Nonnative Speaker English Teachers as a Controversial Role

Yang Zhan[1,a], Rong Tang[2,b,*]

[1]Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, China
[2]Medical and Health College of Yunnan, Kunming, China
[a]zhanyang19900728@126.com, [b]tangrong_chn@163.com
*Corresponding author:tangrong_chn@163.com

***Abstract:** This study examines the challenges and solutions associated with bilingual education and the controversial role of non-native English teachers. The research examines the language experiences of bilingual individuals teachers,specifically investigating the use of translanguaging as a means to express their identity and build interethnic solidarity. The controversial position of nonnative speaker English teachers is examined, focusing on their language skills, classroom dynamics, and biases against them as educators. Suggestions includes improving training for non-native speaker (NNS) instructors, fostering collaboration with native speaker (NS) teachers, and establishing favorable educational settings. To promote effective language education and reduce bias, future directions in bilingual education and teacher roles are recommended.*

***Keywords:** Bilingual Education, Non-native English Teachers, Motivation, Identity Expression, Bias Reduction*

1. Introduction

In response to the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the growing need for skilled professionals in science, technology, and innovation, higher vocational colleges in our country are placing greater emphasis on incorporating English into their specialized disciplines and practical applications. This allows individuals to utilize the English language as a means to improve their expertise in their respective fields and broaden the range of situations in which they can apply their technical abilities.

In the present paper, a Chinese Medical College which is undergoing the newly developed 'bilingual programme' is going to be examined. In this college, professional courses are taught in both Chinese and English. Students who accomplish after-class tasks well can enjoy the opportunity of attending oral English classes taught by 'native' speaker teachers.

In this context, motivation, non-native speaker teacher's identity and bilingual education will be looked into specifically. After defining what 'motivation' is, Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory will be critically reviewed in combination with the oral class entry regulations. Then the focus will be turned towards the bilingual education and its current problems. Analysed from Krashen's second language acquisition theory perspective, the bilingual education finds its firm theoretical basis. And for the third topic,nonnative speaker (NNS) English teachers'pros and cons compared with native speakers (NS) will be cast highlight on. It is shocking how discrimination is closely related with the terms 'native' and 'nonnative'. Having placed the concentration on the students, the teachers and the whole education system respectively, suggestions will be made within each topic to better the situation in each field. The three topics the writers are now going to discuss are:

1) Motivation: goal-setting theory

2) Bilingual education

3) Nonnative speaker English teachers as a controversial role

2. Motivation: Goal-setting Theory

2.1. Definitions of motivation

Hamers and Blanc[1] propose that the acquisition of a second language is mediated by attitudes in the community and by individual motivation as well as a result of the teaching method. Indeed, as the reason individuals behave in certain ways, motivation has been widely explored by researchers.

To define 'motivation', one has to open his ears to a wide range of voices in the literature. Baron[2] states that motivation is 'the internal process that activate, guide, and maintain behaviour (especially goal-directed behaviour)'. McLean[3] puts up an overly broad umbrella term of motivation by defining it as 'the sum of all that moves a person to action'. While Dörnyei and Ushioda[4] make the definition of motivation most agreeable by arguing that motivation is responsible for 'why people decide to do something', 'how long they are willing to sustain the activity' and how hard they are going to pursue it'. The above definitions are general understandings of motivation, yet linguistically specially, that motivation is a subsystem of the second language acquisition (SLA) system. Although his position agrees with Ryan and Deci's[5] belief that motivation itself is not necessarily an exhaustive phenomenon, both their points tend to underestimate motivation's unique significance, which makes their stance doubt-worthy.

Within the educational context, goal-setting theory has been essential in comprehending proactive career behaviors and student motivation. In a study conducted by Clements and Kamau[6], it was discovered that students who had higher mastery approach goals demonstrated a better level of perceived employability. This was attributed to their proactive career behaviors, which included activities like skill development and network building. Likewise, the dedication to achieving career goals was linked to a rise in proactive career actions, emphasizing the importance of setting specific and demanding objectives in motivating students and fostering their career growth.

Locke and Latham[7]offer a detailed analysis of the evolution of goal setting theory, highlighting its strong empirical backing and its applicability to many situations and groups of people. The theory's capacity to discern mediators and moderators of goal effects has been essential in broadening its applications and comprehending its mechanisms.

2.2. Critical analysis on the goal-setting theory and implications

Of all the existing motivation theories, most of which are 'based on overgeneralisation', Locke and Latham[8] argue that the goal-setting theory is less questionable because it is based on hundreds of studies and evolves gradually. As one of the key cognitive theories of motivation, the goal-setting theory seeks to unveil difference of performance in terms of the differences in goal attributes. Historically, it dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century from the concept of task[5] and is largely taken further by Locke and Latham in the 1990s. Locke and Latham's[9] summarisation of their 35 year empirical goal-setting research can be introduced as a theory determined by three main elements: specificity, difficulty and goal commitment. Findings of the experiments conducted show that the more difficult the goal is, the more likely higher level of performance is to be delivered. The second element brings about the conclusion that specific goals produce better results than vague and nonquantitative goals such as 'do your best'[8]. The final conclusion is that when goals meet the condition of high specificity and difficulty, commitment is most hard to get only if the individual is convinced that the goal is both important and attainable. This statement is similar to Ryan and Deci's[5]self-determination theory in which it is argued that extrinsic goals can be internalized so that they work alongside intrinsic goals.

Looking at the goal-setting theory and its conclusions in turn, it is noticeable that although the goal-setting theory is based on empirical research, it has its deficiencies. One main problem is the research context the claims derive from is organizational or work settings. Namely, educational settings are not taken into consideration in the research. Admittedly, Dörnyei and Ushioda[4] , from a supportive point of view, find evidences that part of the theory, proximal goals for example, can be applied to educational settings. The basis of the research is yet to be confidently claimed as holistic in this regard. Another questionable point within this theory is that individual difference is give inadequate emphasis to. That is to say, in light of goal commitment and the delivery of a goal, personal attitudes, which are as important as the specificity and difficulty of the goal itself, are not sufficiently addressed. Ranging from money to appraisal, Locke and Latham put so much effort in listing and explaining extrinsic factors that affect the performance. Yet goal commitment as such an important intrinsicality-loaded

attribute, seems to be stated as just a result of the former extrinsic attributes.

3. Bilingual education

3.1. Definition of bilingualism

A wide range of definitions for bilinguals can be found in the literature. Bloomfield's definition enjoys much popularity for it takes bilinguals as those who have 'native-like control of two languages'.[10] In contrast with Bloomfield's idealistically perfect bilingual individuals, Macnamara argues that people who possess one of the four language skills in a second language are bilinguals[11] .However, both definitions can be criticized not only for their lack of precision and operationalism, but also for the narrowness of dimensions[1][12]. In previous literature, researchers tend to introduce a wider definition of bilinguals which refers to individuals whose degrees of language proficiencies in different domains in both languages are varied, such as those people who 'need and use' two languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives[13].

In educational settings, bilingual education, as the term self-suggests, is the education where students are instructed in the second language on subjects. From the Ancient World to the modern world, bilingual education has been existing in one way or another for thousands of years. As Baker argues, bilingual education plays an important role for individuals, communities and nations since it is a component inside a wide 'social, economic, educational, cultural and political framework[14]. Some scholars, García, for example, even go to the extreme by claiming that bilingual education should be the only way to educate children in the 21st century[15]. According to Baker bilingual education falls into two categories based on the purpose, namely transitional bilingual education and maintenance bilingual education[14]. The former aims at shifting the learner from minority language to the majority language, while the latter casts equal strength on both languages to maintain the cultural diversity. According to studies, both forms of bilingual education not only result in bilingualism and biliteracy, but also tend to heighten achievements across the curriculum.

In contrast, the exact definition and application of bilingualism might vary greatly. Sawyer and Rodríguez-Valls specifically examine the linguistic experiences of bilingual teacher candidates in rural California[16]. They emphasize the significance of translanguaging in these candidates' expression of identity and their ability to form interethnic solidarity. This study posits that bilingualism incorporates not just linguistic aptitude but also cultural identification and societal unity.

3.2. The mechanism of bilingual education

To better understand the mechanism of bilingual education, Krashen's hypotheses should be introduced. What makes up Krashen's second language theory is a set of five hypotheses based on existing data: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis[17]. Three out of these five are more closely related to bilingual education. The first is the acquisition-learning hypothesis which claims that adults, as in their puberties, still have two ways of developing competence in second language. One is acquisition, which is unconscious and natural; the other is learning, which is aware and formal. This hypothesis helps confirm the possibility of bilingual education's function in second language acquisition. The second is the input hypothesis, better known nowadays as the comprehensible input hypothesis. It states that people acquire language by understanding input that is one step higher than their current language level. For example, if a student is at a stage 'i', and is exposed to 'comprehensive input' that belongs to stage 'i+1', his/her language acquisition will occur automatically. Under bilingual education circumstances, students are likely to receive input that is more demanding than that of the classes instructed in L1. Last but not least is the affective filter hypothesis. Attitudinal factors are related to the second language acquisition in the sense that the more motivated, confident and relaxed the student is, the lower the 'affective filter' is. And only if the filter is low enough, can the comprehensive input be in-taken to be acquired.

3.3. Criticisms of bilingual education

In the field of bilingual education, many programmes are still off-standard for problems within them are noticeable for their existence. Generally as is the case of many countries, both English-speaking and those with other languages as mother tongues, bilingual education too often falls

as a rushed product of political, economic and social forces. This, according to Brisk[18], presumably leads to the students' and teachers' negative attitudes towards the programme, because both sides of the participants in the educational activities are not ready yet. Critically, these research highlight gaps and limits while they advance our understanding of bilingualism.

4. Nonnative speaker English teachers as a controversial role

It is estimated that about 80% of the English teachers worldwide are non-native speakers (NNS) Braine[19]. Despite the large proportion NNS teachers take up, they are more often than not placed in an awkward position when compared with native speaker (NS) teachers. As non-native speakers of the target language, the NNS teachers are commonly treated as what Rajagopalan calls 'second class citizens' in the world of English teaching. Braine also points out an ironic phenomenon where language program administrators in East Asia tend to 'prefer unqualified NS of English instead of qualified local teachers'[19][29].

This typical discrimination derives from the general vision of the disadvantages of the NNS as English teachers. The term 'nonnative' carries with it the burden of being the minority. NNS English teachers may lack proficiency in English, which is nonetheless one of their NS counterparts' biggest advantages. The most difficult part, according to Jenkins, appears to be pronunciation. Specifically, it is accent that causes the NNS English teachers the loss of confidence and the feeling of being inferior to their NS colleagues[20]. Another shortcoming is the NNS English teachers' lack of innovation and creativity in the classroom. As Samimy and Brutt-Grifflerargue, NNS English teachers rely too much on textbook; and comparing to the use of English, their excessive use of L1 demotivates students[21]. This serves as another reason for the students' negative perspectives towards NNS English Teachers[19].

However, NNS English teachers have their own strengths. According to Samimy and Brutt-Griffler, NNS teachers are more sensitive to the students' needs and have a deeper understanding of the English language[21]. Since local teachers share similar linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds with their students, they show more empathy than NS English teachers to the students and are more likely to build better relationship with students. Plus, according to Davies, an L2 speaker can become an almost native speaker of the target language with sufficient contact and practice[22].

Before giving critical analysis to this phenomenon, Kachru's classification of the spread of English should be introduced. In his 'Three Circle Model', Kachru categorises English speakers around the globe into three circles (the 'Inner', 'Outer' and 'Expanded' Circles)[23]. Each of these circles contains larger amount of speakers worldwide. Therefore, Kachruargues that in different non-Western (referred as 'non-native' before) societal contexts, especially multilingual societies, 'the dichotomy between native and NNS of English is functional uninsightful and linguistically questionalble'[23][28].

In order to get rid of the limitation of the terms 'native' and 'non-native', linguists propose several different pairs of alternatives. Leung et al. suggest using 'expert' and 'non-expert' to describe fluent and less fluent speakers[24]. It is true that expertise has advantages over nativeness in that it is learned and partial. Yet Jenkins argues that the term 'non-expert' imposes something of the value judgement of 'non-native'[20]. Therefore, she proposes 'monolingual English speakers' (MES), 'bilingual English speakers' (BES) and 'non-bilingual English speakers' (NBES) instead. Although the line between bilingual and non-bilingual is still kind of vague here, Jenkins's proposal is much more favourable than the former terms; because it completely breaks free from discrimination against the 'nonnative' speaker English teachers.

Although in the predictable near future, the distinction between 'native' and 'nonnative' speaker English teachers is still there to exist, these controversial roles have brought about several implications for language education. To begin with, the enhancement of NNS teachers' English proficiency is needed. Bachman defines language proficiency as 'knowledge, competence, or ability in the use of a language, irrespective of how, where or under what conditions it has been acquired'[27]. Despite the fact that some terms are yet to be further defined in this definition, this definition makes it clear that both NNS and NS English teachers are able to reach a certain level of proficiency. Another perspective, on which the administrators should put more efforts, is to improve the collaboration NNS English teachers with NS English teachers. NNS teachers have to lift themselves from low self-esteem and stop looking up to their NS colleagues. NNS and NS English teachers have their own advantages respectively. What should be taken into consideration is how to integrate these merits and delivery better educational results, rather than discriminating one or seeing another as a threat.

As is argued by Braine, China provides researchers with the most vivid examples of discrimination in the employment of NNS English teachers[19]. Ever since China's entry to the WTO at the turning of the 21st century, there has been a 'yingwen re', translated as 'English fever' climbing up through the country [19]. Together with the rapidly growing number of English learners, there comes the 'native speaker fallacy'. Private language schools obviously prefer speakers from the inner circle countries; to some extent, teachers are even unreasonably judged only by their images.

5. Balancing Bilingual Education: Challenges and Solutions in a Chinese College Curriculum

The context that is going to be discussed here is based on a Chinese Medical College in the southwest area with a 'bilingual education' curriculum going on. There are 62 students aging between 18-20 years who are asked to answer a monthly anonymous feedback questionnaire on the bilingual curriculum.The students are selected randomly by the campus posters. Aiming at developing the students' English ability and filling them with biliteracy, the school employs NNS Medical teachers with a certain level of English. English is used as the only medium of instruction in these bilingual science classes. At the same time, NS teachers are also hired as Spoken English course teachers. The income of the NNS and NS teachers varies greatly.

As it is a curriculum new to both the NNS teachers and the students, the students feel quite excited about both the bilingual Medical classes and the oral English classes at the beginning. However, after several weeks, according to the result of the questionnaire, differences come to their appearance: the approval ratings for the medical classes drop rapidly. First, although class contents are not necessarily the same, the teaching style of the NNS and the NS teachers are completely different. While the Chinese teachers tend to stick to the textbook and the planned exercises, the American teachers lead the class with much more flexibility; sometimes they lay the textbooks aside and just keep it spontaneous. Another thing the students complain most about is the NNS teachers' accent and their Chinese English. This phenomenon agrees with the literature earlier discussed in the present paper[19][21]. What is unexpected is at the end of the semester, as Figure 1. demonstrates, the local teachers get back much support. This dramatic change might be related to the Chinese college students' learning habits. Driven predominantly by the urge for high marks and eager to follow a clear path to their future studies, the students gradually feel insecure about the NS English teachers' teaching methods.
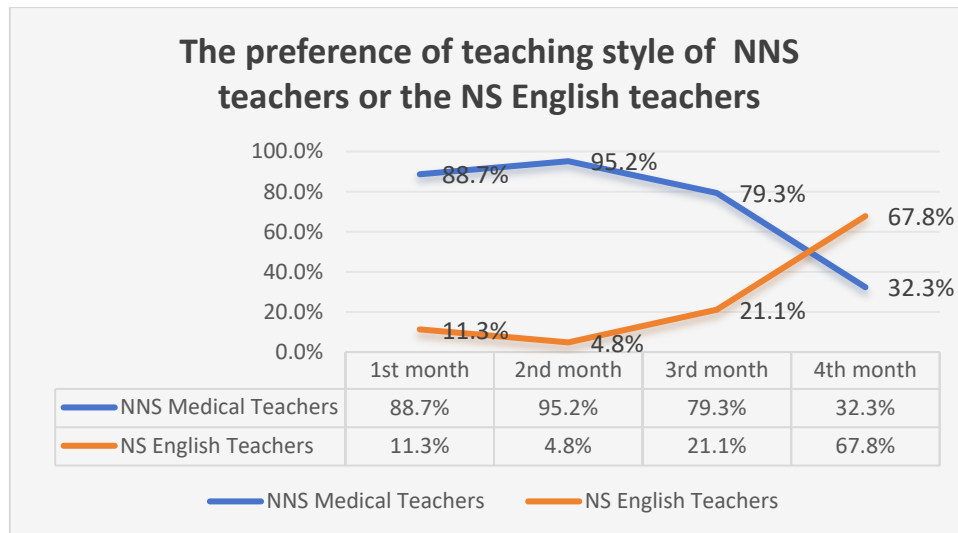

	1st month	2nd month	3rd month	4th month
NNS Medical Teachers	88.7%	95.2%	79.3%	32.3%
NS English Teachers	11.3%	4.8%	21.1%	67.8%

Figure 1. The preference of teaching style between the NNS Medical teachers or the NS English teachers

In this context, besides undoubtedly operating teacher training sessions for the NNS teachers to enhance both their English language proficiency and their teaching styles, it is also reasonable to suggest the NNS teachers to make good use of their opportunity to discuss teaching methodology and lesson plans with their NS colleagues. The concept of 'team teaching'can be adopted to achieve effective educational results[25]. The NS teachers can help search for more authentic and interesting materials for the science lessons, while the NNS teacher are helpful to ensure that the oral lessons flow smoothly without any student being left out because of their shyness.

6. Critical analysis on China's English-Chinese bilingual education

6.1. The English-Chinese bilingual education context

Unlike in many cases where 'bilingual education' refers to the education of the dominant language for the minority communities in a host country[15][18] the present context comprises the joint use of two majority languages[15][18]. In 2001, when the Ministry of Education (MoE) gave recommendations in its official document regarding on bilingual education in higher educational institutions (MoE, 2001), many secondary schools across China responded rapidly to the call. Since then, bilingual education has been a popular educational slogan to attract students. The target school in the present paper is among the secondary schools who try to take English-Chinese bilingual education as a rationale of the curriculum.

In this programme, compulsory courses are taught both in Chinese and in English. The English textbook is compiled by the school to match the organisation of Chinese textbooks. What is unique of the methodology of the bilingual education in this programme is that the teachers take up two even and sequence sessions of class time to teach the same content in Chinese and English respectively. During each session, solely Chinese or English is used without any combination. Although considerably time-consuming, this approach makes the class content much easier for the students to comprehend. Thus, with reasonably lowered difficulty, the students' attitude towards the relatively complex content is quite positive. This is consistent with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis[17].

6.2. Critics on the English-Chinese bilingual education

Together with the problem referred above, English-Chinese bilingual education has its own shortcomings. For one thing, the quality of the teaching materials is yet to be examined against an established standard. It is true that textbooks compiled by the school may fit in with the goal of passing the exams and can take the students into specific account. However, due to the shortage in time and qualified teachers, it is not practical for the schools to keep compiling textbooks. Nor will it be a good idea to directly adopt imported English original textbooks without selection. This material problem, together with the lack of high-quality specialised bilingual teachers, is related to Yu's observation of the present situation of the English-Chinese bilingual education. Yu argues that, despite marvelous achievements, English-Chinese bilingual education is still at an experimental stage[26]. Without a solid research basis, Yu sees it as just an 'administrative response' to political and economic needs. At the absence of adequate academic preparation, both administrators and teachers lack the knowledge of bilingual education. Consequently, the implementation of bilingual education is restricted. Last but not least, an influential unsolved problem is the lack of a constant stimulating English speaking environment. As bilingual education in majority languages, English-Chinese bilingual education is only available in bilingual classes, which carries with it not enough English input.

7. Future Development

For the Medical College being presently discussed, although it is a favourable touch in that instruction given in one language only each time, it would be advisable if the time in delivering the content be gradually reduced from two sessions to one session. And for the improvement of the overall circumstances of English-Chinese bilingual education, there is an urgent call for clearer definitions of specific goals and tasks for the instruction of different levels of education. Besides that, a team of high-quality specialised bilingual teachers are in need in order to carry out successful bilingual education in China. On top of that, as with the lack of input, multimedia should be better made use of in order to cover the students' time at school with English input as fully as possible.

8. Conclusion

Discussions on bilingual education, nonnative speaker English teachers, motivation, and second language acquisition theories have shed light on educational issues. As evidenced by the diverse perspectives and scholarly debates presented in this study, bilingual education is a critical factor in the promotion of interethnic solidarity, the enhancement of student performance, and the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity. The critical analysis of nonnative speaker English teachers has emphasized the significance of collaboration, training, and a supportive environment in enhancing their

teaching effectiveness, highlighting both their strengths and areas for refinement.

As suggested in this study, the bilingual programs are advised to prioritize teacher training, establish clear bilingual education objectives, and establish inclusive learning environments to resolve the issues identified in this study. In order to advance bilingual education and promote language variety in educational settings, it is crucial to connect theoretical frameworks with actual applications.

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