

O GÊNERO ACADÊMICO

English as a global language in China

→ Abstract

English is now said to be an international language or known as a global language. It is an obvious fact that English is definitely important as a window for the Chinese to see the world. English is the key for us to access the Western modern scientific and technological advances. In this article, I will try to examine some issues with particular reference to the situation of English language teaching (ELT) in China and its relationship with the outside world.

→ Introduction

In the past few decades since World War II, the emerging global economy has made it possible for English to play an important role as the world standard language. In view of the situation, millions of students are learning English as the most important foreign language for international communication all over the world. People of the world unanimously consider English as the most useful language for cross-boundary communication. Thus, from an ordinary Chinese point of view, English is not the language for us to speak with Americans, the British or any other native speakers. Rather, it is the common language for us to communicate with Japanese, Koreans, Thais, Singaporeans and other Asians and people from developing countries. The global spread of English over the last 40 years is remarkable in the history the English language. It has become an international language means for multinational and multicultural communication.

As the spread of English progresses, English is bound to reflect a diversity of disparate cultures. Since no language is used to its fullest extent by its native speakers, there is always much room left for our non-native speakers to exploit it in the unique form of English usage, phonetically, lexically, syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. As a matter of fact, English has been used by our Chinese as a tool to know the West and at the same time, let the World know China at its greatest extents.

→ Modern ELT in China

A great deal of attention has been paid to English teaching and learning since the beginning of the reform of Chinese economy in 1978. With more and more Western companies and joint-ventures rushing into China, many college students would like to pursue their further education in the West to acquire advanced knowledge in science and technology. Chinese students are no longer ignorant of international English tests such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and so on. Some foreigners will even be amazed to see the heat-wave of English learning in China. Just take a domestic employer, especially those in the field of foreign trade businesses for example. They consider communicative competence in English to be a decisive factor in hiring a potential employee. Therefore, an applicant must demonstrate his oral English capability besides their various English qualification certificates. This emerging challenge to the traditional methodology of ELT is unprecedented in that the teacher is no longer seen as the sole provider of knowledge and the students are no more encouraged to assimilate their teacher's instruction dutifully or to work their way ploddingly through the lines of their textbook.

The initial progress in ELT took place when English became part of the College Entrance Examinations. The Ministry of Education issued guidelines for textbook makers, requesting that English textbooks should include materials on the Western culture, listening and speaking practice as well. However, there are some disadvantages of ELT education in China. The first is a lack of qualified foreign language teachers, most of whom have no experience of living in Western countries. In fact, effective English teachers should have abundant cross-cultural awareness – it is often the case that quite a number of English teachers in China have a very limited knowledge of English while students have high expectation from their teachers. As a result, teacher development programs have become the "bottle-neck" issue¹ in our current ELT. Worse is the backward methodology: teachers, as well as students, typically adopt the Grammar-Translation method to teach and learn English, which focuses on English grammar and vocabulary, on linguistic phenomena rather than on reading the content itself. It is no surprise to see Chinese students with satisfactory marks on their English examinations who can't

communicate well in English with foreign peers. There is a popular saying about this extravagant scene in learning English as "dumb and deaf" English.

55 According to a survey, most college students in China whose majors² are not English spend more than 70 percent of their study time on English after class. Meanwhile, they have to attend four-hour English courses every week in class. What's more is that the English teacher, unfortunately, has to face normally 50 or more students in the classroom because of the expansion of enrolling college students in recent years. Therefore, it is almost impossible
60 for an English teacher to take good care of each student in class. Some English classes have no access to an audio-video language laboratory, neither do they have access to the Internet. This rigid pattern of old fashioned textbook-based, teacher-dominated and test-oriented teaching is out of date with the rapid growth of international communication in China.
65 Educators have realized the importance of shifting the pattern of ELT from the traditional linguistic acquirement to communicative competence and the module of teaching English language from single skill development to integrated skills training. That can be seen from the reform of syllabuses and curriculum development project issued by the Ministry of Education in 1999. The new syllabus emphasis is on a student-centered approach instead
70 of a teacher-centered one. Meanwhile, the vocabulary capacity required for students has been enlarged from the original 1,800 common used English words and phrases to 4,000. Another outstanding feature of the ELT reform in China's higher institutions is that English study will be continuous throughout the duration of four years in college. ESP (English for Special Purpose) courses are also added to the final year of students' study of English
75 in college. The goal of these courses is to ensure that the non-English major students who have different specialized background can make good use of English after their graduation in their future working career. Besides, the Ministry of Education requires that all of the specialized subjects (preferably taught from foreign textbooks) be conducted in English in the near future. There will be a national English standardized test which will be divided into
80 several levels to evaluate the outcome of reforming in Chinese ELT from primary level to the tertiary level, which means English will become a real tool for communication in China's educational institutions. The construction of a streamlined³ ELT system from Chinese primary schools (third grade) to the tertiary level is underway.

→ Conclusion

85 At this stage, China needs and will continue to want English badly. In order to function efficiently in its economy with the global market, China needs to bring large numbers of people to a higher level of proficiency in English for a wide variety of functions. Success of English language teaching and learning depends largely on understanding English as a tool for communication. Thus, if a student is encouraged to speak with confidence, it is the foreign language teacher's duty to help students overcome the fear of speaking and learn the

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fact that Chinese English learners can use English effectively without feeling guilty of their strong accent. Modern communication such as TV and the Internet makes us more exposed to an English-medium environment than we used to be. It will be no surprise at all for a Chinese person to survive in English.

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Fonte: *The weekly column, Article 99, May 2002* (adaptado)

(Versão original disponível em: <<http://www.eltnewsletter.com/back/May2002/art992002.htm>>.

Acesso em 22 agosto 2009.)

GLOSSÁRIO:

- 1 the *bottle-neck* issue – a questão limitadora (que impede o avanço)
- 2 *major* – área de concentração em um curso de graduação
- 3 *streamlined* – modernizado, atualizado

FAMILIARIZAÇÃO COM O TEXTO

- 1 Faça um *skimming* do texto, isto é, observe o título, *layout*, cognatos e palavras conhecidas e descreva a ideia geral do mesmo em uma sentença.

- 2 Releia o texto, desta vez priorizando a busca das informações abaixo:

- a o status atual da Língua Inglesa, alcançado nos últimos 40 anos

- b duas razões pelas quais os Chineses têm se dedicado ao aprendizado da língua inglesa

c fator decisivo para a contratação de novos funcionários na China, em especial por empresas na área de comércio exterior

d fator que propiciou um progresso inicial no ensino de inglês na China

e dois aspectos negativos ainda observados no ensino de inglês na China

3 A que se referem os números em negrito, nos trechos abaixo?

a "A great deal of attention has been paid to English teaching and learning since the beginning of the reform of Chinese economy in **1978**."

b "According to a survey, most college students in China whose majors are not English spend more than **70** percent of their study time on English after class."

c "What's more is that the English teacher, unfortunately, has to face normally **50** or more students in the classroom because of the expansion of enrolling college students in recent years."

d "That can be seen from the reform of syllabuses and curriculum development project issued by the Ministry of Education in **1999**."

e "Meanwhile, the vocabulary capacity required for students has been enlarged from the original **1,800** common used English words and phrases to **4,000**."

4 Em sua opinião, as informações apresentadas no artigo "English as a global language in China" são relevantes para o universitário brasileiro? Justifique.

APRESENTAÇÃO E PRÁTICA DE ESTRATÉGIA

RECONHECENDO O GÊNERO ACADÊMICO

TODA PRODUÇÃO ESCRITA segue algum tipo de convenção. Livros de receita, cartas, emails, listas de compras, recados, e dicionários apresentam linguagem e formato específicos para que possam ser facilmente compreendidos e utilizados. São justamente essas convenções que possibilitam ao leitor manusear qualquer livro e, na maioria das vezes, reconhecer imediatamente o seu gênero textual.

Todos nós conseguimos ler os gêneros textuais de nosso cotidiano facilmente. Da mesma forma, se passarmos a ler artigos acadêmicos com frequência, e observarmos as convenções que os caracterizam, também seremos capazes de efetuar a leitura de tal gênero sem dificuldade.

A escrita acadêmica geralmente segue estruturas convencionais. Os artigos das áreas das Ciências Biológicas e Exatas costumam conter subdivisões internas, com cabeçalhos, para apresentar a discussão de um problema, a literatura existente (ou seja, os artigos e livros já publicados a respeito), o formato da pesquisa, os resultados alcançados, e de que maneira tais resultados vêm suprir uma lacuna ou aprimorar nossa compreensão de determinado assunto.

Por outro lado, os artigos das áreas das Ciências Humanas não têm muitas subdivisões internas; de modo geral, costumam apresentar apenas três partes principais: a **introdução** (que descreve o *background* e o "problema"), o **desenvolvimento** (que traz os argumentos e as reflexões do autor, com base nos dados que evidenciam o problema), e a **conclusão** (que resume a resposta do autor ao problema).

O primeiro passo para a leitura e compreensão de artigos acadêmicos é saber que sua organização e apresentação seguem normas relativamente rígidas. Identificar tais normas pode inclusive auxiliar o leitor a escrever artigos do mesmo gênero. Leia as dicas a seguir cuidadosamente:

Observe o artigo como um todo, antes de iniciar a leitura propriamente dita. Procure identificar o propósito/objetivo, público-alvo e assunto do artigo a ser lido. Procure pistas no título e/ou subtítulo, no resumo (*abstract*) que costuma preceder o artigo, no *layout*, nas notas de rodapé, na nota de referência biográfica do autor (que pode vir no início ou final de um artigo ou livro).

As perguntas abaixo podem auxiliá-lo a considerar o artigo como um todo:

• **Quem escreveu o artigo?**

O que é possível descobrir sobre o autor do texto que você tem em mãos? Se puder, procure outros artigos ou livros escritos pelo mesmo autor. Isto lhe dará uma idéia de como o artigo integra/complementa outros trabalhos do autor, bem como sua área de interesse/especialidade.

• **Quem é o público-alvo, i.e., a quem o autor se dirige?**

Esta questão é extremamente importante porque afeta o estilo, conteúdo e abordagem do assunto discutido no artigo. Você pode fazer um *skimming* dos primeiros parágrafos para ter uma idéia. De fato, os dois primeiros parágrafos do artigo apresentam, ou deveriam apresentar, as razões/justificativas (*rationale*) para a pesquisa relatada. Quanto mais específica e detalhada for a pesquisa, mais específicos serão os leitores a quem tal artigo se destina.

• **Qual é o assunto do artigo?**

Se o artigo foi bem redigido, os primeiros parágrafos vão determinar o assunto do mesmo. O título também sugere, ou deveria sugerir, o assunto principal do artigo, e a linha de raciocínio adotada pelo autor. Além disso, o *abstract* – ou seja, o resumo em inglês que costuma preceder artigos contidos em revistas científicas – em geral apresenta uma breve descrição do conteúdo do artigo. Finalmente, um outro local que contém um resumo do artigo é a conclusão. Geralmente mais longa que a introdução, a conclusão resume o(s) argumento(s) do autor, situando-o(s) em um contexto mais amplo.

Texto adaptado. (Versão original disponível em: <http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/~agraham/guides/guidec.shtml>. Acesso em: 22 agosto 2009.)

O texto “*English as a Global Language in China*” pertence ao gênero “artigo acadêmico”.

1 **Localize algumas características comuns a esse gênero (*layout*, vocabulário, registro):**

a *layout* (Como se configura este texto? De que forma é dividido?): _____

b *vocabulário* (jargão característico de uma determinada área de conhecimento): Exs: _____

c *registro* (linguagem mais formal): Exs: _____

2 Agora releia o *abstract* e verifique se o resumo do autor sintetiza de modo claro e objetivo o conteúdo do artigo.

CONSOLIDAÇÃO

GRUPOS NOMINAIS E INFERÊNCIA CONTEXTUAL

1 Nos trechos abaixo, extraídos do texto, os grupos nominais foram sublinhados. Circule seus respectivos núcleos e, em seguida, traduza as expressões sublinhadas:

a "*In the past few decades since World War II, the emerging global economy has made it possible for English to play an important role as the world standard language.*"

b "*This rigid pattern of old fashioned textbook-based, teacher-dominated and test-oriented teaching is out of date with the rapid growth of international communication in China.*"

c "*The new syllabus emphasis is on a student-centered approach instead of a teacher-centered one.*"

2 Deduza o significado das palavras ou expressões sublinhadas de acordo com o contexto em que estão inseridas:

a "*People of the world unanimously consider English as the most useful language for cross-boundary communication.*"

b "Educators have realized the importance of shifting the pattern of ELT from the traditional linguistic acquirement to communicative competence and the module of teaching English language from single skill development to integrated skills training."

c "The construction of a streamlined ELT system from Chinese primary schools (third grade) to the tertiary level is underway."

d "At this stage, China needs and will continue to want English badly."

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