing if countable/uncountable forms are mixed up with this word,” and CAN3 wrote that “‘woods’ carries a different meaning from ‘wood.’” It could be that “woods” meaning “forest” was a less familiar lexical item for the Chinese participants, but even

if that is not the case, for the Chinese group, the context of the sentence seems not to have resulted in the same objection to a possible misunderstanding that was described by many of the non-Chinese. The only two Chinese commenters (SIC3 and NKU8) simply wrote that “wood” was preferable. “Woods” meaning “pieces of wood” here, was, for the most part, unproblematic for the Chinese participants relative to other features of the text, and could be an example of an ELF usage that is accepted by them.

6.2.5 Overexplicitness

There are two instances in the essays of ELF-like “over-explicitness,” or increased explicitness that is usually unnecessary or redundant in standard English (Seidlhofer, 2004): one is a reference to “Microsoft Company,” and the other to “degree certificates.” Notably, both of these could be construed as literal translations from Chinese phrases (微软公司和学位证书, respectively.)

Table 6.13 Overexplicitness

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A075	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates , after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability. So degree certificates are a most factor to find job.	2 (7%)	1 (6%)	3 (7%)
AXX	The same is true of Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft Company .	0	0	0

“Microsoft Company” was not selected by any participants, even though it is unusual in standard Englishes to see a large corporation referred to as “X Company” unless it is a formal part of the business’s name. It is possible that this is influenced by the Mandarin words used for the name of this company (which itself is more often translated as “Microsoft Corporation”), but in this case the similarity to a Chinese construction did not draw the attention of Chinese

participants, unlike some cases described in Chapter 5. The addition of “company” to Microsoft is perhaps acceptable because it does not result in any direct violations of English rules the participants would want to enforce, or because it is similar to the more commonly used “Microsoft Corporation.”

The other instance of potential overexplicitness, “degree certificates,” was noticed by a few participants. One Chinese and one non-Chinese both point out that “diploma” is an existing word that fits the intended meaning. The non-Chinese participant (CAN5) described “degree certificates” as “descriptive” but “awkward,” while the Chinese (SIC8) wrote that “‘degree certificate’ is kind of Chinglish.” The fact that both of these (potentially) ELF-like usages are (potentially) related to Chinese influence, yet relatively uncommented on by participants, is interesting in that it contradicts the possibility, mentioned in Chapter 5, that Chinese influence may lead some of the Chinese participants to mark a word or phrase as unacceptable.

6.2.6 “Redundant” prepositions

There was one example of a potential “redundant” preposition (Seidlhofer, 2004) in the AJT text, shown in the table and described below.

Table 6.14 Possible “redundant” preposition

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
D065	However, once the schedule is recorded on , and your alarm clock is open, then you will be reminded on time.	3 (10%)	5 (31%)	8 (17%)

The passage from whence this sentence comes discusses the fact that one can use an e-dictionary for a number of purposes, including keeping track of one’s schedule; the writer wrote “you can record your schedule on it” in the previous sentence. In the sentence in question, the writer writes “recorded on” where simply writing “recorded” would traditionally be accepted.

This was marked by eight participants (nearly 20%), which is enough to suggest that that at least in this case, redundant prepositions are not uncritically accepted. It is also likely that this use of “on” is not a common ELF usage. The most oft-cited example of ELF use of redundant prepositions is “about” (see Jenkins, 2006, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2004), in verb phrases like “to discuss about” and “to study about.” Other innovative preposition uses in ELF have been reported, such as “contact with,” “consequences on,” and “involve with” (Cogo & Dewey, 2012) but “record on” is not necessarily attested in ELF research.

6.2.7 That/who distinction

ELF scholarship refers to a blurred “who/which” distinction – the use of “which” in relative clauses involving people, or “who” for clauses involving inanimate objects – is reported as a feature of ELF that occurs with more regularity in ELF than in ENL (Cogo & Dewey, 2012, p. 73). Most taxonomies of ELF do not include the relative pronoun “that” in their explanations of this feature, but its similarity makes it worth examining. The substitution of “that” for “who” occurs once in the AJT texts.

Table 6.15 Lack of that/who distinction

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
G035	For example, when you receive a card from a friend that you haven't seen for a long time, the words he wrote on the card would remind you a lot of memories about the days you have spent together, and the sweet wishes on the card would move you so much that you might keep that card forever.	2 (7%)	0	2 (4%)

This “that/who” chunk was overall the least commented-on in the potential ELF chunks; all of the other ELF categories had at least one chunk with three or more comments. This chunk had only two Chinese commenters, each of whom made a short, simple correction of “that” to “who.”

This type of pronoun use is often unmarked in informal NES and NNES use; perhaps for this reason, this chunk was a low priority for almost all participants.

6.2.8 Summary

While none of the potential ELF features in this study were overwhelmingly selected, there are some useful observations. The “unnecessary articles” were relatively unproblematic for most participants, though they tended to be divided: chunks were usually either marked only by Chinese participants or only by non-Chinese. It also appeared that there was a tendency from some of the Chinese participants to prefer ELF-like article use with abstract nouns like “(the) society.” With the exception of one repeated lexical item that went unmentioned-upon (“E-dictionary”), the “missing” articles tended to be marked by around 1/3 of the total participants, suggesting that while unnecessary articles are tolerated or in some cases preferred, missing articles were more noticeable and less preferred. High-frequency verbs were mostly unmentioned on by participants, though the one that was seen as having a much more common collocation (“this problem can be done”) was widely marked. Overexplicitness and the substitution of “that” for “who” were mostly unmarked by participants, while the potentially redundant preposition was marked by a few participants from each group. Finally, the use of plurals with traditionally uncountable nouns was split: “families” was mostly unmarked, while “woods” was widely marked by the non-Chinese group while being mostly unmarked by the Chinese group. Overall, these results suggest that it is not the ELF category itself that matters, but *which* word is “violating” traditional expectations and *how*, that seems to make a difference in how participants interpret the acceptability of ELF features.

6.3 Participants' reactions to CE

This section deals with the participants' reactions to CE-like chunks that occurred in the study. As the data below show, CE chunks relating to lexical items were widely uncommented on, while potential grammatical features were more often noted. Overall, there were relatively few CE chunks that were widely selected as unacceptable – only two of the 11 CE chunks (18% of chunks) were marked by 20% or more of participants. Table 6.16 below shows the types of CE-like chunks that occurred in the AJT texts.

Table 6.16 CE-like chunks occurring in the essays

Feature	Number of chunks
Loanwords or loan translations	6
Semantic shift	4
Null subject	1
Adjacent default tense	1
Total	12

6.3.1 Chinese loanwords and loan translations

The most frequent feature of CE that turns up in the texts used in this study is Chinese loanwords of various types, which occur six times in the essays. Many researchers have noted the relative “success” of Chinese loanwords in English; Gao (2001), Yang (2005), and Xu (2010) all note the prominence of loanwords (e.g., *baozi*, *kung fu*) and loan translations (e.g., red envelope, paper tiger) in CE, while Cheng (1992) specifically singles out political loan translations (e.g., capitalist roader) as common. Indeed, in the present study, many of the loanwords and translations are related to politics. The words that occurred in the AJT texts were *harmonious society* (used twice), *socialist market economy*, *yuan* (used twice), and *gulou*. In this section I discuss each loanword and participants' reactions to them.

6.3.1.1 Harmonious society (loan translation)

“Harmonious society” is a concept most recently advanced in Chinese political discourse by former PRC president Hu Jintao, though it recalls much older Confucian ideals. It does seem to be a common usage, appearing frequently in Chinese political and media discourse in English. The phrase “harmonious society” appears in 39 of the 4,680 argumentative essays in the corpus from which this study’s essays were drawn (Wen, Liang, & Yan 2008), while the word “harmonious” alone occurs in 157 essays, or about 3% of the total essays. One of the Chinese interviewees, ATC2, described her opinion that this word is favored by Chinese speakers “because harmonious is very familiar to Chinese people,” who “prefer to use the word harmonious to refer to something very nice.” It occurred twice in one of the essays in the AJT and was only marked by a few non-Chinese participants, as seen in the table below.

Table 6.17 “Harmonious society”

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
C050	Regardless of his position and opinion, everybody, especially the officials who are in power, should understand clearly that the infrastructure, such as roads, transportation, communication, energy and housing, is the most essential framework of the development of a harmonious society .	0	2 (13%)	2 (4%)
C108	Only in this way can a harmonious society be established.	0	1 (6%)	1 (2%)

Although few non-Chinese participants objected to “harmonious society” in the AJT, several of the interviews ended up including in-depth discussions of the phrase. CAN5 wrote in his comment that “harmonious” sounded “awkward” and “poetic, not expository,” and he suggested “functional society” instead. In the interview, he stated that he found “harmonious society” to be

“perfectly comprehensible,” but that it immediately marked the writer as Chinese to him. While he said that he felt the word harmonious was “legit” and it was a “nice word,” he also had “a feeling that that word dropped out for us [that is, native speakers] about 150 years ago.” So while he did not express an overly negative view of “harmonious society,” he felt it was a Chinese expression and one that he would not use.

JVU4, who was working in China, agreed that he could understand the meaning of “harmonious society,” but described it as a “shortcut” that writers might use to earn marks in other contexts with Chinese teachers, but said that at his English-medium, western-style university, it would not be acceptable:

JVU4: And, there’s another one about the harmonious society. I know perfectly well what they mean by harmonious society but I want them to think about what they are writing about, actually are they using that as a shortcut because that’s something they – “OK, if we put this in, I’m going to get a good mark,” whereas actually in this context, they are probably not, because the lecturer will turn and say, “well, what do you mean by that?” It’s actually easy, it needs to be more detailed, you need to say what it is.

One other non-Chinese teacher, CAN1, commented on “harmonious society” in an interview when I asked her whether she would consider the significance of different varieties of world Englishes when teaching students from different countries. CAN1 said that “the way they use it [English] is different than a way we use it here,” referring to English in different contexts, but she also made a distinction similar to that made by CAN5: “I think it’s OK for the teacher to make it clear, like, ‘OK, if we’re in Canada we wouldn’t say this, but I realize that talking about harmonious societies in China is important.’ We don’t talk about that so much.” Like CAN5, CAN1 did not see “harmonious society” as a phrase or a concept that had relevance to the context where she uses and teaches English, which is Canada. However, in her hypothetical scenario, she agreed with the view that a teacher could or should understand that different

contexts call for different concepts and therefore different English phrases which not all speakers may be immediately familiar with.

6.3.1.2 Socialist market economy (loan translation)

While only one Chinese and one non-Chinese participant marked “socialist market economy” as unacceptable, their responses about their reasons are illuminating. Like “harmonious society,” “socialist market economy” is a political term specific to the modern Chinese context, the type of which frequently appear in Chinese university students’ English writing because, according to You (2010), throughout their education they are “steeped in mainstream discourse” and become “fluent in and sympathetic to the party’s positions on various political issues” (p. 156). This chunk is shown in the table below.

Table 6.18 “Socialist market economy”

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
E018	China is in the process of reforming itself, establishing and improving a socialist market economy which is the reason why competition is becoming fierce.	1 (3%)	1 (6%)	2 (4%)

For JVU4, “socialist market economy” was similar to “harmonious society,” in that it was a term that he felt was unclear when used without explanation. He characterized it again as a “shortcut” that was not acceptable in serious academic writing during the interview:

JVU4: There’s another one, the socialist market economy, there’s another one that comes up a lot, so like for example, if we went back to, you know, I gave you the example of the business essay, which is actually an economics essay.

JHH: Right.

JVU4: And if you use that phrase is in an economics essay, an economist is going to turn around you and say, “Well, what is that, what does it mean, can you explain how it breaks down?” And it’s that that they need to be doing, when they’re writing at university level.

JHH: Right.

JVU4: The concept itself is neither here nor there – I personally don't think – I think what they do is they use it as a shortcut to actually kind of really explaining things. Now, they've probably – and it's not whether that thing is correct or not, it's just that the purpose is to get them to think about it and say well this is why it's correct or this why it's not, or this is how it works and this is how, it really isn't.

It was not the Chinese political or cultural meaning he objected to, but the writer's use of the phrase without “explaining” it; he emphasized that he wanted his students to “think about it” and explain “how it works.”

On the other hand, the Chinese teacher who marked “socialist market economy” (ATC2) was more concerned about the accuracy of the translation from Chinese to English. At first, ATC2 could not remember why she had written “socialist is not a correct word in meaning here” on her AJT when I asked her about it in the interview. We discussed the meaning of “socialist market economy,” which she said was a direct word-for-word translation of the Chinese phrase *shehuizhuyi shichang jingji*. ATC2 asked me whether I was familiar with this term in Chinese or in English, and I replied that I did not know the Chinese and was not familiar with the phrase in English, but it did not strike me as ungrammatical. I raised the issue that it might be confusing to non-Chinese readers who would probably see “socialist” and “market economy” as belonging to two different types of economic systems. Eventually, ATC2 said that she remembered what her original complaint had been:

ATC2: Oh, oh, I remember, I remember – it should not be socialist, it should be socialism.

JHH: Well, I think social – what about socialism?

ATC2: Socialist means person.

JHH: Oh, I see, but – no, it can also be – socialist can be a person or an adjective.

ATC2: Oh, OK. I remember my, my, my – this correction is, I think it should be socialism not socialist.

JHH: I see, I see, I see. Yeah, if you think about, OK yeah that make sense, but I think in the end, I think actually socialist market economy is pretty good, in my opinion, yeah, yeah, yeah, personally yeah, yeah, yeah, OK.

Here, I regard ATC2's correction as ungrammatical; the fourth turn, I offer a fairly direct correction ("no"). In the end we seem to have had different concerns about the phrase: I, like JVU4, found the concept of a "socialist market economy" potentially confusing because I was not very familiar with economics and/or Chinese political discourse, where ATC2 was concerned that I might not be able to understand due to an inexact translation of the Chinese words. The difference between JVU4's and ATC2's concerns about "socialist market economy" seem to reflect more of an interest in exposition and explanation of meaning (JVU4) as opposed to an interest in linguistic accuracy and correct translation (ATC2). While neither participant directly addressed the political meaning, of the phrase, this should not be interpreted as a shortcoming; it merely reveals different priorities. In both cases, however, each participant recognized the phrase as having a uniquely Chinese meaning in this context.

6.3.1.3 *Yuan* (2x) (standing loanword/ borrowing) and *Gulou* (ad hoc loanword/borrowing)

Neither *yuan* nor *Gulou* was mentioned by any of the participants. It is likely that *yuan* has become familiar to many English speakers due to China's economic prominence and the frequent use of the word (which refers to the PRC's currency) in news reports, but *Gulou* (meaning "drum tower") is likely to be an unfamiliar word to those unfamiliar with Mandarin Chinese. These chunks are show in the table below.

Table 6.19 “Yuan” and “Gulou”

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
FXX	In Nanjing, the apartment near Gulou campus will cost 1300 yuan per month.	0	0	0
FXX	In Nanjing, the apartment near Gulou campus will cost 1300 yuan per month.	0	0	0
FXX	The average income of a common family in Nanjing is about 1500 yuan , and there are also many poor students who cannot even afford the fees for study	0	0	0

The acceptance of *yuan* seems feasible for reasons explained above, but *Gulou* does represent a somewhat unusual case in terms of whether it is indeed a “loanword.” In one of the final interviews, I brought this up with a Canadian participant (CAN9), asking her why no one had objected to *Gulou*; she replied, “Well, because the context makes it clear that they are talking about some university.” A direct translation of the words *gu lou* is “drum tower,” and indeed when *Gulou* refers to an actual structure, it is almost always translated (for example, in tourist materials or English-language media in China). However, this reference is a place name: “Gulou campus,” and usually Chinese place names (cities, neighborhoods, districts, campuses) are not translated into English. There may be some exceptions: at one university where I worked, for example, I was accustomed to hearing one campus referred to as the “Nanshan Campus” (literally “south mountain campus”), and another as the “East River Campus” (rather than the Chinese *Dongpu*). In this case, however, *Gulou* seems to be accepted by both Chinese and non-Chinese readers as simply a place name that does not need an English translation. In English discourse in China, names of districts, landmarks, and other geographical features are often treated as borrowings (e.g., Pudong district in Shanghai, Wudaokou in Beijing), although some of them are also translated (e.g, Worker’s Stadium in Shanghai).

6.3.2 Semantic shift

Another prominent possible feature of CE that has been discussed in the literature is semantic shift. Cheng (1992) discussed words whose connotations shifted negative in Inner Circle Englishes to positive in CE, such as propaganda. Gao (2001) discusses similar shifts, such as the political climate of the mid-20th century which saw “peasant” shifting from negative to positive and “intellectual” from positive to negative. Xu (2010) identifies a number of different possible types of semantic shift in CE, including broadening, narrowing, pejoration, amelioration, and change. In this study, two possible chunks illustrating semantic shift in CE occurred in the AJT texts; the use of the word “open” to mean “turned on” (as an electronic device or a light), and the use of the phrase “living outside” to mean “living off-campus,” which occurs three times in one of the essays. These chunks are shown in Table 6.20 below.

Table 6.20 Semantic shift

Prompt	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
D071	However, once the schedule is recorded on, and your alarm clock is open , then you will be reminded on time.	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
F007	Due to the bad living conditions on campus, there are more and more students who prefer living outside by renting an apartment	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
F000	Nowadays, more and more college students rent apartments and live outside campus . *	0	1 (6%)	1 (2%)
F002	But if living outside , they may less frequently walk in the campus and as a result, they will possibly miss some important information that may change their whole life, such as that of company introduction and interviews.	0	1 (6%)	1 (2%)

(*Note: This sentence occurred in the writing prompt itself, not the writer’s text.)

6.3.2.1 “Alarm clock is open”

The case of “open” being used to express the meaning of turning on an electric or electronic device is mentioned by Xu (2010) as an example of CE lexis which has likely undergone a semantic change; he uses the sentence “I will open the radio” (p. 43) as a typical example of “semantic shift or change of words based on the Chinese social and linguistic context” (p. 42). Because this is an attested feature of CE, we might expect to see more objections from the Chinese teachers, who would be familiar with it, than the non-Chinese, who might not, but in fact we find the opposite: this is a high-priority chunk for the Chinese group, six Chinese participants rejecting it, as shown in the table below.

Table 6.21 Comments on “alarm clock is open” (D071)

Participant	Comment
ATC8	Word choice
NKU1	‘on’ not ‘open’.
NKU2	“turned on”.
SIC1	On, typical Chinese
SIC2	We only “set” the alarm clock
SIC8	The expression is inappropriate, since the alarm clock should be “set”.

Five of the commenters recommend some form of “turn on” or “set” as alternatives, with one calling this use “typical Chinese.” It is possible, then, that the perception of negative influence from Chinese is relevant here (as it was in other cases described in Chapter 5) even though this use of “open” is claimed as a common feature CE (in fact, a similar meaning is attested in Singaporean English by Weber, Platt, & Ho, 1983). Familiarity may breed contempt, just as Hughes and Lascaratou (1982) showed that teachers tend to reject usages they think their students should “know better” than to use.

6.3.2.2 “Living outside”

Another potential case of CE semantic shift is the phrase “to live outside,” meaning to live not within but beyond the boundaries of a location (in this case, a college campus). This use of “outside” is a more or less literal translation of the Chinese *waimian* (outside), often used to mean living away from home or one’s hometown. This potentially CE-like use of “outside” occurs three times in Prompt F, including once in the prompt itself, and notably, it was not commented on by any Chinese participants. Across the three sentences, six different non-Chinese participants commented on “outside,” and comments are shown below in Table 6.22.

Table 6.22 Comments on “outside” across the three chunks (F000, F002, F007)

Participant	Comment
CAN2	Needs the word campus or off campus
CAN3	“Living outside” means in the great outdoors...the student should add the noun – campus.
CAN5	Use “off of campus”, or outside of campus. Outside sounds like in the outdoors.
CAN6	“Living off campus”; outside means outdoors. Used again.
JVU5	off campus
JVU6	this sounds like they are sleeping on the streets!

These comments, like “Outside sounds like in the outdoors” (CAN5), or “this sounds like they are sleeping in the streets” (JVU6), suggest that the non-Chinese participants commenting here feel strongly that “off campus” is the appropriate phrase to use in this context, in part because “living outside” has another meaning that might confuse readers.

While no Chinese participants objected to any usage of “outside” in this essay, there were two other chunks in the essay chosen by some in the Chinese group, which may be relevant to understanding perceptions of the usage of “outside.” Six Chinese participants marked the phrase “less frequently walk in the campus,” and seven simply marked the word “in” from the phrase “in the campus.” As one Chinese participant (SIC2) wrote: “This is Chinglish. You can say: they

may spend less time on campus.” Pronoun usage is notoriously tricky, but the occasional selection of “in campus” as unacceptable but apparent tacit acceptance of “outside campus” suggests a potential shift taking place in some Chinese participants’ acceptability of a CE usage of “outside.” The Chinese group appears to be comfortable with the use of “outside” to mean “off campus,” but some clearly reject “in” to mean “on campus.” It is notable that “in” was interpreted as “Chinglish,” while “outside” was not; the two possible instances of semantic shift here seem to have had opposite reactions from the Chinese participants, with “in campus” being marked, but “outside” accepted.

6.3.3 Null subject

Xu (2010) mentions “null subject or object pronouns in the positions where they can be expected” (p. 72) – that is, the omission of subject or object pronouns – as one of the features of CE primarily found in his spoken English data. These (like some other features of CE), he argues, are unlikely to be found in many written sources, like books and newspapers, because they are likely to be edited out before publication. However, looking at English writing that was not intended for publication, as in the essays used in the AJT, we can see that the null subject feature can potentially occur in writing. The table below shows that the potential “null subject” chunk from Prompt G was widely rejected.

Table 6.23 Null subject

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
G016	We use computers to send e-mails, and we get much information on the Internet that can not get from other ways.	20 (67%)	6 (38%)	26 (56%)

This chunk was marked by over two thirds of Chinese participants and over one third of non-Chinese. However, while seven of the 26 total comments mentioned the problem of the null subject (like “it need a subject” (ATC7) or “a subject ‘we’ needed” (NKU7)), most other comments suggested changing the verb from “get” to “be gotten.” Whether participants objected to the verb form or the lack of subject, however, it is clear that this chunk is a clause that lacks a subject and that it is widely rejected.

6.3.4 Adjacent default tense

Adjacent default tense (ADT) is another feature discussed by Xu (2010) from his spoken interview data. This involves marking verb tense simply by context so that the verb itself is used in its base (i.e., “default”) form. The AJT included one clear example of ADT, shown in the table below.

Table 6.24 Adjacent default tense

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
B026	On the one hand, in the past, we think that we are the masters of the earth, so we polluted the environment discretionarily and took advantage of the resources improperly.	14 (47%)	9 (56%)	23 (50%)

This is a very clear example of ADT, since the verb (“think”) occurs immediately after the temporal context of the sentence has been established (“in the past”). I did not bring up this chunk in the follow-up interviews, though there are places where I mentioned the participant’s rejection in passing as I moved on to the next point I wanted to ask them about. While interview data does not allow for a deeper analysis of the reasons for marking, most of the comments were very straightforward, confident assertions that if the action took place “in the past,” then a past

tense verb is preferable. The wide marking of this feature is unsurprising, as Xu (2010) noted its absence from “well-edited” written data (p. 70).

6.3.5 Summary

There were very few chunks in the AJT essays which evinced potential features of CE. Of those which did, Chinese loanwords were widely accepted, though they were acknowledged as markedly Chinese by a few participants. A clause with a null subject was widely rejected, as was an instance of adjacent default tense, which is not surprising, since they have been assumed to be features of spoken CE and/or likely to be edited out if they occur in published writing. A possible instance of semantic shift was discovered, with some non-Chinese participants rejecting “living outside” meaning “living off-campus,” while no Chinese participant objected.

These findings suggest that while CE-like meanings for lexical items are likely to be seen as unproblematic, grammatical features of CE are probably not likely to be. This conforms the findings of Yang & Zhang (2015). The more ambiguous category here is semantic shift; while the Chinese participants did seem to accept a CE-like use of “outside,” the findings of the previous chapter suggest that in general the Chinese participants were likely to reject semantic shifts from traditionally accepted meanings in ENL, and to reject Chinese-language-influenced uses in particular.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has been focused on participants’ reactions to features of the AJT texts which are similar to those that have been claimed as features of ELF and CE. In contrast to the previous chapter, which looked at judgments of acceptability with no *a priori* interest in particular types of grammatical or lexical features, the purpose of this chapter was to directly

examine how participants judged any instances of ELF-like or CE-like written usage in the essays.

According to Xu (2010), “it is difficult to draw a demarcation line... between ‘nativised Chinese English words’... and words that are simply mistakenly used” (p. 44). The same could be said about other features of CE and indeed ELF. One of the traditional goals of undertaking an AJT is to distinguish whether participants view certain language usages as legitimate or illegitimate, but it seems that it is not necessarily possible to predict which “features” tend to be considered unacceptable, even though certain usages do seem to attract more attention from one or the other groups.

In some ways, the findings discussed above conform to previous research on the acceptability of differences from standard English. In the case of CE, there has been emphasis on the success of Chinese loanwords (e.g, Yang, 2009), and in this study those words seem to have been incorporated into the text with little difficulty for readers. Grammatical innovations tend to be less widely accepted (see McKay, 2008), and this is the case for the CE-like features. The cases of semantic shift (like “open” and “outside”) are more complex; while they were not widely marked, they are also not clear-cut examples of semantic shift but would require further research to confirm their status as CE lexical items. The ELF-like categories also evade generalizations; the data do not suggest that any categories are unequivocally rejected or accepted by participants. The shifting, contingent, context-based nature of ELF (see Canagarajah, 2007, and Jenkins, 2014) suggests that “features” of ELF are unlikely to remain stable, so attitudes toward particular usages may also be context-bound. The application of the concept of ELF, traditionally understood as a spoken English phenomenon, poses challenges

since there is less opportunity for negotiation of meaning and consensus building in reading and writing than there is in speaking and listening.

Chapter 7: Thematic analysis of participants' claims to authority

This chapter undertakes a thematic analysis of what I have deemed participants' claims to authority, or ways in which they justify not simply their particular decisions, but the grounds on which they have the credibility to make acceptability judgments of English usage. By focusing on a thematic analysis of authority, rather than a fine-grained examination of reasons given for specific judgments, I was able to discern several ways in which participants describe themselves as credible judges with the authority to judge texts and writers. Similar to the notion of authority I described in Chapter 2, what emerges here is an intersubjective notion of authority in which participants' construction of authority involves positioning themselves in relation to students, institutions, other teachers, readers, and language users. Authority is thus not something solely imposed from outside (e.g. experts, textbooks, governments) nor only experienced as coming from "deep within" (Cameron, 2012), but a disposition that is produced through talk about language in which participants situate themselves in relation to other stakeholders in the academic writing enterprise.

The themes that I trace in this chapter involve participants' descriptions of themselves and their authority to make judgments in three different categories/identities: as a mediator, as a language user, and as an educator. (The methods used for this thematic analysis were described in Chapter 4.) Though each theme can be seen in the interview data for both of the groups, I identify ways in which members of each group tend to describe their authority in different terms which are detailed below. This is shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Participants' positions of authority

Theme	Chinese Group	Non-Chinese Group
Mediator	Native speaker surrogate	Sympathetic reader
Language user	Bilingual expert	Bilingual (less common)
Educator	Representative of best (Chinese) pedagogical practices	Representative of Western academia

I do not claim that all of the participants made use of all of these characterizations of their authority for making language judgments, but there are multiple examples of each in data from all twenty of the interviewees. Below, I provide analysis of each of the themes for both groups, using extracts of data from most (not all) of the interviewees.

7.1 Mediator theme

For this theme, I considered the way that the participant described him or herself as a mediator or a go-between vis-à-vis the writer and some other person or group. There were numerous instances in both groups in which participants described themselves as standing in for or reading in such a way that recognizes the perspective of another person or type of person. For the Chinese teachers, I describe this as “native speaker surrogacy,” which I first noticed in the interview with SIC2 (described below), in which she describes making a judgment “from my point of view, and standing at your [that is, me as a NES] place.” In many cases, the Chinese participants described themselves as people who had English knowledge or abilities that were in some way equal or nearly equal to that of native speakers, and suggested their authority was in part based on their contact with or membership in a community of native English speakers. In the non-Chinese teachers’ interviews, I found something I call “sympathetic readership.” This is in some ways analogous to native speaker surrogacy, in that the participant describes having an awareness of what people who are not like them might think; that is, the non-Chinese teacher

describes him or herself as a sympathetic reader who is keenly attuned to and aware of both the difficulties the writer may have with English *and* the harsh judgments that the writing might be subjected to by “unsympathetic” readers. A sympathetic reader can mediate by “protecting” writers from the judgments of unsympathetic readers by helping point out what will be harshly judged by others (even if this means actually making a harsh judgment themselves).

7.1.1 Native speaker surrogacy (Chinese participants)

7.1.1.1 SIC2: “From my own point of view, and standing at your place”

The idea of “**native speaker surrogacy**” first became clear in my interview with SIC2. As in most of the interviews, I asked about “your criteria or your reasons for making the judgments.”

She replied,

Actually about the grammars, you know, mainly from my teacher. Now about their word choices, it’s mainly from my self-teaching. You know I read articles, and I watch movies, so **I learn a lot from the materials, quite original materials**. So, sometimes I think I can make better choices than my students, but grammar mainly from my teachers.

We discussed “original” materials, which she referred to as “passages... written by the westerners.” After this I asked if she ever read anything by non-native English writers, and she mentioned the Chinese 20th century writer Lin Yutang, who wrote most of his work in English for a non-Chinese audience. Next, I asked about standards for making judgments, which led to the following exchange, which I reproduce in its entirety, because it gives a vivid illustration of native speaker surrogacy. (Emphasis below is mine)

JHH: So, I was just wondering if you see – you know, as you make the judgment are you judging it against a kind of, what you see as a kind of native speakers standard or kind of as we – you – original standard, I mean, does that ever come up in your mind as you’re making these judgments, or is it more about your own knowledge?

SIC2: Uh, I hope I can make the judgment from, you know, how to say, **I hope that I can grade the composition as you do**, you know, as you the –

JHH: You meaning?

SIC2: You yeah, just you Americans and the British.

JHH: Right.

SIC2: But, I think it's a kind of impossible, right? **So, mainly from my own point of view, and standing at your place.**

JHH: So, why do you, OK, that's interesting to me, that's very interesting to me because... I mean, you said you hope you could grade it like a native speaker.

SIC2: Yeah.

JHH: But, you also say that's impossible. So, it's seems like a kind of paradox, I mean –

SIC2: So, **I stand in the middle of the students and the native speakers.**

JHH: Mm. That makes sense to me.

SIC2: Yeah, I cannot like, be like more students and I can never be like you, so.

The spatial metaphor that SIC2 employs is striking; she creates an image of herself “standing in the middle” of students and native speakers. Her statement that she makes acceptability judgments “from my own point of view, and standing at your place” captures the notion of native speaker surrogacy. While this may on the surface appear to be a kind of native-speakerism which recognizes people like me (i.e., white, American native speakers) as the most legitimate judges of acceptability, I suggest that what SIC2 and many of the other teachers do when describing their authority in this way is to claim the agency or authority to stand for native speakers. This should not be interpreted as a lack of confidence or deference to native speakers, because SIC2 and the other teachers were willing to disagree with me on specific points (for example, the use of “the society” described in Chapter 6). Instead, the claim of native speaker surrogacy should be seen as a way in which Chinese teachers are able to assert expertise, legitimacy and knowledge comparable or equal to that of native speakers.

One of the ways in which the teachers seem to bolster their claims of native speaker surrogacy is by describing their familiarity and engagement with English-language texts produced in Inner Circle contexts. SIC2, for example, mentioned drawing on knowledge from her previous education in English grammar in middle school, but also, importantly, her “self-teaching” through “original materials.” This was mentioned by many of the other Chinese teachers – the publications mentioned included classic novels, magazines, newspapers, and journals like *The New York Times*, *The Times* of London, *National Geographic*, *The Journal of Second Language Writing*, and other less specific references to novels, articles, “passages,” movies, websites, and so on, which were variously described as “authentic,” “original,” or “native.”

One key to this claim of native speaker surrogacy, then, is that the teacher, through his/her exposure to ‘authentic’ or original materials, is able to ‘stand for’ the native English speaking teacher and make the judgment, as SIC2 states, “from my own point of view, and standing at your place.” By using her own judgment but standing “in (my) place,” or “standing between the students and the native speakers,” SIC2 differentiates herself from the students – she acknowledges that due to her knowledge and familiarity with ‘original materials,’ she can ‘make better choices’ than the students, but she still describes herself as wanting to make judgments in the same way that “Americans or British” would. Later she says that for her own English writing she would prefer to “totally forget my Chinese” and “write the composition like the native speakers do.” However, she describes the paradoxical impossibility of ‘forgetting’ Chinese in both in judgments and in writing (“I think it’s kind of impossible, right?”), which is why ultimately she brings the two together. This is indicative of confidence in her own abilities; she

sees her expertise and knowledge of English as good enough to actually stand in for, to substitute for, a native speaker's.

7.1.1.2 ATC4: “The native speaker’s habit in my mind”

This notion of standing in for a native speaker occurred in a number of the interviews. ATC4, for example, described two factors involved in unacceptability: “whether the grammar is right” and “whether it is the right habit of using English.” I asked her several times what she meant by habit, and she said “the native speaker’s language habit in my mind, according to my opinion.” ATC4 mentioned her experience of reading papers, articles, movies, and other NES-produced texts, although she also mentioned that she did not have the experience of going abroad, which she implied would be another important way to bolster her authority. Below is our discussion about language habit:

JHH: When you talk about a language habit, what’s uh –

ATC4: For example you know, I heard a lot, **I heard a lot of native speakers' language, and I also read a lot.** So, if the students’ language is, you know, sometimes the language seems a little strange if I judge by this kind of criteria.

JHH: Mm hm, mm hm. So, when you talk about the, are you mostly comparing to the native speaker or what?

ATC4: The uh, the native speaker, I think.

JHH: OK.

ATC4: **At least the native speaker’s language habit in my mind, according to my opinion,** I think.

We can see here, then, how ATC4 is able to claim the authority by having “the native speaker’s language habit in [her] mind” due to her familiarity with English materials. Another insightful comment came up in our discussion of the phrase “what are they in your opinion to the end,” which she said is “influenced by Chinese meaning – actually the student is translating in the

Chinese phrase into English. **But it doesn't make sense in front of native speakers.**" Another spatial metaphor is used here – the notion that the text is physically in front of a native speaker of English may not be literal, but going back to her suggestion that she makes judgments according to “the native speaker’s language habit in my mind,” she is claiming the authority to act as a native speaker, judging whether such a phrase is acceptable “in front of native speakers.”

7.1.1.3 ATC1: “Whether the foreigners can make sense of the writing”

Language “making sense” was a criterion in acceptability judgments which came up several times, and occasionally it was suggested that this was connected to the notion of making sense to a native speaker. This came up in my interview with ATC1. At one point she mentioned that unconventional article use may not be a “serious (mistake), because foreigners may understand. It still will make your – the writing make sense.” Later in the interview, I brought this up again.

JHH: So, is that a standard that you would think about generally when you think about uh, English or a piece of English writing, this question of can a foreigner understand it. Um, how important is that?

ATC1: **You mean whether the foreigners can make sense of the writing? Oh, I think, I think that's the most important. 'Cause if a piece of writing can make sense then it's to the standard.** But if I have to find out some mistakes, I would notice those parts since it is misused.

Toward the end of the interview ATC1 also makes a connection to native-speakerness: “Based on my knowledge of English, the grammar I learned, the lexical knowledge I learned, yeah. The standard or native English I experienced every day, I am exposed to the newspapers or books, passages...” In the end, when I ask whether she currently has access to these standard/native materials, ATC1 ‘admits’ that she does, but “sadly not so much, all the knowledge I use...are based on things I learned and accumulated when I was in college. And now I’ve forgotten most

of them and I feel very sorry for that.” This suggests that while she may not currently read “authentic” texts or be exposed to native speakers’ English, she identifies this with the ability to make judgments, as ATC4 did. There is a sense that although they are not able to closely engage with ‘authentic’ English as they might like, they have done so more than their students have, and they view this as important for achieving legitimacy as native speaker surrogates.

7.1.1.4 ATC2: “it will be terrible for foreigners”

ATC2 also placed herself in the role of native speaker-like judge on several occasions during the interview. During a discussion, she introduced the Chinglish saying “good good study, day day up,” and said: “...this kind of mistake is easy to correct, but the thinking is difficult to change because the Chinese students are not aware of the mistakes. You think it’s OK, but in fact, English people will not say like this.” ATC2 is able to position herself as an arbiter of how “English people” use English, and to communicate this to her students. Later, in the discussion of a specific example of a Chinese-style English expression (not a grammatically incorrect Chinglish one, but more of a culturally-influenced expression), she again put herself in that position. She describes teaching translation, and the Chinese expression 亚洲四小龙 (literally, “Asian four small dragons”), which refers to emerging Asian economies. She asked me if I thought “Asian four small dragons” – referring to the economies of Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan – would be acceptable. I said “yes, if they explain it, but, but if they just say it and maybe I don’t know what it means because I think in English they usually call those economies the tigers.” She replied,

Yes, yes. So, later when Chinese teachers teach their students, they will say oh, you cannot translate it just the word by word as Asian four small dragons. **It will be terrible for foreigners.**

So while here I state that I would find this expression acceptable if the writer explained the

meaning, ATC2 states that Chinese teachers will (or should, perhaps) teach their students that “you cannot translate it” word-for-word, because this will be “terrible for foreigners.” We did not further discuss what she meant by “terrible,” but her use of this strongly negative word, even when I have tentatively described this expression as acceptable, suggests she is willing and able to take a stance as a native speaker surrogate, making a judgment based on her own opinion about whether an expression will be accepted by native speakers. In both cases above, encounters with Chinglish present opportunities to make claims of authority based on native speaker surrogacy.

7.1.1.5 SIC5: “There is not a native speaker sitting next to me”

Finally, SIC5, like SIC2, described himself as a native speaker surrogate and addressed the seeming contradiction of a Chinese teacher making a native-like judgment. When I asked him about his standards for judging acceptability, or as he said, “where the standard of my judgment comes from,” he first mentioned his grammatical knowledge: “Those grammars were once taught to me by my teachers.” But he made a very strong native speaker surrogacy claim near the very end of our interview:

SIC5: You know, as I told you, that if I know the student is not to take the exam in the near future I would be more tolerant, I would be more lenient with him, right, I said that I will just point if wrong, I will judge if his composition from the point whether it can be understood by a native speaker. But, while **I make these judgments there is not a native speaker sitting next to me**, like it is, right?

(both laughing)

JHH: Right.

SIC5: So this seems to be self-contradictory, this seems to be sarcastic. All that I can see that my language competence, my language ability, my understanding of language, is more closer to that of a native speaker than he is.

JHH: Sure.

SIC5: So, I can still guide him, lead him maybe not uh – not the whole way, but I can still, ha, show him the way.

JHH: Yeah, yeah. That's very well said I think.

As in the case of SIC2, SIC5 uses the physical and temporal setting of the interview to make his point about the way he makes judgments. He stated that as long as the student's immediate goal is not to pass a standardized Chinese exam (which, he stated earlier in the interview, he sees as "more strict" than a foreigner's judgment would be), he would make judgments of acceptability "from the point whether it can be understood by a native speaker." Without any prompting from me, SIC5 pointed out the seeming contradiction in his statement: when he decides whether a particular instance of language use 'can be understood by a native speaker,' he is doing this without "a native speaker sitting next to (him)" – unlike the current situation in which this interview takes place, when there *was* in fact a native speaker sitting next to him – me, the researcher. Despite this 'contradiction,' however, SIC5 stated that "my understanding of language, is more closer to that of a native speaker than he is." This may be indicative of an orientation to English which views native speakers as the ideal judges of acceptability, but throughout the interview SIC5 describes several scenarios involving the necessity to have multiple standards depending on the student's goals and intentions, at one point stating that "we have two standards. One is to make foreigners understand, now that is tolerable. And the other is for you to pass the exam; that is not so tolerable." Ultimately SIC5 is comfortably making judgments of acceptability from multiple standards, claiming both the authority of being a NS surrogate and knowledge of the local Chinese exam culture.

7.1.2 Sympathetic readership (Non-Chinese participants)

7.1.2.1 JVU5: “If a non-sympathetic person is not going to understand”

JVU5 was the non-Chinese participant whose interview first interested me in the theme of “sympathetic readership”. As with most of the semi-structured interviews, I asked JVU5 what his main criteria were for judging certain uses as unacceptable. He answered:

I think the biggest thing is like – non – if a non-sympathetic person is not going to understand, that’s the top concern. I mean, on the flip side there is a lot of you know, British English, American English things that I’d probably let go for one reason or another. And yeah, can the student be understood I think is the fundamental question. And, if there’s one that follows that then it’s how awkward does that sound, but it’s understood.

Here he starts by saying “if a non-sympathetic person is not going to understand” is the main concern in judging unacceptability, which he later states as “can the student be understood.” He does not refer to his own understanding when asked this direct question, suggesting that he does not include himself in the category of a “non-sympathetic person.” He later described the “non-sympathetic person” in more detail:

You’ve got two different kinds of non-sympathetic people. And one is like, “Huh? I don’t understand you.” And then the other one is potentially like “that is such a sss – ridiculous thing to say, like, why are you talking like that?”

Here an “unsympathetic person” can either be one who, honestly or perhaps disingenuously, responds to an unconventional usage with confusion, or one who when confronted with the same type of usage responds with open contempt. I asked JVU5 whether he considered himself a “sympathetic reader,” to which he replied

Oh, absolutely sympathetic. And, after this amount of time in the Asia perhaps unconsciously more sympathetic than I think I am. Just because – just because I’ve seen it so many times that you just become, you know, kind of numb? Uh, so, so, in my heart of hearts when you say on “paper” – what is it – “paper cards are really good stuff in our life.” I say, “You used the grammar correctly, I’m so happy.” That’s really choppy, but you know, like, what that says is like the student can follow the rules; they just need help

with the right words. And that indicates, you know, uh, a certain level of command of the language.

JVU5 went on to discuss several other experiences in his past that related to his being “sympathetic,” including experiences working with immigrants, interacting with English speakers from different countries, and travelling in Asia. “I can cope with all those situations,” he concluded. “That’s a level of sympathetic that’s not even in an ESL context. And the, years of doing the ESL and then plus doing with Asian students, and once you’ve done all of that – then I guess it puts you, I don’t know, in a rarified group of people who are probably really tolerant.” He even described himself as possibly “too tolerant.” JVU5’s characterization of himself as a “sympathetic reader” allows him to occupy two different positions at once: on the one hand, a harsh critic of what he viewed as nonstandard or unintentionally humorous language use, and on the other, a benevolent instructor who has the students’ best interest in mind and can serve as a kind of protector from those in the ‘real world’ who might insult them to their faces.

JVU5 had several examples about students’ language, including a story about how Thai students refer to electronic dictionaries as “talking discs.” Even though he was pointing out the humor in the students’ usage, he ultimately describes himself as the kind of person who would do so in order to be “sympathetic” and “tolerant,” which bolsters his ethos as a legitimate judge of language use.

7.1.2.2 CAN9: “And that’s just the way it is”

Another participant, CAN9, described herself as standing in for other readers outside the classroom, positioning herself as a sympathetic reader despite her sometimes harsh judgments. When I asked her how she interpreted the definition of unacceptable at the word, phrase, and sentence level, she said: “It turned out to be quite simple. If it interfered with communication, or

if a person wound up being required to read it two or three times then it was unacceptable. Simple.”

This use of “a person” and later “reader” suggests that CAN9 also saw herself as a “sympathetic reader” to lend authority to her judgments. Like some of the other non-Chinese teachers, CAN9 created a dichotomy between an imagined (unsympathetic) “reader” and herself. Above, she does not represent “being required to read it two or three times” as her own experience, but the experience of “a person.” In a comment on one chunk, she wrote that the usage would be “high on the irritation factor for the reader if constantly repeated,” again using “the reader” rather than referring to herself. She attributes the criticisms of the usage to a hypothetical reader rather than herself, something she also does in a longer anecdote describing a possibly imagined interaction between her and her students. In a discussion about features of world Englishes appearing in (student) writers’ texts, we had the following exchange:

CAN9: Uh, but as someone who thinks that in prose, part – uh, expository prose at any rate, that that the writer should be invisible, I would find that a, a hindrance.

JHH: Sure.

CAN9: And would try and get rid – because it’s calling attention to something about your personality that, er, I mean, your person, that perhaps it will interfere with the reader’s ability to go directly to your idea.

JHH: Right, yeah.

CAN9: Rather than who you are.

JHH: Mm hm. Yeah, it’s very easy to just look at – even I do this and I’m supposedly politically correct. But, you think, “oh that person is careless” or “that person is, how could they miss an error like that, that’s dumb,” something like that. Well, I mean, I don’t mean to say to say everyone does that, I know that I subconsciously kind of do it.

CAN9: Um, well, sure. I mean, I tell my students the same thing, like my Saudi students, I mean, they’re so, you know, I mean, they’re fine, but they can’t spell to save their lives, and I told them, look, I’m really sorry about this, but when people read that

you spelled cat with a K, they think “my 7-year old son can do that, why can’t this person, and he’s applying for a job here!” And that’s just the way it is.

Here, CAN9 describes her opinion that “the writer should be invisible,” but frames most of the rest of the discussion around an imagined person called “the reader.” When I describe myself as someone who thinks “that person is careless” when I see unconventional usage, she continues to describe this type of perspective in hypothetical terms, creating a scenario involving a job application which will be read by unsympathetic readers. By creating this scenario, she is able to paint herself as a sympathetic guide: in the (possibly invented) anecdote, she tells her students “I’m really sorry about this” and “that’s just the way it is.” Here she is able to portray herself (both in telling this anecdote to me and in talking to the students the way she does in the anecdote) as a teacher who is sympathetic to unconventional use (earlier she described her workplace as “much more descriptivist than prescriptivist” in their orientation to language) but who can help writers learn about “the way it is” and potentially protect them from abuse outside the classroom.

7.1.2.3 CAN5: “I’m afraid that you are going to be marked on a system which is going to trash you”

Another participant, CAN5, described his orientation to unacceptable usage in similar terms to CAN9, asserting a kind of “outside world” which judges L2 writers harshly and describing himself in opposition to “institutions” or “systems” that would likely disadvantage writers who use English unconventionally. When I asked him what he viewed as most important in determining acceptability, he connected importance of understanding the writer’s ideas (“can I figure what you’re trying to say”) with the notion that even if he could understand the writer despite potential problems, others might judge it more harshly:

CAN5: I think the most important thing should be what message you get across. Uh, having said that I'm aware that in institutions, I'm aware that there is a prejudice against people, there is a class system almost you can call it, in terms of upper and the lower class: you are too informal, you're using the wrong genre, and all of a sudden your prestige goes down, down, down and they don't take you seriously. We're all guilty at some stage and in some cases I'm sure – But I suspect that's – more than the comprehension I think often that that stuff really damages a lot of people the way it's – But, I like to think first and foremost can I figure what you're trying to say, if I get through the paragraph and I don't know why you're writing it, it's really – it's a problem.

JHH: Yeah, definitely.

CAN5: If I can get through and you've got a lot of structural idiosyncrasies or whatever you want to call them, uh, I'm partly happy, I'm partly unhappy because I'm afraid that **you are going to be marked on a system which is going to trash you** as well.

JHH: Right, yeah.

CAN5: Especially as we know that if you're not a fairly open minded, big hearted, learner of other languages, and teacher of other languages, we know that people don't adhere to that 'let's give them a chance, they're...'

In the second half of the excerpt above, CAN5 indirectly describes the sympathetic reader (ostensibly himself, and perhaps intending to include me as well) as a “fairly open minded, big-hearted learner of other languages and teacher of other languages” who will give L2 writers “a chance,” in opposition to “a system that is going to trash” L2 writers for “structural idiosyncrasies.” CAN5 constructs himself (and others) as a sympathetic reader by virtue of his experiences as a learner and teacher of other languages. Like CAN9, who described herself and her program as “descriptivist,” CAN5 distances himself from his judgments, for example, referring later in the interview to pointing out “the kind of thing a lot of people would take offense to” (as opposed to something he himself would take offense to) when marking a paper.

He again made a connection to institutional constraints late in the interview:

Yeah, and I don't know, it really raises the question to me myself, put in a position of judging an academic paper like that, how would I feel obliged to mark them, you know, turn a blind eyed some things 'cause they understand content and all the rest, judge it

according to standards of native speakers, what's the institution say, what are the standards I'm forced to be held to – I don't know, how to deal with some of that.

Like CAN9, CAN5 posits an unsympathetic world in which the sympathetic reader-teacher is “forced” to be held to standards of “native speakers” and “the institution.” He says he doesn't know “how to deal with some of that,” presumably because in describing himself as a sympathetic reader he constructs himself as someone who understands L2 writers' difficulties and does not want to judge their language use harshly, but recognizes that he makes these judgments as part of a system he views as unsympathetic.

7.2 Language user theme

For the language user theme, I refer to the participants' authority to judge based on knowledge of more than one language as “bilingual expertise.” Predictably, this was a claim to authority drawn upon much more frequently by Chinese participants. It often came up in interviews when we were discussing particular chunks which participants viewed as being direct translations from Chinese or otherwise influenced by Chinese language (primarily syntax). This often took the form of statements like one that ATC1 made: “Because I am a Chinese and he is a Chinese, I know what he's going to say.” The very labeling of “Chinglish” can be conceived of as something facilitated by bilingual expertise, more available to Chinese than non-Chinese teachers. Bilingual expertise, unlike native speaker surrogacy, is a kind of authority that allows the participant to capitalize on his/her status as an English-knowing bilingual – specifically a non-native English speaker who is fluent in Chinese. Claims to bilingual expertise are derived from the participant's description of him/herself as someone who knows Chinese and/or is well-versed in comparisons between Chinese and English – or, in one case for the non-Chinese teachers, other languages. Although the non-Chinese teachers drew on this less frequently, overall, than the Chinese teachers, it did come up in discussions of situations where knowledge

of the students' L1 would lend credibility to a judgment. This was more common for teachers who actually had the L1 knowledge, like one of the teachers who regularly studied Chinese and occasionally mentioned Chinese words in our discussions of particular usages, or the teacher in the Arabic Gulf region who used an anecdote about her knowledge of Arabic to show how she gains credibility with her students.

7.2.1 Bilingual expertise (Chinese participants)

7.2.1.1 SIC2: "I know what it means because I translated it word for word from Chinese!"

The different ways of describing authority as a judge of language usage were not mutually exclusive. SIC2, the participant whose interview was the clearest description of native speaker surrogacy above, also frequently drew on her bilingual expertise, including in our first exchange about one of her judgments in the AJT:

SIC2: Yeah, sometimes they use Chinglish just like this one, "some arguments thinking that." I think this because in Chinese we say like that.

JHH: Ah. "There are some arguments thinking that"....

SIC2: Yeah. In Chinese we'll say *guāndiǎn rènwéi you xie*. *Guandian* means arguments, then thinking, *renwei*. So, they will write their English composition like this way, you know, "your arguments thinking" but I think this is not acceptable in English, right?

JHH: OK, sure. So, I mean are you often conscious of that, are you often conscious of thinking about what would they say in Chinese, what will they in English, I mean?

SC2: I – actually, when I'm grading their papers, **I will translate this sentence into Chinese first. I know that they are talking** -- actually they mean this.

JHH: OK, interesting, yeah, so.

SC2: Yeah.

JHH: Yeah, I mean I wouldn't be able to see that, so.

SC2: Yeah, you cannot understand, right.

Again, SIC2 evokes me as a NEST, agreeing with my assertion that I cannot notice direct translations from Chinese. She highlights her recourse to knowledge of Chinese and English and the difference between the two, while I (and the non-Chinese teachers in the study) “cannot understand” precisely what makes a direct translation from Chinese unacceptable. She makes several other direct references to Chinese translations throughout the interview, and at one point replied to my question “How do you make that judgment...” in an exasperated tone of voice, saying “I know what it means because I translated word for word into Chinese!”

7.2.1.2 ATC1: “I can understand some Chinese style of English”

ATC1 was another participant whose interview included both native speaker surrogacy and bilingual expertise. At the end of the interview she again brought up “making sense to native speakers” when I asked her what were the main factors she would consider in evaluating the quality of writing. She said “accuracy or comprehensibility” were most important to her, or “whether it makes sense or not.” We then had a long exchange about what it means to “make sense;” she said that “if (native speakers) can make sense of it, it can make sense.” However, she also claims she “may not imagine a foreigner” when making a judgment. She described instead drawing on her knowledge of Chinese. In this scenario, then, it is her understanding of whether an expression is more linguistically “Chinese” that allowed her to determine whether it “makes sense.”

JHH: So, sorry to keep to keep probing this one question, but how do you like – how – what does it mean – ?

ATC1: Make sense?

JHH: Yeah. How do you determine that?

ATC1: Make sense. So, the sentence is logical, it is comprehensible, then others, especially the native speakers may un – if they can make sense of it then it can make

sense. It is related to the topic, it is – it can, yeah it conveys the meaning that the author wants to express...

JHH: So, would you ask yourself, would you ever say, “OK, would a native speaker understand this?” Like kind of ask yourself that question?

ATC1: I will ask myself whether it’s standard English or not. I may not imagine a foreigner. But I know, **I can understand some Chinese style of English.** I can understand them, but I guess, the the the people who don’t know Chinese at all can’t figure it out. So I may think, it’s bad writing.

Thus, while ATC1 says that native speaker understanding is important, when it comes time for her to make a judgment, she “may not imagine a foreigner.” Because “she can understand some Chinese style of English” which presumably native speakers “can’t figure out,” she actually suggests that she has more expertise or authority to judge certain usages than a native speaker does due to her bilingual expertise.

7.2.1.3 ATC2: “We have it, the Chinese way of thinking”

ATC2 made a similar comment about Chinese teachers’ ability to make judgments in ways that non-Chinese speakers could not. In our discussion of Chinglish, we both mentioned several “typical” examples of Chinglish phrases, and then talked about how participants did or did not notice these.

JHH: The Chinese teachers may notice some things influenced by the Chinese thinking, but when I ask the foreign teachers actually the foreign teachers don’t know that’s – it’s influenced by the Chinese way.

ATC2: Yes, yes. That’s because I think foreign teachers, **we have it the Chinese way of thinking**, yeah because in China, Chinese think in this way and then they translate the English, they express their English in this way, you think it’s OK, but the foreigners, they do not know why they say like this.

In this comment, she emphasizes that foreign teachers “do not know why” Chinglish expressions come to be, because they are unfamiliar with the “Chinese way of thinking,” which to her refers

mainly to (as she described later in the interview) “word order” influenced by Chinese. She also later described Chinese teachers’ guide for making judgment as a “grammar book,” which “is written by the comparison between the Chinese sentences’ patterns and the English sentence patterns.” Here she explicitly describes the importance of bilingual expertise for making judgments about English usage in China: the teaching and learning of English for most Chinese is usually related to comparing the language to Chinese (that is, the “grammar-translation” method often considered outmoded in the west). Thus, Chinese teachers are able to draw on their extensive training in and teaching of this comparison when making judgments, and this makes them, in a sense, more qualified than their foreign counterparts.

7.2.1.4 ATC5: “The consciousness of the Chinese teacher”

One of ATC5’s main criteria for judging unacceptability, according to her interview, was collocation mistakes based on phrases “translated directly from Chinese.” As with other teachers, I asked her how she could determine whether a writer’s usage was “Chinglish,” or was being influenced by Chinese. She said that “if I read this sentence and I can directly translate it into Chinese,” she would be able to identify the phrase/sentence as “Chinglish,” which is unacceptable. She described this as a kind of non-native speaker intuition: “**the consciousness of the Chinese teacher.**” To ATC5, her knowledge of Chinese and ability to quickly translate between languages as a part of her ‘consciousness’ allows her to be confident in her judgment of unacceptable “Chinglish.” When I asked how one could distinguish between “mistakes...influenced by Chinese” from those “mistakes that anyone might make,” she said “we can distinguish some of them, or maybe half of them, at least... if you are experienced.”

7.2.1.5 SIC4: “I have to guess what is the Chinese meaning of this word”

SIC4 also described drawing on bilingual expertise in making judgments, and demonstrated this in several of our exchanges. When I asked him, “Do you often use your knowledge of Chinese to help you make a judgment about these things?” He answered:

Yeah, yeah, sometimes I would, I cannot understand the sentence, so **I have to, you know, to guess what is the Chinese meaning of this word** and that word then I can put them together. Chinese meaning, yeah.

We later had a detailed discussion which showed the way SIC4 draws on bilingual expertise to make judgments. His judgments of “Chinglish” were notable to me, because I did not take his examples of Chinglish to be nonstandard. Here he should not be read as being “wrong,” but actually as drawing on his bilingual expertise as something that strengthens his credibility and allows him to make more confident judgments. Even if I disagreed, he was able to explain his reasons for rejecting certain phrases as “Chinglish,” similarly to the Chinese editors overruling the British textbook writer in Fan (2009).

Our discussion began with a frequently marked chunk which comprised the sentence “the earth is ours, so is theirs.” He called this a “word for word” translation, though he was more concerned with “the earth is ours” being “a little strange,” whereas I thought that “so is theirs” was “where the problem comes in.” He used this discussion to bring up several other examples of Chinglish: first, he mentioned “the world is small” being used by a student in place of “it’s a small world.” When I asked him why he viewed the former as problematic Chinglish, he said it was because “the world is small” is “like you know, geography, or things like that. To describe facts, evidence. The world is small – how about the world? We’re describing the world. It is small.” Later he brought up a similar hypothetical example:

SIC4: So, the Chinese student will say your figure, okay, “the girl’s figure is pretty beautiful,” but I think, English will say, “she has that slender figure,” right, things like this, “she has” – “the figure” is not subject, but “she.”

JHH: I see, I see, you know, that’s so hard for me to judge because – I wonder about this question a lot since I don’t have that deep knowledge of Chinese, if I heard that, she – her figure is beautiful, I might accept it, I might not think “oh, it’s like, great,” but I might not think “oh, that must be Chinglish.”

SIC4: You think this is acceptable, you can understand that sentence, right?

JHH: Yeah. And, I think maybe because you know that it comes from Chinese maybe you can be more strict? Possibly? I think. Yeah, that’s one question I’ve – I mean, that’s one reason why I’m asking Chinese teachers and foreign teachers to judge this because... um...

SIC4: Because we can find different problems...

Although eventually when he presses me I say that I *do* think his example of Chinglish is acceptable, he does not agree with me, and in his next turn refers to “problems.” This suggests that he is supporting the example he just gave of bilingual expertise as a way that he and other Chinese teachers can find “problems,” that is, can make judgments of unacceptability. Again, the issue is not whether he is right and I am wrong (or vice versa), but that his knowledge of Chinese gives him the credibility to make this judgment of unacceptability in English writing – something we both seem to acknowledge in this exchange.

7.2.1.6 SIC5: “I can understand her and all her classmates can understand her”:

SIC5, who often had thoughtful, almost philosophical responses to my questions, did not draw on bilingual expertise as often as some of the other Chinese teachers, but he did do so both in a discussion of syntax and later in a discussion of students’ “creativity” in coining words. In fact, the extracts from our interview show how bilingual expertise can be useful not only in making judgments of unacceptability, but in adopting a more contextual approach to judgments in various situations. In fact, SIC5 argued in favor of Chinese English in some circumstances,

though noted that in written exams (which is the main goal of English writing classes in China) it should generally be avoided. In the first example, he discussed sentence patterns in Chinese and English. In the AJT, he had marked a long sentence with a verb missing, writing, “this is not a sentence.” In the interview, he elaborated, saying that “Chinese students make this kind of mistakes quite a lot, and this is I think really a pain in the neck.” He continued,

I think if we trace it to its roots, it is due to the difference between these two languages, Chinese and English. For example, in Chinese you can produce a sentence, a generally acceptable sentence, without the subject – without subject. But in English that is not the case, except one kind of sentence: for example, if somebody wants to give another person a demand, open the door, it is OK. Except this case, mostly you need a subject followed by a verb. But in Chinese it is not so. I think due to the difference of these two languages, so students tend to make this kind of mistakes.

While any English speaker might be able to identify a sentence without a verb as unacceptable, SIC5’s explanation is directly related to his bilingual expertise. He also brought up an in-class example of a student who used the expression “small fresh, heavy taste” in class. He described the meaning to me, since I could not rely on Chinese linguistic or cultural knowledge to understand or judge it, and then he told me that he chose not to correct the student because “**I can understand her and all her classmates can understand her**, it’s understandable.” Here he used his knowledge of Chinese to determine that the audience understood the seemingly unconventional usage, and he opted not to correct it, even though he recognizes it as nonstandard. This is still a use of bilingual expertise, though unlike some of the other cases mentioned, he chose not to make a judgment of unacceptability in the case of spoken English (though he describes being more strict in his judgments of writing; “for oral presentation you must have been more lenient,” he said).

7.2.1.7 SIC6: “I felt lost in the two systems”

Bilingual expertise was not always viewed by the Chinese teachers as an asset bolstering their authority to make a judgment; in some cases, it was seen as a source of confusion and complexity. SIC6 gave a detailed explanation of his use of bilingual expertise, referring to some potential drawbacks:

SIC6: OK, you know, Chinese teachers of English, you know, have a very different experience and – not very different, you know, I mean, bilingual, they are very much, you know, they use both languages. OK, for Chinese, Chinese teachers of English students, they use Chinese in their daily life, and in class they use English, and they have to switch between the two languages and they use two systems of language, two language systems, so, they may probably have a different experience to look at it to say or shall I say, you know... they switch to one and then to the other and this is really interesting.

JHH: So, you think it would influence them to...

SIC6: It influence both of the two systems. You know, even when they are using Chinese, their Chinese may carry, you know, the shade of English language, and English does the same.

JHH: Yeah, that’s very interesting. So, in terms of how they or you – they slash you – evaluate something like this, do you feel that switching or that influence plays a role in your –

SIC6: Yes, well, sometimes, when I was making the comments, I, hmm, well in a lot of cases, I felt, **I felt lost in the two systems**. Like, “Is it OK?” It’s OK in Chi – it’s OK in English – what is the intention? What is the intention, OK.

JHH: Yeah.

SIC6: What is the intention, well, I have to – I had to understand and go into the depths of intention and dig up what he intended.

JHH: And you would use – you would use...?

SIC6 & JHH (unison): Chinese.

SIC6: Yeah.

JHH: OK.

SIC6: So, but in terms of acceptability of English language, I have to think in English

way.

JHH: Yeah. But, in order to evaluate that you're using the Chinese.

SIC6: Yes.

JHH: That's really interesting. So, as you say it's a balancing act?

Interviewee: Balancing act. I have to switch!

Here, SIC6 discusses bilingual expertise not simply as an asset that gives a Chinese teacher the credibility to make a judgment, but as a complex and sometimes contradictory burden when it comes to judging acceptability. As English language teachers in China, Chinese teachers use their first language for almost everything else in their lives but their teaching careers. He describes the paradox of needing to evaluate the acceptability of English by trying to understand the writer's "intention," which he does by thinking about the language in Chinese, but needing to switch to the "system" of English to ultimately make the judgment. The complexity is hinted at when he says, "Like, 'Is it OK?' It's OK in Chi[nese] – it's OK in English – what is the intention?" His rich description of the complexity of bilingual expertise is useful for our understanding of how the others describe it; it is not an unambiguous asset. It is a valuable and important way in which Chinese teachers can assert their authority and feel confident in making a judgment, but can lead to confusion and difficulties. (See the discussion section in Chapter 8 for more on how writing teachers can assert or establish their authority with multilingual writers.)

7.2.2 Bilingual expertise (non-Chinese participants)

7.2.2.1 JVU3: "They have used the Chinese version of something"

Predictably, the non-Chinese teachers (most of whom were native speakers of English raised in English-speaking countries; see Chapter 4) rarely described bilingual expertise as a way

of supporting their authority to make acceptability judgments, but several teachers did. JVU3 was one of the only non-Chinese participants to specifically describe knowledge of Chinese when making a judgment. His discussion of “walk in the campus” (a frequently marked chunk, see Chapter 6) prompted him to try to translate the phrase into Chinese (*jin qu le*) to understand it. Interestingly, this may not be the most appropriate Chinese translation of “walk in the campus,” but at issue here is not JVU3’s accuracy, but his choice of drawing on bilingual ability in making a judgment. When I followed up to ask if his “knowledge of Chinese affects the way that you judge some of the stuff,” he said that it did “to a very limited extent”:

...**they have used the Chinese version of something** and they’re trying to sort of... what they have learnt from their own native language then they try, they try and use that concept of English.

His description is similar to the way that Chinese teachers describe their own knowledge of English and Chinese as a way to legitimate their judgments, in that he positions himself as someone who understands (some) Chinese and understands the potential difficulties learners may have when negotiating between the two systems. He later made a comment about another chunk – the use of the word “perfect” to describe the Chinese education system – as being influenced by Chinese: “I suppose it’s almost kind of like idiom, kind of like Chinese idiom, you know, everything has to be perfect.” While JVU3 did not claim expert knowledge of Chinese, the way he described making certain judgments, and his description of himself as a learner of Chinese, can be seen as a way of bolstering his authority as a fair judge of acceptability in this context.

7.2.2.2 CAN2: “If I can come up with an obscure Arabic word”

Likely due to her long history working in Arabic-speaking areas, CAN2’s most obvious strategy for claiming authority was bilingual expertise, though this occurred less in our discussion of chunks in the study and more in her description of her own teaching. In our

discussion of the chunk “do not switch eyes onto the paper cards,” she mentioned the possibility that the writer was misremembering an idiomatic phrase he or she had heard in English, rather than directly translating an idiom from their L1. She related this to her own experience:

I mean you – if my students do it, I use – because I do speak Arabic and know at least some of their idioms, um, I can usually tell if they’re translating it from Arabic or if it’s something that maybe they heard in English but remembered [in]correctly. So, I think I was interpreting that as I would with my own students and I would I would say probably not something they would say in Arabic, so I think, it’s something that they probably heard it in English, but remembered little funny. Ha ha ha ha...

This is similar to the ways that Chinese teachers describe being able to use both their knowledge of Chinese and their ability to make comparisons between Chinese and English when they evaluate whether a usage is unacceptable. In this case, CAN2 seems to suggest that she might be more understanding if the phrase did seem to be “something they would say in Arabic,” but because the usage does not match either her knowledge of Arabic idioms or English, she is more confidently able to judge the use as unacceptable or “a little funny.”

CAN2 described using her knowledge of Arabic in a slightly different way during our discussion of the archaic word “cocker” in one of the prompts. In this case, her response to my question was not a description of her own bilingual ability as a way to bolster her credibility for making the judgment to reject “cocker,” but rather an anecdote about the way she uses her knowledge of Arabic to build credibility with her own students in the classroom:

Um, so, in my kind of context what I usually do is just kind of, try to **if I can come up with an obscure Arabic word** and say “Would most people understand this?” And they’d say you know, “No, miss,” and I’d say, “Well, if you really want people to understand what you are saying, then maybe you should choose a word that they would know because this is an obscure word, um, I didn’t even know.” And they love it, they’re absolutely thrilled when they come up with a word that I don’t know.

Her explanation of using Arabic to express the obscurity or inappropriateness of an English word shows that CAN2’s bilingual expertise was a way for her to show her authority and expertise in

judgments to her students, not simply as a native speaker of English but as a speaker of Arabic and a person with a high degree of sociolinguistic competence. In the story, she described her students as being “absolutely thrilled” by this implying that using this kind of example gives her judgment of unacceptability more credibility with students. This is a slightly different use of bilingual expertise than the way Chinese teachers described it, but still fits the basic criteria of using the knowledge of both English and another language to claim authority in making judgments.

7.3 Educator theme

The final theme is perhaps the most complex. Here I see the data as reflecting two different orientations to an identity as an educator, in which the participant represents him or herself as an expert educator affiliated with a particular academic or pedagogical tradition in order to bolster his or her authority to make judgments about language use. While both groups clearly do this, the ways in which they do are different and perhaps at odds.

For the Chinese teachers, I refer to this theme as “representative of best (Chinese) pedagogical practices.” Many of the Chinese teachers stated that they preferred the methods by which they had been taught to those which their students currently experience. They evoked a nostalgic past of English learning which often involved more reading, more recitation, and more personal interest in language for its own sake. By contrasting their own preferred teaching and learning methods with those of contemporary Chinese students, the participants create a wider gulf between the writers of the texts they are encountering in the AJT (students who are learning via methods that are not ideal, who have little interest in using English in their lives, and who are constrained by an exam-based system) and themselves as judges of the texts (teachers who learned via better methods, who have more interest in English in their daily lives, and who would

prefer to change the system). Importantly, while the teachers may be judging the current Chinese English education system as inadequate, they are still ultimately championing non-western, non- Inner Circle methods of teaching and conceptualizations of the functions and purposes of English and English learning.

For the non-Chinese teachers – particularly those teaching at JVU – I call this theme “representative of (Western) academia.” The non-Chinese teachers were much more likely to discuss what makes writing “academic” (or more often, perhaps “unacademic”) when they were discussing the AJT texts and the writing of Chinese students in general. The JVU teachers seemed to be united in the idea that the context in which they worked exercised a great influence on how they made judgments; as teachers at a “western university” in China, some of them described a dichotomy between “Chinese” and “western” ways of English writing (and the teaching of English writing) in areas like language use, teaching, assessment, and acceptability. Because they were teaching at a western university and all had extensive backgrounds in western (often British) tertiary education, they could confidently make judgments based on the idea of whether something would be acceptable in western academia, according to their own experience. This sometimes took on the character of describing an opposition between western academic writing and Chinese nonacademic writing.

7.3.1 Representative of best (Chinese) pedagogical practices (Chinese participants)

7.3.1.1 NKU9: “Make yourself love English so much”

NKU9 was the participant whose interview data most typified the theme I call “representative of best (Chinese) pedagogical practices.” In her judgments, she drew on a distinction between her idealized pedagogy and autonomous learning methods and those which she saw in her own students. In fact, she articulated an explicitly moral stance which links values

to language learning, arguing that because both the students and the whole educational and political system in China are materialistic and motivated more by profit than, as she puts “**mak(ing) yourself love English so much,**” the quality of their language learning suffers. By linking a description of her moral and pedagogical values to her marking of specific language uses by writers in the AJT, NK9 positioned herself as an experienced teacher whose understanding of morality and pedagogy bolstered her credibility as a judge of language use.

NKU9 appeared to align herself with the humanistic side of English studies, with her training in literature and research in religion, and her description of ideal pedagogy invoked English literary culture as opposed to a contemporary, exam-oriented culture of English learning in China. She described her preference for more “literary classics” in English textbooks rather than the magazine and newspaper articles which she said made up the bulk of teaching and reading materials in her department. She passionately described her opinion that “in ancient times, there are men of letters, in history there are men of letters, there should be, but they... there are none of them now!” (This is reminiscent of Cheng’s (2002) description of the fundamental dispute at the heart of Chinese English departments: the struggle between more literature-oriented, humanistic studies and the demand for English language teaching.)

She also described her own English education: “I was taught to read English story, complicated stories often, read aloud and read often. So, I never recite the words.” She contrasts this with her own students who are “required to do exercises, do multiple choices, and... recite words.” By contrasting the utilitarian, exam-oriented system the students participate in, emphasizing vocabulary memorization, in with her own more authentic exposure to literature, “complicated stories,” “beautiful paragraphs,” and so on, NKU9 is able to claim that her students – and thus the L2 student writers of the AJT texts – have no “sense of language,” and that she, by

implication and by virtue of her education by superior methods, does have a “sense of language” and thus an ability to make better judgments.

NKU9 frequently related her judgments of “Chinglish” in the AJTs back to critiques of the Chinese education system’s exam-oriented nature, emphasizing that her own pedagogical experience has given her authority to make judgments. NKU9 had strong opinions about what constitutes successful autonomous language learning practices, starting variously “to have elegant writing you need to read more,” “you should read aloud often,” “copy the paragraphs, wonderful paragraphs, and read them often and make yourself entertained” – and seemed to believe that these practices have essentially disappeared or become more difficult in the contemporary Chinese education system due to its utilitarian orientation. For NKU9, then, the authority to make judgments about acceptability is a kind of *moral* authority – unacceptable usages are tied to less-than-ideal teaching, learning, and assessment practices, which themselves are linked with problematically immoral or amoral stances toward language, learning, and society. As a Christian, she felt that Chinese society had first been “tricked” into worshipping Mao Zedong and later, abandoned the admirable socialist values of “serv(ing) the people” in favor of “following in America’s footsteps” via pragmatism. While our interview at times veered solely into unrelated discussions of morality and religion, NKU9 clearly related values and morality to pedagogy and ultimately quality of language usage, and her strong opinions about morality and pedagogy made her a confident judge of students’ language.

7.3.1.2 ATC3: “They seldom read outside class”

Frequently, the Chinese participants contrasted the pedagogical methods and self-study habits they encountered in their own English education with a perceived lack of interest in self-motivated English learning on behalf of today’s Chinese college students. (In fact, I originally

coded this theme with the title “When I was learning English...”; see the discussions of ATC4 and SIC7’s responses below). ATC3, for example, made reference to being assigned to read novels as a student; while he may have felt it was a lot of work at the time, he said, “Now, I think I really see the point of doing the reading. Otherwise you cannot write things, anything.” He contrasted this with a characterization of his own students as reluctant to read and, therefore, to improve their English writing:

ATC3: And also in this writing practice I found the problem is not just about writing but about reading.

JHH: Ah, Okay.

ATC3: Students, **they seldom read outside class** and they don’t know – they don’t – they have no idea what a real sentence in English would be look like.

JHH: Yeah. They may read model essays like this, but...

ATC3: Yeah.

JHH: So, yeah, several other teachers who mentioned that to me too, they think that’s a big – a big problem. So, do you – I mean how – is there a way to fix that problem do you think? Or is it a matter of the curriculum, is it a matter of...

ATC3: I mean, as long as the exam is required at the end of the semester, you cannot do anything. And this is a general course, you know they are more than 2,700 students. So, you cannot do anything about the curriculum. You have to stick to the curriculum and finish the courses within the time and get the whole, you know the general examination will be waiting there.

The notion of students lacking knowledge of “real” English is contrasted with ATC3’s assertion that reading is important for improving writing skills. He characterizes his students as having “no idea” what a “real English sentence would look like,” linking this ignorance to perceived shortcomings in Chinese L2 students’ writing. By describing himself as someone whose own English education involved extensive literary reading, ATC3 positions himself as a more legitimate judge of usage.

7.3.1.3 ATC4 and SIC7: “When I was learning English...”

Both ATC4 and SIC7 also made references to their own English education as a way of emphasizing their credibility, in both cases referring to their middle school education. Although they emphasized the need for grammar (rather than ATC3 and NKU9, who emphasized authentic reading), the effect was the same: positioning themselves as people who, by virtue of being exposed to superior pedagogical methods, have better understanding of English and therefore more authority to judge their students’ language use in writing. In the following examples, both ATC4 and SIC7 directly contrasted their experience with those of their students:

ATC4: You know uh, actually maybe it is, it have a lot to do with my experiences – experiences of studying English. You know in my – I began to study English in the first year of Junior High School, and at that time the teacher you know actually put a lot of emphasis on the right grammar. But, the students, nowadays I think maybe they’re quite different from me, because of the different textbooks, you know at the time if we learn a grammar we have to practice – we have to practice a lot, we have to make a lot of sentences by using the same grammar or structure, that is my – that was my text book. But now you know my students you know they have got in their Junior High School – Junior High School, they had quite a different textbook.

SIC7: I think the most difficult problem to many students is grammar, because in oral English even though we make many grammatical mistakes, it’s OK, we can communicate, we can understand each other, but in writing it’s different. Some very, very basic grammatical rules, they cannot master it. So, maybe I think it has something to do with their – the teaching methods that is applied in, in primary school or middle school.

When I was learning English, when I began to learn English, that is grade 1 in Junior Middle School, at that time teachers would – taught us something first that is how to – phonetics, maybe phonics and grammar a lot, but now they focus on maybe their communication skills in English. So now, many, many students cannot read their, you know, the phonemes. Yeah, they cannot spell the word by themselves according to its pronunciation. So, as to grammar, they always say they are poor at grammar, but we know we have the course that is grammar and we also have a teacher that is, who teaches grammar but they still think they are poor at grammar.

Like ATC4, SCI7 described the shift to a more communicative emphasis as detrimental to students’ knowledge of some of the ‘basics’ necessary for reading and writing – grammar,

phonetics, and phonics. She appears to be lamenting a shift from deep knowledge of English by English majors to a more superficial cursory learning of English which is “totally different from what we learned before,” as she later put it. Once again, SIC7, like several other Chinese participants, aligns herself with an idealized past pedagogical approach to English as a position of authority from which to make her judgment of the current generation of Chinese English learners.

7.3.2 Representative of western academia (non-Chinese group)

7.3.2.1 JVU4: “This is a high school kind of EFL composition”

JVU4 most explicitly spoke as a representative of western academia. I was immediately intrigued by his response on the AJT to the prompt for Prompt B, which for him was the final essay in the AJT. (He was one of few commenters who made any comments on the prompts.) He chose not to mark any usages in the essay as unacceptable, but selected the prompt and commented:

See this isn't an academic question so I don't see how I can ask them to write in an academic style. From my point of view I need to train students to deal with full blown essays and reports and **this a high school kind of EFL composition.**

Indeed, throughout the interview, he referred to the writing in the AJT texts as, for example, “high school writing,” “things they've been taught at high school because that's what they need to get through the exam,” and a “template style of writing which they have been kind of learning at high school.”

Toward the end of our interview, he asserted what he seemed to view as a deep dichotomy between western and Chinese approaches to English academic writing. I asked him how he felt about Chinese influence in English writing. (My emphasis is added below.)

It's more fulfilling the task of the essay, and however they do that, because like, in the end, you've got – whatever they do, they're going to have to give an opinion, they're

going to have to justify it you know, even if they are doing like you know, computer science, they're still gonna have to explain why they chose [to] program something in that kind of way, some point they have to do that and that you know, from my time here, is – it's always the biggest issue and you speak to anybody in the university and some way that will always come out. **So, whether they do that in a Chinese type way or in an academically acceptable way** I don't even really care, but I want them to do it. So, that kind of negative transfer of Chinese to English, I don't think is really a massive issue at a level of our students.

Embedded in this explanation of his main priority as a writing teacher and a judge of quality of academic writing, his dichotomizing of “a Chinese type way” or “an academically acceptable way” is notable. It seems that to JVU4, the “Chinese way” (whether this means Chinese influence at the word or sentence or essay level) is distinct from the “academically acceptable way,” and the academically acceptable way is a vision of university writing that emphasizes content, organization, and ideas rather than simply proving one's facility with English. As a representative of Western academia, then, his authority to make individual judgments is bolstered by his knowledge of what constitutes “academically acceptable” – and to him this is quite distinct from the Chinese/high-school/“non-content” types of essays that were presented in the AJT and that he sees as typical of “Chinese.”

7.3.2.2 JVU3: “This word isn't academic – it's very much informal”

Several other JVU teachers' interviews reflected the “representative of western academia” theme. JVU3 made references to ‘academic’ written language use (which he differentiated from Chinese high school English writing) and to his judgment being influenced by his position as a teacher at a western-style university in China. Initially, he described his criteria for unacceptability as “word choice” or “looking for... language that was not appropriate language or language that could...change the context or something,” which is typical of many of the responses (non-Chinese and Chinese alike) to the question of how unacceptability was judged. He frequently referred to his judgments, however, as being influenced by his job as an

EAP instructor at JYU; at the beginning of the interview he stated that his view of unacceptability was “obviously influenced by the kind of job I do here,” and several turns later, repeated that “obviously I’m very heavily influenced by what I do”. Finally at the end of the interview he again repeated that “we all are here very heavily influenced by the kind of parameters that we’re expected to work in, really: cohesion and internal cohesion and sentence structure, essay organization, paragraphing.” These are more global concerns than lexicogrammatical, but even in discussions of individual words he invoked “academic” language. I asked him what he would do if he saw a “bizarre” word like “cocker” in one of his students’ papers, and he said: “Once again so much of our work is influenced by the academic word list... and so we would point that out to them, **this word isn’t academic – it’s very much informal.**”

Perhaps the most interesting and oblique way that JYU3 drew on his status as a representative of western academia as authority to judge language use is the way he aligned himself with Cornell University in an anecdote about a student who had failed an exam at JYU. Although JYU is a Western university and JYU3 described his own judgments in terms of being influenced by his work there, he described a situation in which a student (from Kazakhstan) had to “re-sit his final essay... and one of the reasons he was marked down on his essay was ’cause [of] lack of cohesive markers,” which he described as a “pretty pathetic reason.” JYU3 then described meeting the student again: “He showed me the essay, and the essay was very, very, very well-written, very well-written.” He went on: “It so happens, his sister was doing a postgraduate at Cornell and he sent the essay to his sister, and she took it to their people and they were very happy with it.”

This story suggests a kind of hierarchy of western-style academia; while the EAP tutors at this western-style university in China rejected the student’s essay due to “lack of cohesive

markers,” in this story he described Cornell accepting it, and he aligned his own opinion with that of Cornell. In so doing, he allies himself with a western postgraduate program (as opposed to his local EAP program at JVU). While this does show that “western academia” is not actually a monolithic category, it also suggests that JVU3 draws on the ‘higher’ authority of Cornell to lend his own judgment more legitimacy.

7.3.2.3 JVU6: “We should be pushing hard the... western model”

JVU6 also frequently mentioned the influence of his institution, making distinctions between western and Chinese academia and drawing on his experience with western academia to bolster his credibility as a judge of language use in his context. He said “the very clear message is that **we should be pushing hard the sort of, the western model.**” The first comment of his we discussed was the chunk involving the phrase “many nice feelings” which he described as “not academic enough.” Later, when discussing the chunk “travelling or being out,” he said: “I suppose, again in a more academic – I mean, these are only semi-academic anyway, it’s not like writing a thesis or something, but I guess we normally encourage avoiding phrasal verbs.” Again, here he made a distinction between the “academic” “western model” of written English taught at JVU and the “semi-academic” essay from the Chinese context. At the end of the interview he said “Chinese university teaching [of] English is, I would say is a completely different ballgame, because their job is not to provide a western education. Surely, they’re teaching English through their own microscope.” Later, I asked him about the chunk “common people” in the AJT for which his comment had read: “I don’t think the use of Chinese sayings works in the academic English tradition.”

JHH: I’m going to just keep pushing this because I’m curious about it. Is there any situation in which you would consider uh... being a little more lenient about that type of thing?

JVU6: Yes, definitely. And, in fact, I mean, in this kind of essay, I don't think it really is that seriously inappropriate. In the kind of essays that we're writing in our extended group essays, which are meant to be, again a [JVU] – I don't believe there's any such thing as a "[JVU] style" – except I mean we do say, OK, your introduction should have move one, move two, move three, move four. The first sentence of your body paragraph should be this, it should round off like this. So, I suppose we are imposing a style. And again, I just sort of self-justify that by saying, you provide a fairly heavy, what's the word for it, scaffolding, and then as people get confident, you say OK, you don't actually need to do that, but it's there if you need it. I mean I did my Masters, I guess, 20-odd years after I'd last studied, but I've been teaching the EAP in pre-sessional courses in the U.K. for several years, and honestly I used exactly the framework I was teaching and they worked very, very well for me indeed.

It is important to note that while JVU6 does not necessarily denigrate the Chinese methods of teaching or learning or English use, he does, like others, contribute to making a distinction between western/university/academic and Chinese/high school/unacademic. By referring to a "[JVU] style," and describing how he himself wrote his MA thesis in the way that he encourages his EAP students to write, he further aligns himself with the western academic writing tradition. While many of his references to this tradition have more to do with global concerns, such as style, or a general sense of "being academic," this trickles down to the lexical/grammatical level and the decision to reject certain usages, such as the abovementioned "Chinese saying." He makes this judgment not simply as a native speaker of English, but as a person with intimate knowledge of the British university system as both a student and an instructor.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined themes in the follow-up interview data which deal with participants' ways of describing their authority to make acceptability judgments. Assuming that participants' authority to make language judgments is both internal (a kind of felt sense of right and wrong in language, influenced by linguistic knowledge, life experience, education, social factors, and other potential influences) and external (that is, influenced by their own position in

various social contexts and their relationships with various other actors and institutions, e.g. students, teachers, universities, texts), the findings of this chapter show that the participants' ways of claiming authority as legitimate judges of language use in writing can be understood in three ways: authority as mediators, as language users, and/or as educators. While each of these themes describes different facets of the participants' identities, they all represent ways in which participants position themselves as qualified judges of language use in writing. I believe that this is a necessary and often overlooked component of acceptability judgments by teachers of writing; rather than simply assuming that teachers tacitly claim the mantle of authority to judge student writing, these results suggest that when questioned, the participants work to build their own ethos as a credible, fair, sympathetic judge.

For the Chinese participants, the three themes were further described as native speaker surrogacy, bilingual expertise, and representative of best Chinese pedagogical practices. Many of the Chinese teachers described themselves as equivalent to or standing in for native speakers when judging students' writing (native speaker surrogates), but many also described their Chinese language and comparative Chinese-English knowledge as making them in some cases more credible judges of Chinese student writing than native English speakers who lack knowledge of Chinese. In addition, many Chinese participants also associated themselves with a previous, preferred pedagogy of English ("When I was learning English...") which they described in opposition to contemporary pedagogical methods and attitudes they viewed as deficient, thus bolstering their authority as teachers trained in methods that led to superior English knowledge (representative of best local pedagogical practices).

For the non-Chinese teachers I described these themes as sympathetic readership, bilingual expertise, and representative of western academia. As sympathetic readers, many of the

non-Chinese teachers positioned themselves as enlightened individuals who understand the difficulties that L2 writers go through, making judgments that stand in for the potentially much harsher judgments they believe the writers would receive from the “outside world.” As most of the non-Chinese were primarily monolingual native speakers of English, they rarely described their authority in terms of bilingual expertise, but several, especially those working at JVU, seemed to support their legitimacy as judges by positioning themselves as representatives of western academia who were able to make judgments because of their relationship to and experience with western educational institutions.

The variety of themes described above suggests that while participants are able to provide reasons why they are credible, authoritative judges of language use in written English, these reasons are context-dependent. What lends a person authority to make a judgment in one context might be irrelevant in another; this is particularly clear in the educator theme, where each of the groups describes their authority in terms that are deeply context-specific: the Chinese teachers’ familiarity with local best practices would likely not be as helpful if they were working at JVU, and the non-Chinese teachers’ experience with western academia would likely prevent them from focusing on the issues that would help Chinese students succeed in, for example, local standardized exams.

The contextually-dependent nature of what “counts” as the authority to make judgments has important implications for pedagogy and for the intersection of language ideology and sociolinguistic studies of writing. This and other implications of the findings of this study are discussed in the next (concluding) chapter.

Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion

One of the goals of this study has been to advance the possibilities afforded by adopting a “non-error-based” or “variation-based” approach to L2 writing, or in this case, readers’ reactions to L2 writer’s texts. While L2 writing teachers do have an obligation to teach students to write in ways that will, hopefully, lead to their accomplishing certain academic and/or personal goals, a more careful approach to non-standard language use in writing is expedient and offers important possibilities for research and pedagogy in second language (and indeed all) writing. This study has demonstrated how rich and illuminating data can be gathered if one does not begin with preconceived notions of what constitutes errors in writing, but instead gives research participants some freedom to explain how they view “unacceptable” language use. In this concluding chapter, I summarize and synthesize the findings of this study and discuss its theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical implications. I end by discussing directions for future research.

8.1 Discussion

Chapter 5 looked at which chunks were selected by participants as unacceptable in a “bottom-up” fashion, and it is clear that there was little in the way of agreement on what exactly constitutes unacceptable use of “non-standard” lexis and grammar. This is true both across groups (any Chinese and any non-Chinese participants were not likely to agree on which chunks are unacceptable) and within groups (any two participants in the same group are not necessarily likely to agree, either). This confirms the findings of some previous studies (e.g., Beason, 2001; Hyland & Anan, 2006; Wall & Hull, 1989) that there are wide discrepancies between what different people label as errors, and that if researchers do not begin with specific errors in mind, there is likely to be wide variability in participants’ reactions to language use in essays. The few chunks that were widely agreed upon were, predictably, more obvious violations of the rules of

English syntax, as well as usages that participants often saw as typographical mistakes rather than serious language errors. The types of chunks I highlighted as unique priorities for each group (the marking of “dictionary words” and discourse markers by some in the non-Chinese group and the marking of “Chinglish” and collocations due to particular interpretations of lexical meanings by some in the Chinese group) are not exhaustive; presumably a study with different texts and different participants would uncover different possible priorities.

These findings do suggest something about how the participants approach(ed) the texts. For the “high consensus” chunks, both groups clearly prioritized following syntactic rules. This suggests that while all language users indeed have an impulse to “clean up” or “improve” language in some way (Cameron, 2012), their complaints are not necessarily “irrational” or unduly “prescriptive.” As English language teachers, the participants used their knowledge of language structures to make statements about whether a usage was or was not grammatical.

The “differing priorities” chunks were more notable as being ideologically inflected: some non-Chinese teachers’ marking of dictionary words (*cocker*, *discretionarily*, and *improvident*) seems to index a language ideology which views individual native speakers as the ultimate arbiters – indeed, authorities – of acceptability in language. Despite the frequently privileged place of dictionaries in conventional understandings of linguistic authority, the vehement rejection of words determined to unconventional (despite being codified in dictionaries) suggests that many in the non-Chinese group felt comfortable regulating whether or not L2 writers were allowed, in a sense, to use words from the dictionary. While misuse of lexical items found via electronic bilingual dictionaries is certainly a problem for language teachers, it is notable that the three words in this study were all used “correctly” but still marked by some non-Chinese participants, and very few Chinese. Their marking of discourse markers

seems to have had more to do with their own experience of L2 student writing – seeing them as overused or unsophisticated – rather than a strong sense of the words being “wrong.”

Some of the Chinese participants’ marking of Chinglish and collocations where they preferred narrow/singular interpretations of certain words suggests a more “rules”-driven interpretation of acceptability; they were especially attuned to potential violations that seemed related to Chinese influence (due to their knowledge of Chinese and comparisons of Chinese and English), as well as to potentially unconventional semantic interpretations of words. This last category – typified by the comment that one cannot “feel alone” but must “feel lonely” – suggests not necessarily a lack of “poetic” or “creative” view of English, but one which is concerned with making sure that students correctly understand the meanings of words. Whether this is due to a desire to improve communication, or to make sure students can perform well on exams, was not a major focus of the study, but enough comments have been made by Chinese English teachers in this study and elsewhere to suggest the latter.

Chapter 6 explored how participants reacted to (possible) features of two varieties of English that have been identified by scholars: China English (CE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). While much has been written about these varieties, there has been little research done on the “uptake” (Lillis, 2013) of features of CE and/or ELF in written texts. As stated earlier, I did not want to begin with pre-conceived categories for what participants could or could not select as unacceptable, so in selecting the texts for the AJT, I paid no special attention to whether they contained features of CE or ELF, choosing to wait until participants had responded to examine this.

Compared to the very large number of chunks marked in the study overall (described in Chapter 5), features of CE and/or ELF did not appear to be a major priority for participants in

marking language as unacceptable. Very few features of CE or ELF were widely marked by either group, with the exception of the spoken CE features of null subject and adjacent default tense, selected by about 50% of all participants, and the ELF features of making an uncountable noun countable (“woods”), and using a semantically general verb (“this problem can be done”), both selected by over 50% of all participants. There seemed to be occasional differences in priorities between the Chinese and non-Chinese groups, but none that suggested obvious patterns in which types of features would be likely to be marked by each group in general (one exception might be the discovery that several Chinese participants argued for more ELF-like usage of articles with the abstract noun “(the) society”). Overall, the relative lack of marking features of CE supports the notion that WE varieties are not to be avoided, but when carefully deployed, can actually be strategically useful to writers intending to index particular local meanings (see, for example, Canagarajah, 2013). Similarly, the relative lack of marking of ELF features bolsters claims by ELF scholars that features of ELF, while they tend to be among those variations from standard English deemed most problematic by English language teachers, usually cause very little trouble in practice. This study suggests that this is true even in the context of academic writing; traditionally, “correctness” has been seen as even more prioritized in this domain, but the participants’ relative non-prioritization of ELF features suggests otherwise.

Chapter 7 was a thematic analysis of what I call participants’ “claims to authority.” These were rarely, if ever, *explicit* claims of why participants saw themselves as qualified, credible, or authoritative judges of language use; naturally, any writing teacher is in a position to make language judgments, and in this study, to do so was their primary task. However, I was interested in how the participants’ descriptions of their judgments and their orientations to language use in

academic writing in general reflected their own interpretations of their *ethos* as judges of acceptable language use.

In my analysis of the follow-up interview data, I identified three different positions from which participants were able to claim authority: as a mediator (that is, acting as an intermediary between two real or imagined groups, such as students and others who will judge their language), as a language user (that is, someone with knowledge of particular languages), and as an educator (that is, someone with training and expertise in a particular educational culture). I found that the Chinese and non-Chinese groups described their authority differently in each of these categories (with the exception of language user): Chinese participants described themselves as stand-ins or surrogates for native speakers, bilingual Chinese-English speakers, and teachers with knowledge of best (past) practices in the Chinese educational context (as opposed to contemporary Chinese educational culture which some viewed as problematic). Non-Chinese participants described themselves as sympathetic readers (as opposed to putative “non-sympathetic” readers in the “real world”), bilingual speakers of English and other languages (though this was rare), and teachers with knowledge and experience in western academic institutions.

Each participant was able to occupy positions from which to speak with authority. In terms of language ideology, one might surmise, especially if we assume a kind of global, hegemonic SWE, that participants’ understandings of their authority would be oriented toward native speaker judgments and institutions in Inner Circle contexts. And while it is true that the Chinese teachers’ identification as “native speaker surrogates” suggests a privileging of native speakers as authorities (and Chinese teachers as somehow second best), this and other positions taken by the participants actually suggest that their claims of authority are more contextual than being solely oriented toward native speaker authority. Chinese teachers’ characterization of

themselves as native speaker surrogates can be seen as their claiming equality with NESTs, that their judgments can stand in for – are as good as – those of native speakers. In addition, the bilingual expert theme was heavily tilted in favor of the Chinese teachers, many of whom had no qualms about representing themselves as more qualified than NESTs to make judgments of Chinese students’ writing when Chinese language issues were involved (which was frequently). In addition, the educator theme showed that participants in each group were able to draw on familiarity with a specific educational culture in order to bolster their credibility. Linguistic authority then, is not something the participants “have,” but something they construct based on their context and their social positioning.

8.2 Implications of the study

By bringing together concerns that have been disciplinarily “separate” in the fields of composition, L2 writing, the globalization of English (i.e., WE and ELF), and language ideology, this study has illustrated how areas of inquiry which have often been separated by disciplinary divisions have important things to say to each other. Specifically, the historical split between studies of spoken and written language has somewhat artificially prevented scholars of writing from applying theoretical insights from linguistics, including sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, which have historically focused more on spoken language. In recent years, sociolinguistic approaches have been of more interest to writing scholars, particularly due to the sociolinguistics-influenced New Literacy Studies (see Hornberger & McKay, 2010), but theoretical approaches influenced by robust sociolinguistic traditions are still relatively new in studies of writing. The publication of books like Lillis’ (2013) *The Sociolinguistics of Writing* and Coulmas’ (2013) *Writing and Society* and the completion of studies like this one represents the beginning of “conversations” between sociolinguistics and writing studies which will

continue for many years. This study, which applies a more sociolinguistic approach to an area traditionally (and sometimes unthinkingly) seen as simple “error,” is one voice in this developing, ongoing conversation.

8.2.1 Theoretical implications

This study has shown the value of sociolinguistic approaches to variation from standard written English. Traditionally, studies of nonstandard usage in L2 academic writing are oriented toward an understanding of L2 writers’ language use that views deviations from SWE in predetermined categories of error rather than looking at potentially practical avenues of research such as writers’ reasons for writing nonstandard uses, or readers’ reactions to them. Thus, while I do not necessarily endorse “translingual writing” as a miracle approach that will make all second language writing studies more socially realistic – and there are valid concerns being raised by L2 writing scholars about the terminological confusion between L2 writing and translingual writing (see Atkinson et. al., 2015) – I suggest that this study has shown one fruitful application of a translingual approach (and/or related approaches) specifically in *research*. One criticism of the translingual approach and other “postmodern” approaches which seem to leave “correctness” behind is that they are theoretically fashionable but often impractical. In terms of the theoretical impact on research, however, this study shows that a translingual approach is practical.

The unique concern of this study as an analysis of readers’ reactions to texts (as opposed to, for example, a rhetorical analysis of the texts themselves, or a study of writers’ composition processes) shows the methodological strength of the translingual approach’s flattening out of all “deviations” from SWE under the rubric of “language difference.” Rather than forcing the researcher to make potentially ill-informed decisions about whether to classify a certain usage as an error – since the literature shows that identification of errors tends to be idiosyncratic and

varies widely – the translingual approach treats language difference as an inevitable fact of writing as language-in-use and offers possibilities for researchers who want to study both readers’ reactions to and writers’ reasons for using nonstandard forms (Lu’s (1994) famous “can able to” vignette is an example of both of these). This study is an example of the former, and more studies of the latter can and should be undertaken. (Canagarajah (2013), for example, contacted scholars who used nonstandard English in academic writing to ask about their composition processes.)

There are also theoretical implications for sociolinguistics, specifically for WE and ELF. Just as I have argued for a more sociolinguistic-focused approach to L2 writing, there is also a great need to recognize the place of writing in sociolinguistics. WE in particular has ignored academic genres in favor of literary forms as typifying local features. As academic writing in English has become a more or less permanent feature of higher education not only in Inner and Outer but also Expanding Circle countries, WE theory needs to account for the role of academic writing in education and society more broadly when various varieties of English are conceptualized and described. Similarly, this study confirms that ELF scholars’ initial assertions that ELF features are no hindrance to communication are likely correct, and the continuing engagement of ELF theory with written (in addition to spoken) English should continue.

8.2.2 Methodological implications

This study is the first to conceptualize what I have called the “social/ideological” Acceptability Judgment Task. While some scholars in WE, ELF, and first and second language writing have used approaches influenced by linguistic acceptability studies, most prior studies have not been methodologically or theoretically rigorous in their descriptions of method. By making an explicit link between single-sentence linguistic acceptability studies and the

emergence of more discursive, whole-text studies of readers' reactions to language use, this dissertation has laid a methodological foundation for future research in writing and sociolinguistics. Scholars should consider the limitations of decontextualized acceptability (and/or error gravity) studies for revealing insights about reactions to language use. All language variation in writing takes place in a context and it is judged by people in that context, not in discrete sentences. While single sentences remain a useful method for theoretical linguists to elicit data about metalinguistic knowledge in a cognitivist framework, writing scholars and sociolinguists should look at lexical and grammatical variation as being embedded both in a full piece of writing and in a social and ideological matrix that includes relationships between people, texts, and institutions.

8.2.3 Implications for practice

There are several practical implications from this study for those who work with second language writers' (and others') texts and want to be aware of the highly subjective ways in which variation from SWE is constructed as "error." Here I am thinking not only of writing teachers, who are the most obvious beneficiaries of this type of research, but also what Lillis and Curry (2010) term "literacy brokers," such as editors, copyeditors, proofreaders, and others whose judgments may lead to substantial changes in writers' texts. This could also have implications for peer editors, writing center tutors, and assessors of writing placement and proficiency exams, among others. The findings of each chapter have implications for anyone in a position to work with second language writers and make judgments about their language use. I briefly describe three here, in the form of advice to these stakeholders:

- 1. Be aware that you may have different priorities than other readers.**

It is easy for people who work with language (teachers, tutors, editors) to assume that we are the ultimate arbiters of correctness, especially if we are native speakers of the language. However, studies like this one have shown that outside of agreeing on very obvious syntactic violations of the rules of English, various language “experts” are likely to have quite different priorities when it comes to judging which uses of language are unacceptable to readers. Inflexible insistence on one’s own personal preferences is likely to lead to students’ confusion and may not be conducive to learning to write. It is important to exercise what Heng Hartse and Kubota (2014) call “hyper-reflexivity” when it comes to making comments, suggestions, and changes to L2 writers’ texts. Rather than making this reflexivity a source of anxiety, it should be a “teachable moment” for both students and teachers; we can all develop greater metalinguistic and metadiscursive awareness of different standards in different contexts, whether those be countries, regions, institutions, disciplines, or even classrooms (see Flowerdew & Miller, 1995). While we may be accustomed to thinking about these differences in large-scale terms of genre and register, it is also important to think about this when it comes to the uptake of lexical and grammatical variation from SWE (see Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010).

2. Be aware of contextual differences in varieties of English and how these affect the way texts are written and taken up.

In addition to being aware of the variety of ways that any deviation from SWE may be taken up, it is particularly important to be aware of current descriptions of varieties of English in the world. Even if one does not wholeheartedly agree with the theoretical positions of world Englishes or ELF scholars, it is important to recognize their empirical scholarship and descriptive work on varieties of languages that we are not all likely to be familiar with.

Teachers and other literacy brokers would do well to avail themselves of the scholarship on varieties of English in the contexts their students come from. China English is one example; there has been work done on Englishes in many other countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. It may be worthwhile to invest in a handbook on world Englishes (e.g., B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & Nelson, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2010) and to keep abreast of developments in research centers like the University of Helsinki's ELFA project and the University of Southampton's Centre for Global Englishes.

3. Be aware of how you understand your own authority to make judgments of language use and how you communicate it to writers.

As with point #1 above, some reflexivity is necessary here. This study has shown that different people position themselves as authorities in different ways in different contexts. What lends a person credibility as an authority in one may not be credible in another. We need to be more aware of the ways we can earn students' trust by how we rhetorically position ourselves as experts who can judge their language use in ways that will ultimately be beneficial to them, rather than acting as the writing police who can "catch" writers' "mistakes." This means continuing professional development in our own knowledge of English (especially for NESTs, who often lack serious training in language structure) as well as educating ourselves about our students and the contexts they write in. Any reader of this study might be able to speak from a position of authority as a reader, language user, or educator in the ways described in Chapter 7, and doubtless there are other positions from which to achieve credibility with students. We should explore how we can strengthen our own authority in ways that benefit students – not in ways that are self-aggrandizing.

In addition to implications for teachers and literacy brokers, the calls for awareness above, inspired by this study, are also relevant for undergraduate, graduate, and professional educators in the areas of ESL and composition teacher training, writing program administration, writing assessment, and policy. Simply put, greater awareness needs to be raised regarding the subjective “standards” that are applied to writers’ texts, and a more (socio)linguistically realistic orientation to language should be considered by higher education institutions. Given that the results of this study were obtained in the context of English education in China, anyone who works with students from China, both inside and outside the country, may want to seriously consider the benefits of a more sociolinguistically nuanced, less punitive approach to dealing with variation in L2 writers’ texts.

8.3 Future directions for research

This study looked at reactions to nonstandard language in Chinese university students’ texts. Using the methodology described in this study, future studies could be carried out in different contexts with participants of other backgrounds. The research design and theoretical framework could be applied to a study which looked at, for example, French and non-French teachers’ reactions to texts written in English by French students; it could also be used to investigate differences in Singaporean and Indian teachers’ reactions to texts written by Japanese students. Participants from various language backgrounds could be chosen depending on the researcher’s interest.

Different types of texts could also be used. Given the enormous amount of English writing done by NNEs throughout the world, genres such as academic essays, theses and dissertations, published academic articles, English newspaper and magazine articles, blogs,

social media sites, online discussion forums, and numerous others could be used in similar open-ended AJTs for researchers interested in studying those contexts.

Another area of interest in future studies of this type would be to combine the AJT, interviews with readers, and interviews with the writers of the AJT texts. Takashima (1987) alludes to informal consultation with the writer of the text in his study, but a research design that involves both readers and writers – perhaps even in a focus group-style interview – would be useful in creating knowledge about the relationship of writers’ choices and readers’ reactions.

This has been one of many possible studies that can be carried out in what is beginning to be called the sociolinguistics of writing. While researchers associated with New Literacy Studies have drawn on insights from sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology for years (for example, David Barton’s *Literacies* series for Routledge Press has been in print since 1999), work that engages with the central concern of sociolinguistics – linguistic variation – is coming to the fore. Labov (1972) famously stated that the central question of sociolinguistics is “why anyone says anything” (p. 207). This led him in specific methodological directions (in his case, quantitative studies of sociolinguistic variables like race, class, age, and gender), but sociolinguistics and related fields have expanded enormously since then. We are now at a point where the interest in “why anyone writes anything” can be taken up by writing scholars who are influenced by sociolinguistic traditions. Embedded in that question are questions about why and how anyone interacts with texts, even at the sentence or word level. If L2 writing researchers are willing to investigate texts and peoples’ relationships with them in a way that starts not with a deficiency model, but instead with what exists in the text itself and how the process reading and reacting to it takes place, there is much more fruitful work to be done in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix A

All “priority” chunks for the non-Chinese group

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A047	Although the charge in the university is higher and higher today, some people think it is not worthy to spend so much money on education, and they can use the money to do other things.	11 (37%)	12 (75%)	23 (50%)
B058	Don't cocker it so much. It is just an animal after all.	4 (13%)	11 (69%)	15 (33%)
C087	So the authorities ought to spend money improving the medical system to care all persons .	13 (43%)	11 (69%)	24 (52%)
E049	Whereas, just knowing how to compete is not enough, cooperation is also needed.	7 (23%)	11 (69%)	18 (39%)
G070	If we want to protect our environment, we should ban those used-for-once chopsticks and those unnecessary packages, because those things are really wasting woods , and we have not solved that problem.	2 (7%)	11 (69%)	13 (28%)
B026	On the one hand, in the past, we think that we are the masters of the earth, so we polluted the environment discretionarily and took advantage of the resources improperly	14 (47%)	9 (56%)	23 (50%)
E059	It is undoubtedly that one can not manage a thing sometimes.	11 (37%)	9 (56%)	20 (43%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
G027	But actually, nobody likes that electronic cards better than the paper cards, because the characters on the paper cards can give us many nice feelings.	9 (30%)	9 (56%)	18 (39%)
G050	Environmentalists suggest us to use electronic cards instead of paper cards for holiday greetings.	10 (33%)	9 (56%)	19 (41%)
G075	But do not switch eyes onto the paper cards, they are totally different from those real garbage.	10 (33%)	9 (56%)	19 (41%)
B003	Some people raise animals as their pets, even their children.	9 (30%)	9 (56%)	18 (39%)
A053	Although the charge in the university is higher and higher today, some people think it is not worthy to spend so much money on education, and they can use the money to do other things.	3 (10%)	8 (50%)	11 (24%)
B027	On the one hand, in the past, we think that we are the masters of the earth, so we polluted the environment discretionarily and took advantage of the resources improperly.	1 (3%)	8 (50%)	9 (20%)
C021	At the option of mine, I vote for the later one.	12 (40%)	8 (50%)	20 (43%)
E014	First of all, the world changes everyday, so does China	0	8 (50%)	8 (17%)
A003	It is known to all that Edison, a great American inventor, was not a good student at school and he didn't even finish primary school.	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A058	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability.	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)
A059	I just want to say these people are improvident .	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)
D049	Secondly, as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation. Besides , this also will help you to improve your pronunciation since it provides Standard English	0	6 (38%)	6 (13%)
A002	Many successful people didn't have a good schooling .	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
A018	As a result, some people think that education is expensive, it just only wastes our money our time. On the contrary , some people think that the consequences of a failure to educate, especially in an increasingly globalized world, are even more expensive.	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
E020	China is in the process of reforming itself, establishing and improving a socialist market economy which is the reason why competition is becoming fierce. Besides , China is a large family with more than 1.3 billion people...	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
E032	And living in the society filled with competition, everyone should learn to compete.	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold text)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A039	On the other hand, ignorant people tend to do something foolish and harm others and society.	0	5 (31%)	5 (11%)
A026	Educated people consider that education is essential to an individual as well as to society.	0	4 (25%)	4 (9%)
C071	Last but not least, it is necessary for the authorities to furnish the financial assistance to medical care	0	4 (25%)	4
F008	But if living outside , they may less frequently walk in the campus and as a result, they will possibly miss some important information that may change their whole life, such as that of company introduction and interviews.	0	4 (25%)	4
G024	Nowadays we just simply type some words with the keyboard, and click a "send" .	0	4 (25%)	4

Appendix B

All “priority” chunks for the Chinese group

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
B042	On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being.	26 (87%)	6 (38%)	32 (70%)
A070	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability.	22 (73%)	3 (19%)	25 (54%)
G016	We use computers to send e-mails, and we get much information on the internet that can not get from other ways.	20 (67%)	6 (38%)	26 (57%)
B039	On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being.	19 (63%)	5 (31%)	24 (52%)
D048	Secondly, as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation.	19 (63%)	7 (44%)	26 (56%)
B055	In my opinion, we should decide the status of animals according to your own condition.	17 (57%)	6 (38%)	23 (50%)
D099	What's more, as time passing-by , it will become indispensable in people's daily study and life, and you will see its popularity more.	16 (53%)	4 (25%)	20 (43%)
D036	Of course, in no case people would like to bring the heavy dictionary with them while traveling or being out.	15 (50%)	7 (44%)	22 (48%)
A111	One can learn more theoretical knowledge in school, with these theoretical knowledge for basis, you can do well practice .	15 (50%)	1 (6%)	16 (25%)

ID	Chunk (relevant section in bold)	Chinese (%)	Non-Chinese (%)	Total (%)
A068	Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability	14 (47%)	0	14 (30%)
G039	...the words he wrote on the card would remind you a lot of memories about the days you have spent together, and the sweet wishes on the card would move you so much that you might keep that card forever.	10 (33%)	2 (13%)	20 (43%)
B068	You can eat them, wear the clothes which are made from them, and use them to make things. But you should also have a limitation .	10 (33%)	0	10 (22%)
G042	When you miss that friend or you feel alone , you can take out that beautiful card, touching the paintings and characters on it, you'll find out why you love paper cards so much.	10 (33%)	0	10 (22%)
E091	...,vice versa,	7 (23%)	0	7 (15%)
4085	Sometimes we can't avoid calculating some complicated questions , especially when the time is very limited and urgent, E-dictionary will be necessary, and apparently much time will be saved.	7 (23%)	0	7 (15%)
F088	leave influence for	7 (23%)	0	7 (15%)
F082	If we encourage students to rent an apartment off campus, these students may feel sense of inferiority, which may leave a bad influence for their future development.	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
B061	If you are fond of them and like to raise one, you can feed one, play with it and treat it as your own lovely pet. But you should have a limit .	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
D071	However, once the schedule is recorded on, and your alarm clock is open , then you will be reminded on time.	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
F005	There are more students	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)
F019	The college students	6 (20%)	0	6 (13%)

Appendix C

Acceptability Judgment Task

Instructions

The purpose of the project is to learn about your perception of acceptable features of written English.

The following seven essays were written by English majors in their fourth year of university in a non-English-speaking country. Each essay was written in response to a different prompt, which is also provided, and the essays are final drafts which the students submitted to their teachers. You will be asked to identify any usage in the essays which you consider to be **unacceptable** in this context.

Please read each essay, and using Microsoft Word's comments features, select any **word, phrase, or arrangement of words which you consider unacceptable**. In order to save time, please limit yourself to selecting a **maximum of ten instances** which you believe to be the most unacceptable **for each essay**. The whole task should take you no more than 90 minutes. After you have selected a part of the text, please explain in your comment **why you identified that part as unacceptable**. You can explain your reasoning in as much or as little detail as you want.

For example, if you saw this passage:

As we all know, no one is perfect. No one can handle all the things around us, and cooperation can let people work better and more quickly.

You might make these comments:

As we all know, no one is perfect. No one can handle **all the things** around us, and cooperation can **let** people work better and more quickly.

"All the things" is an unusual phrase. "Everything" is a more appropriate choice.

I have never heard "let" used in this way.

Please note: your goal is not necessarily to find and correct errors. The important thing is to express your opinion about the "acceptability" of the English used by the writers. **There are no right or wrong choices.**

Finally, please limit your comments to these **lexical** (vocabulary, word choice, phrases, etc.) and **syntactic** (grammar, phrases, word order, sentence structure, etc.) features, **but do not comment on the overall rhetorical or discourse features of the text**. (For example, comments such as "this conclusion is unclear" or "this essay has no thesis statement" are **not** related to the questions under investigation in this study.)

Thank you again for your participation in this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

About You

Name:

Gender:

Age:

What country were you born and raised in?

Teaching Experience: year(s)

Please briefly describe the kind of teaching you have done and where (e.g., primary, secondary, college; ESL/EFL speaking/writing; which countries):

Please briefly describe the student populations you have worked with, including age and language background (e.g., Vietnamese L1 secondary students, etc):

Academic qualifications attained (please mark with an X, and indicate your major):

_____ Bachelor's degree in

_____ Master's degree in

_____ Doctorate in

_____ Other (please specify):

Please check here if you are able to take part in a 1-hour face-to-face interview about this topic:

Yes_____ No____

C.1 Prompt A

Education is expensive, but the consequences of a failure to educate, especially in an increasingly globalized world, are even more expensive." Write an essay of approximately 300 words on this issue to state your own opinion.

Many successful people didn't have a good schooling. It is known to all that Edison, a great American inventor, was not a good student at school and he didn't even finish primary school. The same is true of Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft Company. Bill Gates left Harvard University before he graduated. Even George Bush Junior, president of the US, was a poor student at school. As a result, some people think that education is expensive, it just only wastes our money our time. On the contrary, some people think that the consequences of a failure to educate, especially in an increasingly globalized world, are even more expensive. I would like to vote for the second idea.

Educated people consider that education is essential to an individual as well as to society. Personally speaking, without education people cannot rid themselves of ignorance. Illiterate people can hardly have a livelihood in modern society. They can not keep pace with the developing society. Nowadays all trades and professions require people with professional knowledge and skill. On the other hand, ignorant people tend to do something foolish and harm others and society. As far as society is concerned, uneducated people can hardly make contribution to the development and progress of society.

Although the charge in the university is higher and higher today, some people think it is not worthy to spend so much money on education, and they can use the money to do other things. I just want to say these people are improvident. If one has a higher education, accordingly he can get a good job and he can earn much more money. Firstly, nowadays when most people find job, the company first to look at your degree certificates, after look at your degree certificates and then test your ability. So degree certificates are a most factor to find job. So investing education can provide much opportunity for you to find job. Secondly, education can advance one's ability, and teach you some skill for survival in society. One can learn more theoretical knowledge in school, with these theoretical knowledge for basis, you can do well practice. Therefore investing education charge is much, but compared with the consequences, the reward is much bigger.

In conclusion, education is not expensive. On the contrary, it can produce much more wealth.

C.2 Prompt B

Some people think that the animals should be treated as pets, while others think that animals are resources of food and clothing. What is your opinion?

There are many animals around us. Some people raise animals as their pets, even their children. But some people eat them, or use them to make something. Yet what are they in your opinion to the end? This topic sounds a little boring. If I must have a decision, I have to take the middle-of-the-road line.

In my opinion, the status of the animals is difficult to be decided, because we can neither treat them as pets only, nor just use them to satisfy us. On the one hand, in the past, we think that we are the masters of the earth, so we polluted the environment discretionarily and took advantage of the resources improperly. Animals were also harmed. Many animals had disappeared. But the fact tells us that we are wrong. Therefore, animals are not just the resources of our living. On the other hand, there also have some people who treat the animals so kindly that they even let them more comfortable than human being. We can find lots of news about this from TV and newspapers. To be frank, I think it is stupid to do this. We can treat them as friends, but not children or families. If all of us raise animals in this way, what our society will be.

In my opinion, we should decide the status of animals according to your own condition. If you are fond of them and like to raise one, you can feed one, play with it and treat it as your own lovely pet. But you should have a limit. Don't cocker it so much. It is just an animal after all.

If you think that they are heartless, dirty and ugly, you can treat them just as animals. You can eat them, wear the clothes which are made from them, and use them to make things. But you should also have a limitation. The earth is ours, so is theirs. Don't kill them arbitrarily, because the balance of the nature needs them. Moreover, they are the most important resources of our food and clothing, so the nature and our life both need them. We should take advantage of animals continually.

In conclusion, we can treat the animals as pets or, the resources of food and clothing freely from case to case. However don't forget the limitations. If all of us can do like this, I think it's all right.

C.3 Prompt C

Some people say the government shouldn't put money on building theaters and sports stadiums; they should spend more money on medical care and education. Do you agree or disagree? State the reasons for your view.

For the purpose of satisfying the people's need, with developing quickly in construction, the government offers lots of funds to build theaters, sports stadiums, etc. The behavior of governments raises a sharp controversy as people stand on different positions. Some hold the opinion that the governments ought to invest in these buildings. Others, however, contradict it. At the option of mine, I vote for the later one.

First of all, governments should give priority to the construction of infrastructure. As our country is a developing nation with limited funds, through the effective and perfect operation of the authorities, money collected from the taxpayers should be invested into the projects which are beneficial to majority of common people other than minority. Regardless of his position and opinion, everybody, especially the officials who are in power, should understand clearly that the infrastructure, such as roads, transportation, communication, energy and housing, is the most essential framework of the development of a harmonious society.

Next, it is important for the authorities to focus on education. According to the official statistics, nearly half of children in rural regions are unable to finish their elementary education and some of them fail to go to school because of lack of money. Therefore, the governments should provide a part of revenue to educational institutions so that a perfect educational system will be established for every child's opportunity of being educated.

Last but not least, it is necessary for the authorities to furnish the financial assistance to medical care. There is a phenomenon that many people are unable to go to see the doctor, let alone to cure the disease, especially for these who live below the poverty line. What they can do is only to endure. So the authorities ought to spend money improving the medical system to care all persons.

On the other hand, I take it for granted that the government, without the expense of the above-mentioned aspects, put money into the construction such as theaters that are beneficial for people's psychological health. Nevertheless, since we have a very limited budget, we should make full use of money to benefit the common people.

All in all, infrastructure, education, and medical care, instead of these buildings, are the principal issues the authorities should give priority to. Only in this way can a harmonious society be established.

C.4 Prompt D

Nowadays, electronic dictionaries (E-dictionaries) have been increasingly popular among students. However, teachers think that the overuse of E-dictionaries might have more disadvantages than advantages for English learning. For example, like the use of calculator affecting the skill of calculating, reliance on E-dictionaries may lead to the deteriorating of our spelling ability. Write an essay of approximately 300 words on this issue to state your own opinion.

Nowadays, E-dictionaries are becoming more and more popular among our students. However, there are still some arguments thinking that the overuse of E-dictionaries might have more disadvantages than advantages for our English learning. Even though everything has two sides good or bad, still I insist we can benefit more by using E-dictionaries.

Comparing with the traditional English dictionaries such as Oxford Dictionary, the E-dictionary is easy to take as it's light but contains thousands of words, including two languages at least. Undoubtedly students can enjoy the great convenience it brings. For example, when we meet some new words while communicating with others, it will be very convenient and prompt to check their meanings once you have brought E-dictionary. Of course, in no case people would like to bring the heavy dictionary with them while traveling or being out.

Secondly, as pronunciation is one of the functions E-dictionary has, if you do not know or forget how to pronounce a word, then this problem can be done easily by just pressing the key of pronunciation. Besides, this also will help you to improve your pronunciation since it provides Standard English. In a word, no matter where you are, once you have taken it along with you, then you can learn real pronunciation at any time.

Thirdly, you can record your schedule on it. Sometimes we can't assure ourselves won't forget everything. However, once the schedule is recorded on, and your alarm clock is open, then you will be reminded on time. For our English learners, obviously it's very important for us to read English early in the morning. How to keep this good habit? E-dictionary is one of the best assistants.

In addition, people can enjoy other convenience it has such as calculation. Sometimes we can't avoid calculating some complicated questions, especially when the time is very limited and urgent, E-dictionary will be necessary, and apparently much time will be saved.

Moreover, with the development of technology, its advantages will be more obvious, and it will serve people's lives more in more various but better ways.

In conclusion, people always benefit more while its advantages outweigh its disadvantages. What's more, as time passing-by, it will become indispensable in people's daily study and life, and you will see its popularity more.

C.5 Prompt E

Some people think children should learn to compete, but others think that children should be taught to cooperate. Express some reasons of both views and give your own opinion.

Nowadays, with the rapid development of our society and economy, competition is becoming more and fiercer, while cooperation, as a traditional idea, is losing its position in our society. In this situation, many parents do not know how to educate their children. People have different opinions on this problem: some people think children should learn to compete, but others think that children should be taught to cooperate. In my opinion, both competition and cooperation should be taught to children.

First of all, the world changes everyday, so does China. China is in the process of reforming itself, establishing and improving a socialist market economy which is the reason why competition is becoming fiercer. Besides, China is a large family with more than 1.3 billion people, and the growth of the service sector, the increasing demand for skilled workers which adds pressure to the intensifying competition. And living in the society filled with competition, everyone should learn to compete. As the old saying goes, competition will make the real talent come out of the common people. So, in order to improve the ability of children, we should teach them how to compete and how to live and succeed in such competitive society. In other words, teaching children to compete is necessary for their lives and development in the future.

Whereas, just knowing how to compete is not enough, cooperation is also needed. In football game, for example, one team is competing against the other, but each member of the team must cooperate with his teammates. Otherwise, they could lose the game no matter how skillful each individual player might be if they can not cooperate well. It is undoubtedly that one can not manage a thing sometimes. At most time, we need help from others, with so-called cooperation, which can make us work efficiently. It also can improve the whole ability of a group or a country.

Cooperation without competition only will lack motivation, vice versa, it will lead to the final failure. They can not live without each other. While we advocate competition, we cannot forget cooperation. Human beings are social beings. No one can exist alone in the society. If you want to play the game well, you have to play with others. With cooperation the world is progressing at peace and in harmony.

Therefore, children should learn to compete as well as cooperate. We should make use of them to strengthen ourselves and work together to make tomorrow a better day.

C.6 Prompt F

Nowadays, more and more college students rent apartments and live outside campus. Is it appropriate? What is your own opinion?

Due to the bad living conditions on campus, there are more and more students who prefer living outside by renting an apartment. However, considering three advantages of living on campus, I strongly recommend that college students should live in dormitories with classmates.

Firstly, the dormitory life will help students to get along with others much better. The college students need to prepare themselves for future careers, especially in the abilities of communicating and mutual understanding. From the daily chores and quarrels, students will be less self-oriented and learn to take other people's interests into consideration.

Secondly, the school life will provide students various kinds of information. They can easily get to know the messages about lectures and social activities. But if living outside, they may less frequently walk in the campus and as a result, they will possibly miss some important information that may change their whole life, such as that of company introduction and interviews.

Thirdly, renting an apartment will impose a heavy load to students' parents. In Nanjing, the apartment near Gulou campus will cost 1300 yuan per month. This is quite a heavy burden to ordinary families and also will cause some students to compare living conditions with each other, which will lead to bad earning environment for a university. The average income of a common family in Nanjing is about 1500 yuan, and there are also many poor students who cannot even afford the fees for study. If we encourage students to rent an apartment off campus, these students may feel sense of inferiority, which may leave a bad influence for their future development.

Beside three key reasons mentioned above, there are also some other advantages of living on campus, such as easy management of students for colleges. Although renting an apartment will improve their living conditions, I believe they may lose spirits of fighting against difficulties because of too comfortable life.

Therefore, based on all these analysis, I hope that colleges will encourage students to live on campus rather than renting an apartment off campus.

C.7 Prompt G

Nowadays, we are advised by environmentalists to use electronic cards instead of paper cards for holiday greetings. However, some people think that electronic cards do not have the same flavor of paper cards and do not display the same function, either. Write an essay to state your own opinion.

Nowadays, we are using computers more often, computers are becoming more and more important in our daily life, and some people would say that their life and work can not going on without computers. We use computers to send e-mails, and we get much information on the internet that can not get from other ways.

However, most of us have forgotten that we used to write letters with traditional pens and paper, we sent friends greeting cards to express how much we missed them. Nowadays we just simply type some words with the keyboard, and click a "send". That is an easy way, and saves much time. But actually, nobody likes that electronic cards better than the paper cards, because the characters on the paper cards can give us many nice feelings. For example, when you receive a card from a friend that you haven't seen for a long time, the words he wrote on the card would remind you a lot of memories about the days you have spent together, and the sweet wishes on the card would move you so much that you might keep that card forever. When you miss that friend or you feel alone, you can take out that beautiful card, touching the paintings and characters on it, you'll find out why you love paper cards so much.

Environmentalists suggest us to use electronic cards instead of paper cards for holiday greetings. However, the electronic cards certainly do not have the same flavor of paper cards and do not display the same function, either. Actually, using a computer is a kind of pollution itself, so it does not make any sense to use electronic cards instead of paper cards just for the sake of protecting our environment. Paper cards are carefully collected by the receivers, people would never throw a paper card away without consideration, because they think the cards are precious. If we want to protect our environment, we should ban those used-for-once chopsticks and those unnecessary packages, because those things are really wasting woods, and we have not solved that problem. But do not switch eyes onto the paper cards, they are totally different from those real garbage. Being not able to solve the real problem could not be an excuse to show opposition to the paper cards.

In a word, paper cards are really good stuff in our life. We should not abandon them and turn to the electronic cards. Think about a world without any human writings, how awful will it be.

Appendix D

Consent Form (English, for non-Chinese teachers)

Investigating English Teachers' Perceptions of Acceptability in English Writing: Informed Consent

Principal Investigator: Ling Shi, Associate Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia

Co-investigator: Joel Heng Hartse, PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to better understand native speakers' understanding of the characteristics of written English, especially considering the global significance of the teaching, learning, and practice of writing in English in international contexts.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to read ten short essays written by university students and to comment on which parts of the essay you consider unacceptable, (i.e., features of the essay, at the sentence level, that are unusual). For each part you identify as unacceptable, you will be asked to explain your response and provide an alternative. This may take you about 90 minutes. You may later be asked to participate in a short interview about your responses.

Confidentiality: Your identity and all of your responses will be confidential. The only people knowing your names and identities will be the principal investigator and co-investigator, and this information will be kept in encrypted data storage on a computer. Neither your name nor any identifying details about yourself will be published or released to the public in any format.

Risk and Benefits of Participating in this Study: This study poses no known risks or benefits to participants.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions concerning your participation in this project, or would like further information about it, you may contact Dr. Ling Shi at
Joel Heng Hartse at

Contact for the concerns of research participants: if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, please contact the UBC Office of Research Services at

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without jeopardy to yourself. By completing the task of commenting on the essays, it will be assumed that you have consented to participate in the study.

Appendix E

Consent form (Chinese/English, for Chinese teachers)

英语教师对英语写作中的语言可接受度调查： 知情同意

主要调查人： 英属哥伦比亚大学语言与语文教育学系副教授Ling Shi

合作调查人： 英属哥伦比亚大学语言与语文教育学系博士生Joel Heng Hartse

Purpose 研究目的: The purpose of is study is to better understand Chinese speakers' understanding of the characteristics of written English, especially considering the global significance of the teaching, learning, and practice of writing in English in international contexts. 本研究是为了更好地了解在英语写作教学和实践日益重要的全球化背景下，作为母语为中文的人对于书面英语语言特点的理解。

Study Procedures 研究过程: You will be asked to read 7 short essays written by university students and to comment on which parts of the essay you consider unacceptable, (i.e., features of the essay, at the sentence level, that are unusual). For each part you identify as unacceptable, you will be asked to explain your response. This may take you about 90 minutes. You may later be asked to participate in a short interview about your responses. : 您将阅读7篇由大学生写的短文章，并对其中您觉得不可接受的部分做出评论（也就是说，在一个句子中，您认为用法不当的地方。您还需要解释每一处标注的原因，并提供修改的方案。整个过程可能需要90分钟，可能您还需要接受一个简短的采访。

Please limit your comments to these lexical (vocabulary, word choice, phrases, etc.) and syntactic (grammar, phrases, word order, sentence structure, etc.) features, but do not comment on the overall rhetorical or discourse features of the text. (For example, comments such as “this conclusion is unclear” or “this essay has no thesis statement” are not related to the questions under investigation in this study.)

请只从词汇层面（用词、选词、词组等）和句法层面（语法、词组、用词顺序、句子结构等）做出批注，而不要从整体的语篇修辞或话语特点的角度批注。（例如“这个结论很模糊”，“这篇文章缺少中心句”等类似的批注就不属于本次研究范围。）

Confidentiality 保密: Your identity and all of your responses will be confidential. The only people knowing your names and identities will be the principal investigator and co-investigator, and this information will be kept in encrypted data storage on a computer. Neither your name nor any identifying details about yourself will be published or released to the public in any format. 您的身份和所有您做出的标注和修改完全保密，只有主要调查人和合作调查人才知道您的姓名和身份。任何关于您姓名和身份的细节都不会以任何形式公布或被他人获得。

Risk and Benefits of Participating in this Study 参与本次研究的风险和利益: This study poses no known risks or benefits to participants. 本次研究不会给研究参与者带来任何已知风险和利益。

Contact for information about the study 询问关于本次研究相关情况的联系方式: If you have any questions concerning your participation in this project, or would like further information about it, you may contact Dr. Ling Shi at _____ or Joel Heng Hartse at _____. 如果您对所参与的本次研究项目有任何问题，或者希望获得关于本次研究的其他信息，您可以联系Ling Shi博士，联系方式为 _____，也可以联系Joel Heng Hartse，联系方式为 _____。

Contact for the concerns of research participants 询问关于研究参与者相关情况的联系方: if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, please contact the UBC Office of Research Services at _____. 如果您对于本次研究过程中您本人的权利有任何问题，请联系英属哥伦比亚大学研究服务办公室，联系方式为 _____。

Consent 同意: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without jeopardy to yourself. By completing the task of commenting on the essays, it will be assumed that you have consented to participate in the study. 参与本次研究完全属于自愿行为。您可以拒绝参与，也可以在任何时间退出，这不会给您带来任何后果和风险。如果您完成了批注并修改了所有的短文章，即表明您同意参与本次研究。

Appendix F

Sample questions for semi-structured interviews

1. The interview will begin with specific questions relating to responses the participants made on the AJT, and why/how they made them – these questions can only be determined after that part is completed. I anticipate this will take perhaps the first half (30 minutes or so) of the interview.
2. What is the most important criteria for you when you make a judgment about whether a certain word, phrase, or sentence is acceptable in English writing?
3. What makes good (English) writing?
4. What makes bad (English) writing?
5. In your opinion, where do you get your ideas about what makes good English? (For example, from reading, from education, from dictionaries, etc)
6. What kind of experience do you have with English writing? (Teaching, learning, practicing, etc)
7. What is the difference between mistakes in English writing and innovation/creativity in English writing?
8. What do you think is the most important aspect to focus on in English writing (teaching/learning)?
9. Do you think Chinese people write in English in a way that is different from other English speakers? How can you tell?
10. Do you think there is such a thing as Chinese English, China English, etc? Why or why not?
11. If yes, what is your opinion about Chinese English – good, bad, indifferent? Why?

Appendix G

Text of recruitment email to ATC department head

([XXXX] = Redacted for confidentiality)

Dear Prof. [XXXX],

I was glad to hear that Dr. [XXXX] was able to get in touch with you. In fact, I read your study [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]. I worked as a foreign English teacher at [XXXXXXXXXXXX]. I am now a PhD student at the University of British Columbia in Canada, on an exchange at [XXXXXX].

I think Dr. [XXXX] mentioned my study, but I thought I would tell you a little more information about it. Basically, I am investigating the construct of "acceptability" by asking Chinese English teachers to read and comment on some features of Chinese students' academic texts. The task itself is fairly simple but the important thing for me now is to recruit participants as I can. My goal is to get about 20 participants from three different universities each. I have been in contact with [XXXX] and [XXXX] in [XXXX] and they recommended that instead of just e-mailing all the teachers directly, I should contact teachers I know and ask them to contact their colleagues. They said that this would probably be a better way to find participants. So far, they have each found a few colleagues who are willing to participate, but I hope I can find some more.

So, I wonder if you can help me by contacting some of your colleagues who teach English there and asking if they may be able to participate. I will attach the instructions and example of the survey to this email so you can have a better idea about what I'm doing. The actual survey includes seven texts (the sample only includes one as an example).

[XXXXXX]

The study involves two phases: in the first the participants will complete a survey identifying the parts of the text they find unacceptable, and explaining why. After that part is complete, I would like to conduct interviews with some volunteers from the first group of participants to discuss how they made their judgments. When I e-mail them the survey I will ask about volunteering for the second part.

If it is possible, would you be able to contact some of your colleagues to ask if they may be able to participate? Each participant will receive a 100 yuan gift card for a supermarket.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the study. [XXXX]

I'm very glad Dr. [XXXX] could put us in touch and hope to have the chance to talk with you soon. [XXXXXX]

Appendix H

Text of recruitment posting on professional association website

Hello fellow writing teachers! I'm looking for a few people who might be up for participating in a small part of a study I'm doing.

The study is about native English speakers' perceptions of the features of standard written English and the "acceptability" or "unacceptability" of some writing by non-native speakers. I am looking for participants who are able to spend about an hour or less reading 8 short essays written by EFL students and commenting on those parts of the texts which they consider "unacceptable." (Interpret as you may! There will be more detailed instructions, though.)

I think the task is pretty interesting and easy to do, and I'd love to have your participation if you're interested. Only two criteria:

1. You consider yourself a native speaker of English who acquired the language from birth in an English-speaking country.
2. You have not spent a significant amount of time teaching English in Asia. (e.g., no more than a few months at most.)

I am happy to answer any comments or questions about this project. Please contact me if you're interested.

thanks for your time!