

# CHINGLISH AS A DEVELOPING ELF VARIATION From globalizing perspectives to glocalizing tendencies

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**Abstract** – Since China has emerged first as a global manufacturing hub and gradually as an economic power, Chinese people have adopted English as a lingua franca, namely Chinglish, in their intercultural interactions and transactions. Nevertheless, the investigation of the historical and social context in which Chinglish has evolved will show a controversial relationship of Chinese speakers with their ELF variation. Despite being widespread among users that interact with foreigners for socio-economic reasons, Chinglish is generally considered by political power and Chinese governmental representatives as a primitive and backward language, to be deleted and replaced with a more pure Standard English. In this conflicting perspective, the paper will explore how some pragmatolinguistic elements, derived from L1 cognitive schemata, regularly affect the texts spoken and written by Chinese speakers in English. Hence, a number of case studies will illustrate the extent to which Chinese native speakers – acting as ELF users and interacting within a global communicative setting – promptly activate native lexico-grammatical processes, consciously appropriate English language, creatively manipulate it to fulfill pragmatic needs, and, in the meanwhile, preserve L1 cognitive, semantic, rhetorical and socio-cultural dimensions. This would provide further insight not only into the current debate about World Englishes, but also into the challenging and ongoing shaping of intercultural communication in China where innovation and global attitudes constantly conflict with tradition and cultural resistance.

**Keywords:** Chinglish; ELF variations; World Englishes; linguistic transfers; intercultural communication.

## 1. Research context and rationale<sup>1</sup>

In the context of World Englishes (Kachru 1992), Chinglish (or ‘China English’, as suggested by Li 1993 and Fang 2011)<sup>2</sup> – namely the English variation used by Chinese speakers worldwide – can be considered of fundamental importance either in the sphere of the world migration, and in linguistic terms, since it may be classified as a viable English variation thanks to the huge demographic potential of its speakers. Actually, Chinglish is the ‘lingua franca’ spoken worldwide by Chinese people and actually represents a blend of English and Chinese words and pragmatolinguistic structures aimed at ‘mutual intelligibility’ among its speakers.

As a result, this paper aims to assess the degree of evolution and acceptance of Chinglish in today cross-cultural interactions involving Chinese people and NNSs, by means of (i) a socio-cultural background, framing actual Chinglish political and social

<sup>1</sup> While both authors are responsible for the design of this study and for the sections 4 and 5, and have co-revised the paper, Silvia Sperti is responsible for sections 1 and 6, and Anna De Siena for sections 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fang 2011, actually, suggests distinguishing “China English from Chinglish by claiming that China English, free from mother tongue’s negative interference, is shaped by combining the core linguistic norms of Inner-Circle Englishes and Chinese cultural elements that participate in communication by means of phonetic translation, borrowing and meaning reproduction” (Fang 2011, p. 379, citing Li 1993, p. 19).

approval, as well as its role in the weak equilibrium between tradition and modernity within China and in the international political and economic balance of power, threatened by the standing out of the Asian giant (considered that Chinese GDP has become in only one decade the second in the world and China today represents undoubtedly a global economic power); and (ii) a pragmatolinguistic analysis of a corpus of ELF productions involving Chinglish in a varied textual scenario, moving from public signs to academic specialized discourse, in order to identify the main unconventional linguistic features, derived from Chinese (i.e. transfers from L1) that may be considered as steady and effective native influences onto the use of ‘English as lingua franca’ by Chinese speakers at any level of language competence.

## 2. Theoretical background

Chinglish, in Chinese “Zhōngshì Yīngyǔ” - 中式英语 (lit. ‘Chinese-style English’), is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as “*a blend of Chinese and English, in particular a variety of English used by speakers of Chinese, incorporating some Chinese vocabulary or constructions*”.<sup>3</sup>

In the last decades, there has been an intense controversy going on between scholars who support the idea of Chinglish as an effective English variation “permeating the local use of English” (Li 1993, p. 379), and governmental actions against the use of English and ELF (‘English as a Lingua Franca’), which are to be banned as considered backward and degrading for China in front of the world.

Anyway, the considerable amount of divergences from the standard norms of English that characterize Chinglish are the main subject for discussion among scholars, since they can easily create confusion and incomprehension on various linguistic levels (e.g. on the *lexical* level, Chinglish employs expressions that may result unintelligible or imprecise to the non-native receivers; on the *syntactic* level, Chinese construction of sentences may lead to a lack of textual cohesion/coherence; on the *discourse* level, miscommunication may also arise from the culture-specific manner in which ideas and concepts are presented).

With the exception of Hong Kong that remained a British colony up to 1997 and still keeps two official languages, namely Cantonese and English, in mainland China, English has never been an official language. That is why Chinglish cannot be seen as the localization of a former colonizers’ language – like it happens e.g. in many African countries – but it started to be studied and used to communicate with people outside China as a business, as a global lingua franca, since the country opened up to the external world, after Deng Xiaoping laid the foundations of those economic reforms that would have made the country a worldwide economic superpower. As a consequence, Chinese adopted English in their international communications since, actually, Mandarin Chinese is a too complex and elitist language to be easily learned and spoken by foreigners.

‘Chinglish’ means to various authors in China “a misshapen English or a deformed language phenomenon” (Basciano 2013, p. 36, quoting, e.g., Li 1993; Pinkham 2000, Wan 2005), and this is how it was considered by Chinese government during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai Expo when thousands of language policemen

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>

raked Beijing or Shanghai on a mission to clear all traces of bad English signage before the beginning of the events.

Indeed, the decision of Chinese government had either an open practical scope, i.e. a precaution against misunderstandings by foreign visitors, and a kind of nationalistic preventive measure being the government afraid of appearing ridiculous in the eyes of the external world.

The explicit interpretation of Chinglish as a barrier to understanding (a communicative issue) overshadowed the implicit negative valuation of its speakers (a symbolic issue), and the extension of this evaluation to the social group and nation as a whole. Henry (2010) claims in this regard:

The anxieties of modernity in China and the question of whether a person can be both properly Asian and properly modern at the same time are thus enacted through the issue of foreign languages and their proper use in context. (Henry 2010, p. 670)

and:

Chinglish acts, within the Chinese English speech community, as a sorting mechanism of inclusion or exclusion where those who can participate in China's globalizing project (the educated, the urban, the cosmopolitan) are separated from those who cannot (the poor, the rural, the backward). (Henry 2010, p. 686)

On the other hand, in latest years, number of articles puzzling the uncertain future of standard English have been published with titles like: *China has more English speakers than the US* (Politifact, 19 August 2011), *Chinese free-form adoption of English is happily leading an alternative lifestyle without us* (Boing Boing, 8 July 2008; Bamboo Nation, 31 July 2008) and *English is evolving into a language even native speakers no longer understand* (Wired, 23 June 2008). In the latter, after mentioning few examples of Chinglish “signs”, the author comments: “*But what if these sentences aren't really bad English? What if they are evidence that the English language is happily leading an alternative lifestyle without us?*”

The journalistic interest in Chinglish linguistic phenomenon confirms the fact that China is emerging as a new politico-economic world power and its population is extremely dense if compared to Western countries, and sometimes, like in the above-cited articles, it seems that Chinglish is threatening not only the purity of English but the global hegemony of the English language (Li 2016).

At the same time, from an economic-political perspective, Henry (2010) claims:

Even as China's growing economy gobbles up American investment opportunities, Chinglish underwrites a racialized perception of the Chinese English language user, doomed to never participate as equal partner in a new global milieu. Experiencing Chinglish as humor projects the perceived linguistic lack of the speaker back on to other dimensions of intersubjective engagement, such that China can be safely portrayed as an undeserving global power as well as an easy market for international manufacturing or marketing. (Henry 2010, p. 686)

A recent case of this international economic struggle, hidden under the groundless mockery of Chinese people who speak “Chinese-style” English, is that of Lei Jun, founder and CEO of the Chinese mobile phone giant Xiao Mi, also known as the “Chinese Apple”.

During the launch of a new product in Delhi on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2015, he was laughed at for his short speech in English in a heavy Chinese accent, although there was not any “awkward” content in his words, which were simply limited to:

“Hellou. How are you? Indian ‘Mi’ funs, I’m very happy to be in China... In India. Do you nike MI 4? Do you nike Mi Band? ... ok, we have a gift for everyone. We will give everyone a free Mi Band. Are you ok? Are you ok? Sank you. Sank you ...”

The video of the event<sup>4</sup> became viral within hours and it was commented by prestigious Anglophone media, like BBC<sup>5</sup> and Wall Street Journal, which on April 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 titled: *Are you ok? Xaomi CEO’s awkward English goes viral, sparks debate.*<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Fang (2011, p. 379) interestingly claims: “with Chinese culture and traditions growing more and more popular in the world, Chinese English speakers will too be gaining the power of discourse in intercultural communication, because they are no longer passive culture receivers but culture disseminators”.

To conclude, as the previous research background briefly outlines, scientific debate and divergent perspective about Chinglish and China English may be rightly considered within the wider and extensive discussion taking place around World Englishes and the ongoing struggle between glocalization and localization of ELF and the destiny of Standard English (Crystal 1997; Widdowson 1997).

### 3. Research fieldwork: Chinglish on the Internet

If one launches a Google search about “Chinglish”, Google will show more than 570.000 results which include blogs, books, YouTube buzzing videos, Pinterest photos, Facebook pages, travelers’ private photo collections, specialized web pages, academic essays, interviews to specialists.

The main subject of these web pages is the English variation employed in a series of textual productions: official notices, restaurant menus, instruction manuals, books, magazines, newspapers, on line dictionaries – often filled with amusing mistranslations that usually leave non-Chinese speakers completely confused, unable to interpret the original meaning of the message.

On the other hand, a typical and well-known fieldwork to observe Chinglish is that of public signs. The essential part of all these multimodal messages – which often associate words to images – consists of the Chinese script that is addressed to domestic people and whose meaning is very clear, while the English (or better the Chinglish) translation is intended as a courtesy in a lingua franca towards foreign visitors that cannot read Chinese characters.

It could be inferred that China’s globalization has occurred so fast that Chinese people were not yet prepared to give importance to the adoption of a lingua franca within China. Nonetheless, Radtke (2007, pp. 10-12) suggests some other possible reasons to answer the question:

First of all, it is not the case that nobody speaks English in China. Not only there are many foreigners in China that could make or check the translations, but there are also many Chinese graduates with excellent languages skills, and many of them studied abroad. However, those fluent in English do not work as translators, often considered as a side job...

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKT-169biQw>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-32510814>

<sup>6</sup> <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/04/28/are-you-ok-xiaomi-ceos-awkward-english-goes-viral-sparks-debate/>

Another reason could be that English is sometimes used as a “decoration”: it can make something look foreigner, exotic, cool, different, thus a sign with characters and something resembling English just does the trick.

That could really be the case of some Chinglish scripts, e.g. printings on t-shirts and shops’ names that are a meaningless series of alphabetical letters put together to give the idea of English words.

Besides, on the Internet websites and blogs devoted to Chinglish are very common and popular, especially those presenting videos produced by Chinese young Internet users that are well mastered in English and posted on YouTube or YouKu, where they mock their compatriots speaking in Chinglish with heavy accent or by simply borrowing L1 grammar<sup>7</sup>.

In other words, inside and outside China, Chinglish is generally looked down by public opinion and ridiculed by the advocates of the purity of Standard English and Mr. Lei Jun’s aforementioned video is an example of this attitude.

Actually, it sparked a media civil war between the supporters of the choice of the Chinese managers: *“Even foreigners will try to be friendly with us by trying to speak in Chinese. What kind of thinking is that to say Lei has lost face by speaking in less-than-fluent English?”* wrote one user on Weibo, China’s Twitter-like microblogging service. Another said: *“To be honest, I laughed while watching the video. But Lei’s seriousness and humbleness are very impressive”* or *“Does Bill Gates speak fluent Mandarin? Is Mark Zuckerberg’s Mandarin pronunciation that accurate? It is valuable for these big bosses to try”*, and its opponents: *“Simply appalling!”* read one comment, while another said: *“His English is so bad that he shouldn’t have spoken in it at all”*.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Research objectives and case-study method

As a result of huge differences in language, history, religion, geographical position and socio-cultural customs, Chinese people developed specific cognitive ‘schemata’ (according to Guido’s (2008) definition) which are completely different from the Western ones – reserved and unassertive the former, straightforward and open the latter – that inevitably affect their cross-cultural communication and the text construction in their respective languages at any level.

In order to cope with such an animated intellectual debate (previously outlined) and show the common interferences between Chinese and English in ELF interactions it may be helpful to underline the main original structures of Chinese language that are transferred to Chinglish, making comparisons between native English and Chinglish forms, considering that the two languages are very different as for phonological system, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, semantics and writing system.

Therefore, the research objectives is the exploration of pragmalinguistic processes activated by Chinese native speakers acting as ELF users and interacting within a global communicative setting where English is creatively appropriated and mutually manipulated by non-natives in order to fulfill pragmatic needs, and, in the meanwhile, preserve L1

<sup>7</sup> For example: “Why Chinese people cannot speak English authentically.mp4” by Stefan Xu, 2011: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwodzJ0n6MY>, and “How Chinese people speak Chinglish” by Yang Jeremy, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw\\_Un0lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw_Un0lk).

<sup>8</sup> All quotes from <http://www.bbc.com>, April 30th 2015.

cognitive, semantic and socio-cultural dimensions recognizable in (i) articulatory and suprasegmental realizations; (ii) morpho-syntactic adaptations, (iii) textual attitudes, and (iv) visual and multimodal products.

#### 4.1. Phonology and suprasegmental features

It is difficult to define a unique accent for the English spoken by Chinese people, because the vastness of China's territory gives rise to a huge variety of dialects, with different accents and phonological features, which characterize Mandarin (Putonghua), the official Chinese lingua franca.

Nevertheless, being all Chinese varieties monosyllabic languages written in characters, Chinglish speakers have the tendency of syllabing more than for stressing timing (Kirkpatrick, Xu 2002) and to pronounce the English words as they were written in characters, like for example: 'First' '佛斯特fo<sup>2</sup>-si<sup>1</sup>-te<sup>4</sup>', 'yes' 爷死ye<sup>2</sup>.si<sup>3</sup>', 'right' 赖 lai<sup>4</sup>.

As for articulatory aspects, another feature of Chinglish speakers is that they change the vowels of the words into more acquainted ones: e.g., 'sorry' sometimes is pronounced 'sorr(a)'; 'y' and 'i' become 'ae', like in 'sorrae' and 'f(ae)sh; miss' = 'm(ee)ss';<sup>9</sup> 'n' is often used instead of 'l', e.g. "Do you n<sup>ike</sup> Mi band?"<sup>10</sup> (cfr. Mr. Lei Jun speech in Dheli).

Moreover, the lack of certain English phonemes in Chinese, such as [ð] and [θ], leads Chinese to replace them with the more familiar [z] and [s], that is why they pronounce 'mo[z]er' instead of 'mo[ð]er', 'some[s]ing' instead of 'some[θ]ing', '[s]ank you' instead of '[θ]ank you'<sup>11</sup>, and '[s]rough' instead of '[θ]through' (Henry 2010).

#### 4.2. Morpho-syntactic interferences and transfers

The main L1 syntactic transfers onto Chinglish variation are due to the 'simplicity' of Chinese grammar: verbs are not conjugated, tense is expressed by time particles or by sentence subordination. For example, a word for word translation of a Chinese time clause meaning:

- (1) "When I was in China, I made friends with many Chinese people".

would be:

- (2) "I (subj) + to be (inf. verb) + in China (prep.+noun) + when (time adv.) + I (subj.) + with (prep.) many (adj.) + Chinese person (noun, sing.) + to link (inf. verb) + friend" (noun, sing.).

The consequence of this translation process is that when Chinese people speak in English, they often use present tense for past events.

Moreover, in Chinese grammar, the gender of personal pronouns (masculine, feminine and neutral) is expressed only for the characters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, but as they are all read in the same way, i.e. "ta", Chinese people usually make gender mistakes when they speak or write in English.

<sup>9</sup> "How Chinese people speak Chinglish" by Yang Jeremy, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw\\_Un0lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw_Un0lk)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKT-169biQw>

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, '[s]ank you' in Chinese social media is often written '3q', because 3 in Chinese is read [san].

Conjunctions and punctuations were introduced in China just at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but even today they are seldom used.

On the other hand, there are typical Chinese grammar forms and structures that do not exist in English and that are transferred from L1 to Chinglish, as shown in Table 1.

Chinglish	Chinese	Standard English
How to say?	你(you) 怎么(how) 说(say)	How do you say that?
I very like	我(I) 挺 (very)喜欢的(like)	I like it very much
I want to play with you	我(I)想(think, would like)跟(with) 你(you) 混在(mix) 一起(together)	I want to hang out with you
I eat already	我(I) 吃(eat) 过(particle indicating past actions)	I already ate
I go already	我去过	I already went
I have met him	我见过她	I met her
Good good study, day day up!	好(good, well) 好(good, well)学习(study), 天(day)向上(up)!	Study hard and every day you will improve!

Table 1  
Typical Chinglish grammar variations.<sup>12</sup>

The last sentence is a communist slogan that – until some years ago – was usually painted with red Chinese characters on the wall next to the school entrances. When the number of foreigners living or visiting China started to increase, the Chinglish word-by-word translation started to appear next to the Chinese characters. In this slogan, there are elements that are unique to Chinese grammar, e. g. the repetition of the attributive verb, i.e. “good” or “well”, here used as a verbal determinant, to emphasize its meaning (the meaning of “good, good” is “very well”).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.3. Chinese textual features and Chinglish

English text structures follow a linear form: they begin with a sentence introducing the main topic which eventually is followed by other sentences, logically connected, stating the sub-topics. For example:

(3) “yesterday I went to the seaside, because it was a sunny day”.

sets first the main clause, followed by the causal subordinate. This pattern also exists in modern Chinese because it was adopted by the “May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement” (1919) writers with the aim of translating European literature works; anyway, it is the traditional schema that is still massively used by contemporary Chinese. In this textual structure, word order is less flexible than in English and in concessive, conditional and cause-effect clauses, the subordinate precedes the main clause; parataxis is preferred to hypotaxis, which, instead, characterizes English language, “because [in traditional Chinese] explicit connectors were not necessary to show the relationship between the clauses” (Kirkpatrick, Xu 2002, p. 272), so the sentence above would have been:

<sup>12</sup> Source: “How Chinese people speak Chinglish” by Yang Jeremy, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw\\_Un0lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEBGw_Un0lk)

<sup>13</sup> The grammar nomenclature is quoted from Abbiati (1985) and translated into English.

(4) “yesterday it was a sunny day, I went to the seaside”.

Besides, in Chinglish the theme of discourse is not stated in a direct manner but in a circuitous way. Some scholars date it back to 15<sup>th</sup> century “Baguwen” (八股文) - “Eight-legged Essay”, which was a style of essay writing required to pass the imperial examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Actually, candidates to these exams had to respect the Confucian etiquette and never state their personal opinion in a direct way but in a roundabout way (Xu 1992, cited by Li 2015).

It is interesting to notice that textual ‘schemata’ differently characterizing native varieties of English and Chinese are the projection of the socio-cultural and cognitive schemata affecting the speech community they belong to: the Chinese cognitive processes mainly produce understanding, parataxis and topic-prominent texts, while the Western analytic thought leads to reasoning, hypotaxis and subject-prominent texts.

The Chinglish text that follows – which is an extract of a business email dated September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 and written by an export manager of a Chinese company – comprehensively shows how L1 cognitive structures affect the speaker’s use of English as a Lingua Franca and his textual cohesion:

Since the structure line (the shoe model) is different between the two samples you got. The material of the final sample is different with the previous one.

Therefore we have to re-prepare the raw material and re-start the production.

The same structure can be seen in a high percentage of texts written or spoken by Chinese people (and Asian in general) regardless of their educational level.

#### **4.4. Multimodal and visual transfers**

It is also possible that Chinglish texts hide semiotic contents transferred by L1, as for example the Dragon and the Fenix as symbol of harmony between male and female in the marriage decoration advertisements, like the one in Figure 1:



Figure 1

Source:

<http://www.chinacart.com/d.asp?a=Dragon+Phoenix+Xi+Chinese+Wedding+Background+Decoration+Complete+Set&d=17707>.

The dragon in Western culture symbolizes the devil (Saint George and the dragon or the Archangel Michael that kills the dragon), because of the influence of the Hebrew-



Christian tradition, while the Fenix is symbol of death and resurrection:

Chinese people consider dragon is a mascot to China while foreigners think it is a monster with four legs and represents evil. Hence, ‘give birth to a twin’, it should not be translated into ‘a baby dragon and a baby phoenix’, instead of it, the right translation is ‘pigeon pair’. (Zhang 2016, p. 902)

Other examples are a couple of expressions usually employed by Chinese native speakers in Chinglish intercultural conversations like:

(5) “He was trying to clean my shoes”.

or

(6) “He is a small potato”.

where the former expression means: ‘He was trying to flatter me’ and actually the scene of cleaning the shoes with the hands, when asking for favors, is often seen in Chinese films. Instead, the latter means ‘he is not an important person, he is not a person with power’ probably because potatoes are tubers and grow under the ground.

On the other hand, public signs imply semiotic meaning that a foreigner may not interpret without considering the Chinese social-historical background. For instance, the signs in Figure 2 and 3 both communicate the same message in a clear way for Chinese people but less for international English speakers.

Figure 2 is completely incomprehensible, because it is composed by a written part, awkwardly translated, which is the main conveying means of the message and the graphic image that in this case is ancillary to the wording:



Figure 2  
“Don’t stampede” from “The Man in China Archive, July and August of 2011” -  
Picture of Chinglish sign in a restaurant bathroom.

Figure 3 is more intelligible because the message is conveyed by two pictures illustrating what the receiver can do and what he/she cannot do:



Figure 3

“Don’t stampede Chinglish Sign” - Picture from Blog’s eko-pambarep-9\_11\_2013.

In reality, even if the message is more or less delivered to the receiver, international English-speakers who are not acquainted with Chinese habits, in both cases cannot understand the reason why this strange sign is hung on the doors or walls of the public toilets. In fact, it only gets a sense if one knows that in China, when they go to toilet, many women stand with their feet on the toilet seat, instead of sitting on it, because they are used to squat toilets.

Moreover, the website <http://store.english.com/products/dont-stampede-t-shirt>, which is the eCommerce page of English.com for t-shirts with the printed Chinglish sign “don’t stampede”, offers the confirmation that this sign sense is of difficult decoding.

Next to the t-shirt picture, actually, it is stated:

(7) “The ‘Don’t Stampede’ sign’s original intent is, well, we don’t exactly know...”

while Chinese characters say: "Please don't tread on/step on (the toilet seat)".

As we said, the difficulty in interpreting the signage is also due to the selection of the English word “stampede” that signify something different from the sign’s original message, as confirmed by the Oxford English Dictionary:

**VERB:**

- 1 (of horses, cattle, or other animals) rush wildly in a sudden mass panic.
- 1.1 [no object, with adverbial of direction] (of people) move rapidly in a mass.
- 1.2 [with object] Cause (people or animals) to stampede.

This example is emblematic of another feature of Chinglish that is the use of rare or unconventional, sometimes misleading English words that obviously are the obstacle in the successful conveyance of text meaning.

## 5. Case-study method and analysis

The main objective of the analysis reported in this paper is to detect and assess the nature of cross-cultural linguistic transfers currently occurring within the frame of spoken, written, and multimodal interactions among native and non-native speakers belonging both to Western communities and to non-Western ones. More precisely, by means of a corpus-based ethnographic analysis, data may show the degree of appropriateness and ELF ‘mutual intelligibility’ (House 1999) acting among aware users of Chinglish, namely Chinese native speakers at any level of linguistic competence.

In other words, in order to reveal common and diffused intercultural practices among ELF interactants, a multifaceted corpus of data has been selected, thus accounting for Chinglish appropriateness of standard forms and structures retextualized through ELF creative and accommodation strategies occurring at the level of (1) spoken discourse, i.e. the intercultural exchange between a Chinese worker and his British superior; (2) formal written discourse, i.e. a letter sent to an Italian consultant by a Chinese manager for an export company; (3) specialized academic discourse, i.e. two extracts (i) from Zhang Linping's essay about Chinese-English Translation, and (ii) from Pinkham's guide to Chinglish; and (4) visual and multimodal discourse: i.e. a series of common Chinglish public signs.

It is important to stress that the following analysis is aimed at considering the cognitive mechanisms underlying those "unconventionalities" to Standard English rules which here are highlighted with the purpose of illustrating that what is generally considered a deviance by the supporters of the ethnocentric conception of Standard English are instead well-established and mutually accepted norms in ELF spoken, written and multimodal interactions in China. The ultimate aim of the analysis is also to show how these "unconventionalities" are strictly related to the Chinese people's own cognitive, pragmalinguistic and socio-cultural 'schemata' that inevitably mold their ELF variation.

### 5.1. Case study 1: Chinglish Spoken Discourse

The first case study has been selected from Li Yusheng<sup>14</sup> to illustrate the so-called Chinese spiral-like schema, which characterize Chinglish spoken discourse (Li 2015). It is included in this corpus because it shows clearly ELF interferences in cognitive schemata and pragmalinguistic realizations in a brief exchange between a Chinese police officer and his British superior, in a professional context characterized by status and power asymmetries:

(A= policeman, B= British superior)

- (1) A: *Sir?*
- (2) B: *Yes, what is it?*
- (3) A: *My mother is not very well, sir.*
- (4) B: *So?*
- (5) A: *She has to go into hospital, sir.*
- (6) B: *Well, go on with it. What do you want?*
- (7) A: *On Thursday, sir.*
- (8) B: *Bloody hell, man, what do you want?*
- (9) A: *Nothing, sir.*

In this dialogue, the Chinese policeman's request for a leave is submitted to the British superior in a very indirect way, according to what Li (2015) calls 'spiral-like text pattern' that characterizes written and spoken Chinglish texts and which can be represented as follows:

Reasons/justifications → Main topic/eventual requests

On the other hand, his superior teases him to say it straight, because British speakers, and Westerners in general, are used to make requests in the opposite way, according to the

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schema that Li (2015) called ‘linear text pattern’ that is typical of Standard English and may be summarized as follows:

Main topic/eventual requests → Reasons/justifications

The pragmatic perspective allows noticing that in the conversation the asymmetry of power is very evident: the Chinese subordinate is polite and respectful to the authority, because of the legacy of the Confucian respect to hierarchy and of the Daoist idea of ‘non-contention’. In fact, he ends up every sentence with “*Sir*”, keeps calm even when the British superior becomes more aggressive and rude (e.g. *go on with it, what do you want?, bloody hell*) and in the end, when he senses that the boss would not give him the permit to leave, he accepts the refusal without placing the direct request, in order to avoid contentions and embarrassing situations for both.

The cross-cultural exchange occurs in a situation of status and power asymmetry (Guido 2008), underlined by speakers’ different pragmalinguistic behaviours, between a Chinese subordinate in rank – whose English is an ELF variation influenced by his L1 cognitive and lingua-cultural patterns – and his British superior, hindering the successful interaction between them, and eventually the dialogue ends up to be a juxtaposition of two monologues.

Moreover, the use of ‘*into*’ in (5) can be seen as a L1 syntactic and lexical transfer, since in Chinese it would have been:

Chinese:

我Wǒ - 母亲mǔqīn - 要yào - 入rù - 医院yīyuàn

(I (poss.) – mother – will - enter, go into – hospital)

Instead, in Standard English it would have been: ‘My mother has to be hospitalized’ or ‘My mother has to go to hospital’.

## 5.2. Case study 2: Chinglish Formal Letter

The second case study has been selected from a corpus of formal emails received and collected by an Italian business consultant. The following letter has been sent by an export manager of a Chinese supplier on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016. She wrote it to inform about the delay in the scheduled shipment of some goods after that the first lot they had produced had been rejected.

The email text has been divided into sections and some ELF realizations have been underlined and reviewed in brackets:

<b>Salutation</b>	<i>Dear ****,</i>
<b>Facework</b> = the sender gives the receiver a positive image of herself, she shows that she is very active on the receiver’s requests.	<i>Please <u>kindly</u> find the <u>attached</u> (attachment), as you said you are interested in these items. <b>Thus</b>, we prepared these samples for you. <i>If you want (to) review (see, have a look at) them, please let us know and we will (soon) send them to you <del>soon</del>.</i></i>
<b>Reason/justification</b> = She tells the reasons why she cannot deliver the goods on time, although at this point she talks of 10-15 days delay in the shipment schedule.	<i>Secondly, I’m sorry to inform you that <del>the shipment</del> (the goods) <u>can’t be delivered as scheduled</u>. <del>#</del> (the shipment) will be delayed <del>for</del> (of) 10-15 days. <b>Since</b> the <u>structure line</u> (the shoe model) is (was) different between the two samples you got (received) (and since). The material of the final (last) sample <del>is</del> (was) different <del>with</del> (from) the previous one.</i>

	<i>Therefore we have to re-prepare the raw material and re-start the production.</i>
<b>Main topic</b> = the real information: the goods will be delivered 2 months later than the agreed date. Other justifications.	<i>Due to the Chinese National Holidays, our holiday will (+ be) from Oct. 1st to Oct. 7th. So, the shipment will be delayed. Shipping <u>window</u> (new shipping schedule) will be Oct. 20th-25th. Please understand. We also do not want to cause the shipment delay.</i>
<b>Salutation</b>	<i>Again, we apologize for any inconvenience we might have caused and look forward to <u>filling</u> (fulfill) your future orders in <u>timely manner</u> (in time?).</i>
<b>Sign off</b>	<i>Best Regards, ****</i>

As pointed out, the email follows a particular textual structure which is influenced by Chinese cognitive and cultural schemata.

In particular, the textual structure complies well with a schema that Kirkpatrick (1991) found very common in letters of this kind and that is composed by precise elements such as:

- Salutation
- Facework
- Reason/justification
- Main topic/eventual requests
- Salutation
- Sign off.

This email, therefore, reveals a series of elements of Chinese language that are common transfers in Chinglish texts: the adoption of inductive, spiral-like pattern, preference for parataxis, confusion in the declination of the verbs and lexicon transfers.

Considering the ‘facework’ section, the punctuation does not follow the standard English rules: even if the content of the first and second clauses is independent, the two sentences are connected by the comma (instead of being separated by the full stop), while the second and third sentences are de facto subordinate-main sentences, connected by ‘thus’ but separated by the full stop.

Other ELF features may be considered the excess of politeness by using contemporarily ‘please’ and ‘kindly’ and the usage of ‘attached’ (adj.) instead of ‘attachment’ (noun).

Finally, the ‘reason/justification’ part of the letter is quite confusing for a Western reader because of the wide use of parataxis and cohesion interferences throughout the paragraph succession (e.g. the use of conjunctions *thus*, *since*, *therefore*, *due to* seems inappropriate and incoherent).

### 5.3. Case study 3: Chinglish Specialized Discourse

The third case study has been included in the analysis since Chinglish has long fascinated and still fascinates native speakers of English and linguists, who study and observe its forms and uses struggling between blame and acceptance as a viable ELF variation. Nowadays a series of scholars involved in language teaching and education in China consider Chinglish as a linguistic variety, or at least, a product of the intercultural communication and exchange between competent and aware Chinese speakers and English natives. In this perspective, Chinglish could represent a challenging threat to

nationalism as well as an urgent need for modernization in a global context where China, with all its socio-political contradictions, will find its role sooner or later.

The following extract is drawn from an essay titled *Analysis of Chinglish in Chinese-English Translation*, written by Zhang Linping, Professor at Sanmenxia Polytechnic, in 2016. It has been included among the analyzed cases because, beyond the academic content of the article, the English variation used throughout the text shows distinctive and unavoidable Chinglish characteristics:

*“B. Try to use English thinking mode*

*Due to different religions, locations, history and social custom, when we translate Chinese ~~to~~ (into) English, if we do not use English thinking mode (pattern of thought), Chinglish will definitely be caused. As mentioned before, by getting in touch with English authentic material, we can form the English sense and know better about the mode of thinking of native speakers. Thus after that, we can easily use English mode of thinking as much as possible. If we need to express “the shop is not open ~~in~~ (on) weekend”, we should know native speakers like to give results first and reasons next, therefore we ought to translate it into “This shop is closed because of the weekend”.*

*What we need to pay attention to is that we should try not to (mechanically) translate the Chinese words one by one mechanically.” =(main topic at the end)*

The previous paragraph is linguistically interesting for two main reasons: (i) it shows that even academic papers and discourse, written in English, are influenced by native cognitive patterns and grammatical rules derived from Chinese language; (ii) for its content, i.e. the interesting contrast between the translation theory presented and discussed in the essay and the way he inadvertently failed to implement it.

Actually, throughout the text, he adopts the sentence structure ‘subordinate→main clause’ by postponing the main clauses at the end of the sentences and – as we can see from the bold highlighting – sentences are usually introduced by connectors like ‘thus’ or ‘therefore’, with the exception of the first sentence, whose subordinate clause is introduced by ‘due to’ (while in the previously analyzed letter (in case study 2), the informal connector ‘so’ appeared next to ‘thus’ and ‘therefore’, because of different formal tune).

The Anglo-American deductive text structure is so far away from Zhang’s cognitive schema that, in the last part of the text, he mentions the meaningful simple sentence “the shop is not open in (on) weekend” (grammar transfer in the preposition selection), and suggests to turn it into a complex causal sentence, where the subordinated should be introduced by the connector ‘because’, changing the preposition ‘in’ with the phrase ‘because of’: “This shop is closed because of the weekend.”

Zhang’s textual schema, in general, is structured according to the spiral-like (Li 2015) pattern; the author first states all the reasons/justifications and postpones the main topic to the end.

Furthermore, throughout the text there are Chinese wording and lexical transfers (the underlined expressions, such as e.g. *by getting in touch with, form the English sense, the mode of thinking*). This was further confirmed by the experiment of translating back the text into Chinese: the result in terms of wording, grammar and text structure was perfectly Chinese.

Another example of specialized discourse influenced by Chinglish patterns and features is that of “*The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish*” written by Joan Pinkham and published in 2000.

In this book the author systematically examines the common errors in written English committed by Chinese native speakers and gives a large number of examples collected from the “*Selected Works*” by Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping’s texts and important official documents translated into English, as well as articles from English newspapers and journals published in China.

Pinkham’s book “*The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish*” is a manual for Chinese-English translators, structured in chapters, each one dealing with a single category of linguistic accommodation strategies applied to Standard English by Chinese speakers. A theoretical introduction precedes the comparison of a series of examples of translations into Chinglish (here the term is used with derogatory and critical meaning), identified as ‘A’ in the text and followed by Pinkham’s revisions, identified as ‘B’.

The selected part belongs to the book section titled “*Unnecessary Nouns and Verbs*” where the author states “they [the nouns] are plainly redundant because their sense is already included or implied in some other element of the sentence...” (Pinkham 2000):

Other unnecessary nouns (or gerund) may be less easy to identify. Nevertheless, a little thought will reveal that they add nothing to the meaning of the sentence. When they are deleted the sense is not diminished, only clarified. Some examples:

A: following the realization of mechanization and electrification of agriculture

B: following the mechanization and electrification of agriculture

A: it is essential to strengthen the building of national defense

B: it is essential to strengthen of national defense

A: these constitute important conditions in striving for the fulfillment of the general task in the transitional period

B: these constitute important conditions for the fulfillment of the general task in the transitional period

Although Pinkham’s revised texts were in a very Standard English, in the translation process she neglects to preserve some terms and expressions that were particularly revealing for that historical period. In fact, what she considered redundant were terms like ‘*the realization of*’, ‘*the building of*’, ‘*in striving for*’ which represent the fundamental symbolism of the Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda.

From the 50s to the end of the 80s not only all the Chinese official books, press articles and writings in general were filled up with exactly these Chinese terminology, but they were also essential messages in the slogans painted in red on the public walls, on street billboards and they can still be read in the names of the cities’ streets – e.g. ‘建国门外大街- Jianguo Men Wai Dajie’ in Beijing (in English ‘Build the Country External Avenue’) – and even in the names of the Chinese people that were born in that age:

The period from 1950s to 1980s has been considered to be the ‘golden age’ of China’s political slogans. Because Communism was immature and fragile in new China’s early history, the Chinese government looked upon ideology as a great weapon in propaganda and public relations. The party put the introduction and cultivation of communist ideology as their first concern. Every day of the year, hundreds of political slogans were made to attain this aim. The Chinese communist pioneers felt they had a great responsibility to protect, spread, and develop communist ideology and Marxism against the aggression of western capitalistic powers. Meanwhile, they were also desperately hopeful to find the right way to develop a new communistic country with Chinese characteristics. Such enthusiasm is reflected clearly in that period’s political slogans (Fukunaga, Zhang 2007, p. 87):

Work hard, try the best and build the socialistic society in a prosperous, efficient, good and economic way (鼓足干劲, 力争上游, 多快好省的建设社会主义) (1950s)

Independence and hard work, build the country economically (独立自主, 自力更生, 艰苦奋斗, 勤俭建国) (1960s)

Seize the revolution, stimulate/fuel the production (抓革命, 促生产) (1970s)

All these terms had a political and historical implicit meaning and in that era they were almost symbols of the construction of new China. They were the terms used by the CCP to convince Chinese people that the Party was building the new country, that it was important to strive and support hardness and difficulties in that ‘transitional period’ to achieve common important results.

In this case, it is important to underline that the L1 influences onto the use of an ELF variation are not related to Chinese syntax or lexis, rather it implies underlying Chinese semantic and semiotic codes that, when related to specifically Chinese historical or political contexts, against the resulting ‘redundancy’, may express Chinese concepts in a more exhaustive way.

#### 5.4. Case study 4: Chinglish Public Signs

Chinese public signs may be considered the most evident and visible product of ELF accommodation strategies consciously occurred to enhance intercultural communication and the exchange of Chinese socio-cultural concepts and beliefs.

Therefore, the fourth case study represents a corpus of different public signs (e.g. menus, shop signboards, bills, and notices), actually placed in public spaces in China, as interesting matter for further analysis of L1 transfers to Chinese ELF variation, at the syntactic, morphological, cultural, semantic and pragmatic levels.

This linguistic peculiarity of Chinglish is indeed well-known and represents a widespread phenomenon and a topic of great attraction on the web for its hilarity.

Nonetheless, the English translation of Chinese texts in public signs aims at the effective intercultural communication since they are addressed to foreign people living or travelling in China that cannot read Chinese characters. Most of the time, considering Chinglish as a global language, the wording in these signs is neither grammatically incorrect nor nonsensical, it simply sounds unusual to native speakers.

Figure 4 is an example of Chinglish public sign: what in Standard English is usually expressed as “Caution, wet floor” or “Floor slippery when wet”, in China becomes:





Figure 4

Source: <https://it.pinterest.com/pin/447897125418516810/>.

There are also cases when the use of Chinglish in translation may result in an amusing outcome but “*sometimes it can misinform, be dangerous and even vulgar and offensive*” (Basciano 2013, p. 38).



Figure 5

Source: [www.nytimes.com/slideshow/.../20100503\\_CHINGLISH.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/.../20100503_CHINGLISH.html).

In Figure 5, for example, the English meaning is exactly the opposite of what the Chinese characters say but, curiously, the image clarifies it well. Here, the English translation of the Chinese characters was done by selecting the wrong English words and the message is conveyed by a linguistic divergence occurring at the multimodal level between verbal and non-verbal signs.

Almost all the features of Chinglish that we have analyzed till now, that is to say all interferences of Chinese grammar, morphology, semantics and semiotics can also be seen in a good number of English translation of public signs. In the following series of figures, retrieved from the Internet, signs have been divided according to the prevailing linguistic transfer and ELF features revealing the presence of an underlying cross-cultural construction of the meaning.

#### 5.4.1. Morpho-syntactic transfers

The Chinese writing in the sign of Figure 6 literary states: “please not lie-bed smoke”, which in standard English would be: ‘please don’t smoke in bed / no smoking in bed’:





Figure 6

Source: <https://it.pinterest.com/pin/215539532142544701/>.

Although there are no lexical errors in the English translation, from the syntactic point of view one can remark the omission of the preposition ‘*in*’, which makes the bed look like a direct object, and the inappropriate use of the article ‘*the*’ which very probably derives from the fact that in Chinese there are no articles.

The sign in Figure 7 is usually seen in taxis and in public transportation. The Chinese characters state: ‘please not forget take/have-with oneself articles/goods’, that is ‘please don’t forget to take your belongings with you’:



Figure 7

Source: <https://bramanswanderings.com/2014/09/23/a-couple-signs/>.

Besides the inappropriate use of the verb ‘*carry*’, instead of ‘take with oneself’, the singular object is another transfer from the Chinese language where plural does not exist.

ELF-adapted gerunds like ‘*no louding*’, ‘*no noising*’, ‘*no nearing*’, ‘*no photoing*’ are often found in Chinglish, especially in public signs (Simon-Kennedy 2012). Figure 8 is an example of this widespread phenomenon:



Figure 8

Source: <http://www.chineseenglish.com/2010/08/23/chinglish-polite-language-and-no-noising/>.

The literal translation of the Chinese in this sign that was located at Shanghai World Expo is: first line ‘civilization concept be rich rely on everybody’ – second line ‘talk be civilized no noisy’, which could be interpreted in this way: ‘speak politely in low voice, because politeness depends on everybody.’

This sign, in fact, besides displaying an approximate ‘free’ English translation, shows grammar ‘deviations’ in the construction of the negative imperative tense by using ‘no + -ing form’ and above all the -ing form of a noun, ‘noise’.

Another example of syntactic transfer is the sign in Figure 9 here below, where the Chinese characters state: ‘prohibited to climb’ while the awkward English translation might be the imperative form ‘no +...ing’ or ‘nothing at all’. Anyway, the message is an interesting instance of ELF deviation which, in this case, may lead to misinterpretation:



Figure 9

Source: <https://it.pinterest.com/rachelgj13/lost-in-translation/>.

The sign of Figure 10 in Chinese literally says: ‘small grass to have life, please foot-under show mercy’:



Figure 10

<http://theawesomedaily.com/40-chinese-signs-that-got-seriously-lost-in-translation/>.

The English message is an accommodated translation where the preposition ‘*unlike*’ is used with the meaning of the verb ‘dislike’. The ELF deviation is here generated by analogy with the ‘un-’ prefix that in English is commonly attached to Latin derivatives that end in suffixes such as ‘-ed’ and ‘-able’, resulting in adjectives such as ‘unfounded’, ‘unbelievable’ and to verbs denoting the opposite meaning or the reversal of an action or state, like ‘untie’, ‘unsettle’, ‘unlock’ (Basciano 2013).

#### 5.4.2. Socio-Cultural transfers

The sign in Figure 11 is also interesting from a socio-cultural perspective. It is representative of a kind of signs, which are very common in China and are devoted to the preservation of the environment or the protection of cultural heritage. These signs often consist of a visual construction of poetic and symbolic messages that tend to personify natural elements, often providing a reason for the prohibition (Simon-Kennedy 2012 and Basciano 2013). The pictures in Figure 11 are indicative of this phenomenon:



Figure 11

Source: <http://theawesomedaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/griDgWT.jpg>.

In this kind of signs, even when the English translation is grammatically correct and understandable, the accommodation strategy encloses an unusual meaning construction, which may sound uncommon and creative to foreign English speakers, who are used to colder neutral imperatives like “keep off the grass”, instead of notices rich in emotional content.

In Figure 11 the grass becomes an animated element of the nature and is described as tiny and fragile, almost like a cartoon character, by means of poetic adjectives and expressions (e.g. *tiny grass is dreaming*, *tender*, *fragrant*, *hardhearted*, *smiling*), in order to elicit tenderness in the foreigner reader and easily reach the target to prevent the grass

to be trampled.

The Chinese version is arranged like classical Chinese poems, which are full of natural images and usually divided in specular lines, paratactically linked and containing similar number of characters. The English translation follows the same structure: the two lines are separated and linked by parataxis.

In the sign reported in Figure 12 (retrieved in a public park) the writing on the stone is a piece of poetry in Chinese and in English:



Figure 12

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/franksplanet/3868172360>.

The poetic English version (see the use of metonymies like *flower and leaf*, and metaphors like *ray of enlightenment*) is a faithful translation of the Chinese, although in the original language there is no connector 'and' and there is no verb 'to be', like in classical Chinese. The real meaning is: 'it is forbidden to pick up flowers and tear the leaves from the trees'.

#### 5.4.3. Semantic transfers

It is also interesting to observe how mistranslation or adapted translation in public signs to reveal how verbatim translation sometimes fails to fully interpret the semiotic and the semantic content of particular Chinese terms or phrases, above all (but not only) in the names of Chinese traditional dishes:



Figure 13

Source: <http://www.yoyochinese.com/blog/learn-chinese-5-funny-chinglish-phrases-really-help-you>

The Chinese characters in Figure 13 literary mean:

- 农家 (nóng jiā): ‘farmhouse’ and in Chinese cuisine means ‘genuine’, ‘home-made style of cooking’;
- and
- 小炒 (xiǎo chǎo): the first character means ‘small’ but in this particular expression refers to ‘lightly fried’ food, fried for a short period of time, while the second character means ‘stir-fry’;
- 肉 (ròu) literally means ‘meat’ or ‘flesh’, but when used in menus, like here, when it is not specified the meat’s animal, it is often used simply to refer to pork, which is the most commonly eaten meat in China.

Therefore, it is evident that the English word by word translation of the name of this dish, which actually means ‘home-style lightly stir-fried pork’, even without considering the obvious lexical errors, does not succeed in properly expressing the original reference to meat/pork meat, small/lightly fried and genuine cooking.

In Figure 14, ‘whatever’ is the literal translation of a very commonly used Chinese expression (随便 - suí biàn) whose meaning is very close to the English ‘whatever you want’:

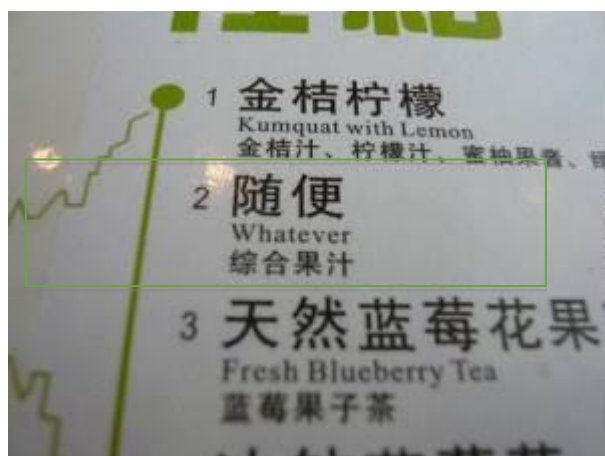


Figure 14

Source: <http://www.yoyochinese.com/blog/learn-chinese-5-funny-chinglish-phrases-really-help-you> (last access 21/10/2016).

However, in English, “whatever” sounds extremely informal (almost rude), and is something one would generally only say to friends and family. But 随便 (suí biàn) does not have this connotation and can also be used in more formal situations. For example, in a restaurant in China, the waiter may tell you: 随便坐 (suí biàn zuò) - "Sit wherever you please".<sup>15</sup>

Actually, the restaurant of this menu is offering to the customer the chance to select the fruit and make his/her own fruit juice mixture, ‘whatever’ followed by the Chinese subtitle ‘mixed fruit juice’ here means: ‘create your own (fruit juice)’. Thus, the original pragmatic aim may not be fulfilled by ELF readers who can misinterpret

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.yoyochinese.com/blog/learn-chinese-5-funny-chinglish-phrases-really-help-you> (last access 21/10/2016).

‘whatever’, since the indefinite pronoun conveys an idea of vagueness and ambiguity which is not really common in a restaurant menu.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the linguistic analysis of different text typologies produced within a Chinglish context has shown the main socio-cultural and pragmalinguistic reasons why nowadays ELF variations should be observed and taken into account in a more complex investigation, which should consider the socio-cultural and economic evolution and global remodeling of customs and interpersonal exchanges that involve China as well, as widely engaged in new and unrestrainable wave of cross-cultural interactions at any level.

Moreover, data have proved the original research hypothesis since in ELF and Chinglish realizations common L1 features clearly emerge not only at the morpho-syntactic level but, more interestingly, at the semantic and pragmatic one, thus, as a consequence, hindering or at least interfering with the receiver’s interpretative reconstruction of the message.

Next to all the syntactical and pragmatic transfers of L1 to Chinglish, all the examined written and spoken cases, in fact, followed the same textual schema, the so-called, ‘the spiral-like pattern’, which may be considered the linguistic reflection of the cognitive and historical-cultural framework of the current Chinese society, even though some scholars trace back its origins to the strict Confucian rhetorical rules of the ‘Eight-legged Essay’.

The future of Chinglish is actually related to many socio-cultural and scientific factors, on the one hand e.g. governmental attitudes and public opinion; and the implementation of English learning and translation software on the other.

Nevertheless, although Chinglish has steady features and is widely used in China, further careful research investigation is still required in order to totally classify it as an existing English variation and, above all, evaluate if the correct performing of speech acts among interactants, in terms of illocutionary aims and perlocutionary effects (Searle 1983), effectively takes place in cross-cultural exchanges, since the debate pro and against Chinglish – as already pointed out – has been going on for twenty years and is still very lively and animated, being, as Henry (2010) claims, the evident reflection of China’s contradictory relationship with contemporary modernization and globalization.

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