Awareness-Raising in the TEFL Phonology Classroom: Student Voices and Sociocultural and Psychological Considerations

Lawrence Jun ZHANG
National Institute of Education,
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract

This paper reports on two phases of a study of a group of advanced TEFL (teachers-of-English-as-a-foreign-language) students. To raise their awareness of the importance of discourse intonation while they were receiving teacher training, this study focuses on examining their sociocultural and psychological inclinations in the choice of phonological models. The first phase is an exploration of their attitudes toward or voices about a native-speaker variety (British English) and a nonnative (Chinese EFL-speaker) variety of English pronunciation and intonation. The second reports on a didactic intervention study of the impact of activities that engaged the students in the awareness-raising of the importance of suprasegmental features, especially discourse intonation, on self-perceptions of their efficacy and confidence in communication. The results showed a systematic pattern of participant endorsement for a native-speaker model and a clear improvement in their perceptions of the importance of suprasegmental features of standard English because of teacher-student co-construction of meaning through interactive
awareness-raising activities. The findings are discussed with reference to the students’ sociocultural and psychological needs in TEFL training, particularly with reference to recent academic discourse on the issue of “linguistic imperialism” (CANAGARAJAH, 1999; PHILLIPSON, 1992, 1996) and EIL in pedagogy (JENKINS, 1998, 2002) and their wider implications in typical EFL contexts.

Key words: Awareness-raising; language Learning; phonology instruction; TEFL education; sociocultural and psychological needs;

Pronunciation, as an umbrella term to cover not only the sounds but also features beyond individual sounds, is an integral component of the language. These latter features are generally known as suprasegmentals (BRAZIL, 1997; KINGDON, 1958; TENCH, 1996). In teaching the target language, however, not all language educators would agree that teaching the language through its spoken form is a better choice than through other means, for example, reading (STERN, 1992) and little is known about how learners themselves attribute importance to aspects related to their development as language learners. This is mainly because, with the wide spread of English and its role as an international language in many arenas, nonnative speakers have far outnumbered its native counterparts (CRYSTAL, 1997), and its ownership has been evolving (WIDDOWSON, 1994). Even if a consensus is reached on this argument, the decision of which model or variety teachers should adopt in their classroom practice is a crucially pivotal one (cf. NEUFELD, 2001). Thus English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning, and related TEFL training programmes have all been loaded with sociolinguistic, sociopolitical and sociocultural implications. “Linguistic imperialism” naturally has emerged as a concern (PHILLIPSON, 1992; see also CANAGARAJAH, 1999).

KACHRU (1992) posits that a native-speaker model is not attainable or desirable for most language learners, which means that we should not be so much bothered
about making such efforts. However, research has shown that depending on learners’ personality traits and other social factors, some have managed to achieve the native-speaker level (e.g., BONGAERTS, 1999; see also SCOVEL, 2000, for a recent review). How much relevance these views and the research findings have to the current practice in pronunciation pedagogy needs to be revisited. Advocates of the use of English as an international language, or EIL for short (see e.g., JENKINS, 1998), state that in EFL contexts, although it is impossible for students to achieve perfect native-like pronunciation, especially intonation, in order to be acceptable points of reference and models of guidance, nonnative teachers still need to approximate to a standard native model. Jenkins argues that a difference between a model and a norm should be made clear. Rather than treating a native norm as the goal for production, learners can always be made aware of the native model as a reference point (see also ANDREASSON, 1994). This would discourage them from moving away too much from the native model so that international intelligibility is not lost as a result. Based on some empirical evidence, JENKINS (2002) further explains that, although for EIL interlocutors a Lingua Franca Core (LFC) will be better able to promote intelligibility and regional appropriateness, as well as being more teachable, than either of the two most commonly adopted classroom models, yet, in EFL (English-as-a-foreign-language) contexts, provision of a native-speaker model is necessary due to a fact that EFL learners are “foreign” speakers of English.

Others, who work within the English-speaking countries and naturally speak and teach the language as it is, have used the native speaker model in pedagogy (MORLEY, 1994), without being much troubled by how to make a decision about which model to follow. This is quite natural, as many ESL students, when they arrive in English-speaking countries, would like to be immersed into the society in which they live; i.e., they realise a strong sociolinguistic and psychological need for acquiring a native-like pronunciation/intonation in order to be entitled to a societal membership.
Studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), or ESL/EFL education in general, have shown that to improve listening and verbal communication skills teachers’ conscientious effort to teach pronunciation makes it more efficient for learners to master the language and build up self-confidence (CASTILLO, 1990; HAMMERLY, 1991; MORLEY, 1991, 1994, 1996; PIRT, 1990; see also WENNERSTROM, 1994, 1998), especially in helping them to have access to the suprasegmental features, e.g., word stress, sentence stress and discourse intonation (GANSCHOW & SPARKS, 1995). This, in turn, greatly facilitates the level of intelligibility and effectiveness in verbal communication, particularly from the speaker’s vantage point.

However, insufficient literature documents learner perceptions of their own needs and the instructional content, with reference to English suprasegmental features, especially discourse intonation, in an input-poor EFL environment such as China. Eliciting information on learner thinking of the instructional content might be necessary in today’s foreign language classrooms, where communicative language teaching (CLT) has been critically accepted and the “eclectic approach” has been acknowledged as the mainstream in the selection of language teaching approaches (CORTAZZI & JIN, 1996; cf. PENNER, 1995; YU, 2001). More importantly, what pronunciation/intonation model should be the basis for classroom teaching with reference to TEFL education programmes in input-poor environments remains a question within the CLT framework. It seems that teachers make decisions according to their intuitions, and students’ perceptions of the phonological models and sociolinguistic and psychological needs are not given sufficient attention.

Based on a study of 60 TEFL students, who were undergoing training to be middle school EFL teachers in a northern province in China at a teachers’ university, this paper examines student voices in the choice of phonological models/varieties (especially of discourse intonation), a channel through which their sociocultural and psychological needs are recast. It also explores
possibilities of raising TEFL students’ awareness of the importance of discourse intonation based on learner perceptions, a first step in helping them to improve intelligibility and effectiveness in verbal communication in addition to boosting their self-confidence. In order for the study to be well-anchored, in the following sections, some instructional issues are explained and relevant literature is briefly reviewed so that the research questions are addressed in a proper context.

Some Instructional Issues

Instruction: Implicit or Explicit?

As briefly mentioned above, there have been debates about whether students should be explicitly taught the pronunciation in ESL/EFL programmes in recent years in the literature (CELCE-MURCIA, 1987; CELCE-MURCIA et al., 1996; MORLEY, 1994; STERN, 1992). Some hold that there should be no such instruction in student language learning processes, where imitation and gradual acquisition should be the norm, as teacher intervention tends to debilitate students’ acquisition of the pronunciation system, depending on which language teaching methods the classroom practices of teachers are based upon (see PENNINGTON, 1989; RICHARDS & RODGERS, 1986, for discussions).

However, in recent years, it has been shown that pronunciation instruction can enhance students’ awareness of the language to improve their communicative ability, and more importantly, to understand how the language works in its spoken form, in addition to boosting their self-confidence (CELCE-MURCIA et al., 1996; GANSCHOW & SPARKS, 1995; MORLEY, 1991, 1994, 1996). A consensus seems to be that pronunciation should be taught, but the emphasis should be shifted, which is related to the pedagogical aims, as discussed below.
Objectives in Pedagogy

It seems that both language educators and practitioners have acknowledged that pronunciation should be an important part of the language teaching agenda. A more essential issue is what teachers should expect of learners in target language pronunciation (and intonation) with respect to student expectations. As CASTILLO (1990: 3) and RICHARDS & RODGERS (1986: 3-5) point out, when the grammar-translation method was dominant, traditional notions such as minimal pairs, drills and short conversations were heavily emphasised. Nowadays, it seems that more emphasis should be placed on approaches that are “top-down” (PENNINGTON, 1989). This means that in teaching pronunciation, teachers need not necessarily start only from the basic minimal pairs. As BROWN (1996: 11-12) argues, speakers and listeners have to be able to “monitor the incoming acoustic signal” so that they can predict and confirm what is being perceived or conveyed. Indeed, recent research suggests that effective and successful listeners use such strategies in language processing (GOH, 1998; VANDERGRIFT, 1999).

It follows then that, if pronunciation/intonation has become an “integral part of oral communication” in the class, the pedagogical aim of pronunciation teaching is not to attain the “perfect” pronunciation of the native speaker, but instead to aim at a more realistic goal of developing students’ “functional intelligibility, communicativity, and increased self-confidence” (MORLEY 1991: 501). This also involves developing students’ speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom (MORLEY, 1991; JENKINS, 1998, 2002). It seems that such an expectation would be more practical for beginner and intermediate students. As regards advanced TEFL students, a higher expectation can be set by engaging them in awareness-raising activities to understand how different intonations can carry different meanings in native and nonnative varieties. In such cases, intonation deserves more attention than it has received, particularly in this era when advocates of teaching methods
such as comprehension-based approaches or communicatively oriented language curricula hold the view that pronunciation should be allowed to develop naturally rather than taught, as pointed out by PENNINGTON (1989: 20; see also HAMMERLY, 1991).

JENKINS’ (1998) idea of encouraging teachers in EFL contexts to approximate to a native-speaker model is not without good reasons. In the Chinese context, it is equally essential to stress the importance of intonation instruction because the newly published textbook series used widely in schools across the county has critically adopted communicative language teaching ideas as guiding principles. However, although some EFL teachers have explored teaching intonation to Chinese EFL students (e.g., ZHANG, 2003), their suggestions are not based on empirical evidence that students need such instruction.

As is well understood, different pragmatic meanings are also embodied in different intonation as per different situations in the native-speaker model (BRAZIL, 1997; BROWN, 1996; KINGDON, 1958; ROACH, 1991). Giving leeway to students through imitation and exposure to acquire the pronunciation naturally might be possible for those who are in an ESL context, where the target language input is sufficient and authentic audio-video materials are easily available (MORLEY, 1994, 1996). However, in a context where students are deprived of necessary target language exposure, pronunciation teaching should become an inseparable part of the language curriculum to expedite the learning process.

While “linguistic imperialism” and “linguicism” might be something we need to consider (PHILIPSON, 1992), in many EFL contexts, as compared with their EIL counterparts (JENKINS, 1998; MODIANO, 1999), English learners still prefer the native model (traditional notions of standard varieties, e.g., standard British English or General American) because of societal influence or learner expectations (LASAGABASTER & SIERRA, 2002; LUK, 2001; cf.
PHILIPSON, 1996). So, the issue is confounded and some teachers are put in a
dilemma (see ZHANG, 2000, for more information).

(1996) and others have invariably expressed their concerns about English as
second/foreign language users, who have difficulties in pronunciation. PIRT
(1990) specifically addresses nonnative speakers’ problems with discourse
intonation. They suggest that these difficulties may put nonnative speakers at a
professional or social disadvantage. By virtue of the importance of this aspect in
TEFL programmes, I outline the importance of discourse intonation contours and
the role of intonation in EFL curricula in China before I present the research
questions.

Meaning and Intonation Contours

Although word stress placement can make a difference at the level of individual
syllables and words in English, the meanings of utterances conveyed in
association with discourse intonation contours may be quite different from what
they appear to be when written down on paper (BOLINGER, 1986; BRAZIL,
This point has been succinctly summarised by PENNINGTON and RICHARDS
(1986: 211):

In every language, characteristic intonation contours carry both referential
and affective meaning … In their referential function, intonation contours
provide an interpretation for a sentence by indicating which part of the
information is viewed as new versus known, salient versus less salient, or
topic versus comment. Intonation and stress are highly context-dependent, so
that the patterns of speech and pitch that characterise isolated words or
phrases are typically modified when these words or phrases occur in the
context of longer utterances. For example, pitch level tends to be reduced in
later parts of discourse as predictability of information increases. Thus, intonation is an essential component of the prosodic continuity that makes connected stretches of speech—as opposed to individually spoken words or syllables—coherent and interpretable by the listener.

PENNINGTON (1989) further maintains that intonation contours have relationships with meanings such as finality, continuation in questioning, and that the meaning of a particular intonation contour may vary according to the context or the language in which it occurs (see also BRAZIL, 1997; TENCH, 1996). Although this is no longer a new issue (e.g., KINGDON, 1958, addresses it in greater detail), the revived discussion of the importance of teaching this part to TEFL students (e.g., CELCE-MURCIA et al., 1996; MORLEY, 1994, 1996) needs to be further consolidated. This is because, without a clear understanding of the importance of intonation and its contours, effective instructional activities cannot proceed. KINGDON (1958), O’CONNOR & ARNOLD (1978), ROACH (1991) and BRAZIL (1997), among others, posit that, by putting different intonation patterns into different social contexts, speaker intentions vary due to many possible variations and meaning associations. This suggests that teaching intonation patterns to EFL learners is necessary. Otherwise, these learners will be deprived of chances for getting to know many dynamic aspects of the language. If, indeed, teaching intonation is more challenging and “linguistic imperialism” is a concern, then learner-centred awareness activities for EFL students in language learning should take the lead (cf. ZHANG, 2001), because teachers’ awareness of language is crucial to their professional development in the long run (JAMES, 1999). This would be especially helpful in cross-cultural communication. However, except for CONIAM (2002), who explored technology as an aid in raising learner awareness of features of stress and rhythm in English, insufficient literature has documented pedagogical initiatives that aim to sensitisEFL learners to the importance of discourse intonation.
Role of Discourse Intonation in EFL Curricula in China

The role of discourse intonation in EFL curricula varies from country to country depending on the social functions of English. The teaching of pronunciation in China usually starts from the sounds and analysis of minimal pairs (e.g., pure vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs, etc.) at every level in the education system, especially at the beginner level, and discourse intonation has not been given sufficient attention. Many factors can be suggested as explanations for such practice. However, due to space, I think that listing two important reasons might suffice.

Firstly, China lacks target-language input, particularly daily use of English. According to KACHRU (1992), three major varieties of English are used respectively in the “Inner Circle” (countries where English is used as the native language), in the “Outer Circle” (former British colonies where English is used as a major language”) and in the “Expanding Circle” (where English is learned and used as a foreign language). Following this tripartite taxonomy, China qualifies as a typical “Expanding Circle” country, i.e., an EFL context. Secondly, the philosophy that guides the adjudication of the “English Syllabus for Middle Schools”, whose directive is that accuracy in pronunciation must be emphasised, has a penetrating effect on EFL teaching among teachers (e.g., MOE, 1995). Therefore, even middle school EFL teachers tend to emphasise explicit instruction in the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in their own classes, regarding this system as a strong tool in facilitating student learning of English pronunciation. However, current popular instructional attention to the accuracy of sound production and to some degree of fluency in speech has not sufficiently enhanced the effectiveness in communication due to teachers’ neglect of intonation (YU, 1992). Intonation is seldom taught, and if it is done, only two types of intonation, the rising tone and the falling tone, are briefly introduced to students. Because of time constraints and EFL teachers’
inadequate training, EFL teachers in schools generally do not have any awareness of the importance of intonation in the curricula.

Admittedly, some TEFL programmes in tertiary institutions in China have given some attention to the teaching of phonetics and intonation recently, but the number of graduates who have received training in English phonetics and intonation is disproportionate with current pedagogical needs. A course called “English Phonetics” is offered in most tertiary teacher-education institutions, yet, most of the courses of this kind concentrate on teaching the basics of English sounds and the like, working within the tradition of analysing minimal pairs. Because of this, most teachers feel that intonation is just a subject for theoretical exploration (CHEN, 1983; LAO, 1983). Consequently, because of the paucity in instruction, many TEFL students will have graduated without fully understanding the importance of shades of meanings conveyed through variations of discourse intonation. Also, because of their lack of such an awareness, when they are in cross-cultural communicative situations or in language classrooms, they are found using intonation patterns in peculiar ways in which the intended meaning is not expressed, or their perlocutionary meanings are perceived differently by the native-speaker listener (PIRT, 1990; WENNERSTROM, 1994, 1998).

Indeed, it is not a bad thing as such that traditional pronunciation teaching in EFL curricula emphasises the importance of accurate production of individual sounds. However, it is believed that the teaching of these sounds in a flow of speech may deserve more concerted effort in classroom procedures, especially in contexts where the amount of target language input is meagre. In effect, as is stated earlier, PENNINGTON (1989: 20) has issued a call for “teaching pronunciation from the top”. What she means is that “a focus of attention in language instruction from individual phonemes to suprasegmentals and other features of the larger context of utterances” should take place. Several writers have expressed similar concerns in the field of TESOL in recent years, as
LAWRENCE JUN ZHANG

reviewed in the preceding section. Accordingly, an immediate need is felt for advanced EFL students who receive TEFL training in input-poor environments to learn to understand different intonation contours, whether the variety is a native or a nonnative one. This would include locutionary/declared as well as the illocutionary implicatures and the perlocutionary effects of these suprasegmental features at the intonational level. Understanding how speakers use them to express their thoughts and feelings appropriately in real verbal communication is especially useful to TEFL students, who are future teachers of English.

Sociolinguistic and Psychological Considerations

The teaching of pronunciation and intonation is closely linked to TEFL students’ sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic needs. If pronunciation and intonation teaching is perceived to be relevant to TEFL education programmes, then TEFL students should be given explicit instruction in the nature of the phonological system of English (or, at least, their awareness of the importance of intonation should be raised), rather than only in the accurate production of sounds. This is because TEFL students are future agents who are to conduct EFL teaching based on this knowledge and then translate it into skills that are expressed in their students. Moreover, pedagogical decisions should be made by listening to student voices. How much do teachers know about what they prefer? Have teachers really given sufficient attention to student voices about their sociolinguistic, psychological and sociocultural needs? In fact, for many advanced EFL learners native-like pronunciation/intonation, structural accuracy, fluency, sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence, etc. are logical expectations, particularly if the students are future teachers. Therefore, students themselves should be given the option for a particular pronunciation/intonation model/variety. Unfortunately, except for a very few reports (e.g., ANDREASSON, 1994; LASAGABASTER & SIERRA, 2001; LUK, 2001), much needs to be known about how pedagogical decisions are made in
delivering pronunciation/intonation models to TEFL students to meet their sociolinguistic, psychological and sociocultural needs. In other words, student voices are usually hidden because of teachers’ overwhelming power in making decisions for them.

For example, ANDREASSON’S (1994) research shows that many learners regard correct pronunciation/intonation as an asset by itself, regardless of its facilitating role in communication with native speakers. LUK (2001) reports on a study she has conducted in two secondary schools in Hong Kong on the Native English Teacher Scheme (NETS) by surveying feedback from the students. Her findings show that the NETS is a valued commodity to the students. Native-speaker teachers are welcomed because of the linguistic model and interaction opportunities they provide. The majority of the students feel that being taught by NETS teachers enriches their linguistic resources and personal experiences. LASAGABASTER and SIERRA (2001) report similar findings, suggesting that there is a general preference for native-speaker English teachers.

Given that China is said to be an EFL “super power” (PENNER, 1995), which houses millions of English learners, the present study is interested in exploring how TEFL students who are trainee-teachers perceive their sociolinguistic and psychological concerns in phonology classrooms and the impact of awareness-raising activities on their perceptions of a need to be exposed to native and nonnative models/varieties of English and of any consequential perceived improvement in verbal communication and confidence due to awareness-raising. Specifically, the following two questions were addressed in two phases of the study.

1) What were the attitudes of TEFL students toward two models/varieties — standard native British English and standard nonnative (Chinese EFL-speaker English)?
2) What were the impacts of awareness-raising activities on the participants’ reflections on their improvement in communicative competence and confidence in verbal communication when such instruction was based on their own preferences?

Methodology

The study was completed in two phases. Phase I of the study investigated student voices with regard to the models/varieties to which they were exposed, i.e., a nonnative (Chinese EFL speaker model) and a native (standard British English model, or, an approximation to RP). Namely, it examined their preferences. It also explored their psychological and sociocultural concerns over the models/varieties so that their voices would become clearer. Phase II was an interventional study of the participants’ perceptions of the two English varieties through awareness-raising activities. It also examined possible impacts of such awareness-raising activities on their perceived improvement in communicative competence and confidence.

Phase I: Student Voices and Preferences

Participants

The participants were 60 advanced-level TEFL students in a year-three course on a 4-year tertiary teacher-education programme at a teachers’ college in a

---

1 There is always a labeling or definition problem when the term RP is used to refer to standard British English. Admittedly, I have the same dilemma here, but this does not impede my operationalisation of the term in pedagogy. It should be worthwhile to note, however, that some writers use “Southern Standard British English (SSBE)” (e.g., DETERDING & POEDJOSOEDARMO, 1998; WELLS & COLSON, 1971) to indicate such an accent or pronunciation/intonation model so that they can avoid the overtones that might suggest its archaic history that is also class-laden. In the present paper, I use the term RP throughout to mean basically SSBE and it is used because the term is more familiar to readers and practitioners in the field of applied linguistics, particularly in ELT.
northern province in China. They were receiving full-time training in English Language Education to qualify for teaching EFL in senior middle schools (pre-university level) in the Chinese education system. They had already received a minimum of two years’ training in English as English-major students at the diploma level while studying in the 1990s at various normal schools (i.e., vocational teacher-training institutions), whose graduates are usually posted to teach at the primary level nowadays. In their case, however, due to a severe lack of EFL teachers in middle schools across the province, these normal schools were charged with tasks which were usually undertaken by tertiary-level colleges or universities for teacher education. So the normal schools had to run crash courses to prepare EFL teachers to fill up the vast vacancies in the middle schools. The severity in teacher shortage was caused mainly by a sudden change in the national policy on foreign language offerings soon after the Ministry of Education revised its National Foreign Language Syllabus and English was offered as a major compulsory subject throughout the country after Russian was relegated to a less prominent status in the curriculum in the 1980s.

Prior to their admission to the TEFL education programme, they had been EFL teachers for periods ranging from two to eight years. They were admitted to the TEFL programme based on their scores on various tests of the China National Examinations for Admission to Adult Higher Education (English Grammar, English Intensive and Extensive Reading, English Composition and Translation, College Chinese, and Political Theories). Upon graduation from the TEFL programme with qualified standing, they were also to be awarded the Bachelor’s degree in English Education.

*Input-Speakers*

Two varieties of English were used in the study: a nonnative Chinese EFL-speaker variety (two speakers, hereinafter referred to as Speaker Type A) and a standard native-speaker British English variety (two speakers, hereinafter
referred to as Speaker Type B). A male nonnative EFL speaker had a Master’s degree in English Language and Literature and a professional Postgraduate Diploma in ELT from an overseas university. He spoke a variety that was described by both native British and PRC nonnative English-speaking colleagues as “very standard” in terms of the way that the words in these sentences were pronounced and the intonation used. He had had rich experience teaching in junior and senior middle schools for about eight years before he took up the teaching post at the institution where the data were collected. He taught “Intensive Reading” (a core comprehensive integrated skill course embracing the teaching of pronunciation, grammar, reading, speaking and some listening skills), “English Phonetics” and “Introduction to Linguistics” for about another five years. Another female nonnative Chinese EFL speaker held Postgraduate Diplomas in ELT from Chinese and overseas universities. She had also taught English in a middle school prior to her tertiary-level teaching which involved core curriculum courses such as “Intensive Reading” and “Extensive Reading” for three years, and she was also rated by local and expatriate colleagues as a very good speaker of English.

For easier operationalisation, Speaker Type B was represented by the voices of two native standard British English speakers. One native speaker, female, had a Master’s degree in English from a British university. She spoke a standard southern British English variety. The other, male, whose voice had been recorded on a commercially available audiocassette-tape (HILL, 1977), spoke standard southern British English, commonly known as RP.

A note has to be made about the models/speech varieties used in this study. A British model was chosen to be the basis upon which a contrast was made mainly because the participants were more familiar with the British pronunciation and intonation system, as, in their previous learning experiences, almost all the materials had been presented in the British tradition. Also, usually, the English Phonetics course was conducted following the British phonetic
system (approximating to the description of RP; see e.g., CHEN, 1983) based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). General American phonological system was not as familiar to the participants as was RP.

Material and Procedure

Seven sentences which were based on KINGDON (1958: 23ff) and a passage, *Tom* (researcher-given title) from *Advanced Stories for Reproduction* (HILL, 1977: 36), were used as the input material. The passage, *Tom*, came with a published audiocassette-tape recorded in standard RP pronunciation and intonation. Therefore, basically, two major varieties of English or models of pronunciation/intonation were involved, as explained above. A nonnative Chinese EFL-speaker variety was given a code “Speaker Type A” and a native British English variety “Speaker Type B”. Both the nonnative and one of the native speakers read the seven sentences (see Appendix A) into an audiocassette recorder-player. As the *Tom* passage was already on a published audiocassette-tape, it was not recorded by the native speaker again. Only the nonnative speakers read it into a recorder. The recordings of both types of speakers were then played to the participants in their “Reading and Writing” and “Introduction to Linguistics” classes, without the participants’ knowledge of who the speakers were. This measure was taken to guarantee the smooth elicitation of information on participant attitudes to, or perceptions of, each of the two varieties.

As the sentences and the passage typically reflected the nuance of the intonational meanings they possibly conveyed, after the recordings were played, all the participants were requested to note down which speaker type represented native English speakers and which speaker type nonnative speakers and then rate them in terms of how they preferred the ways the speakers spoke. The criteria for their judgement were: 1) native-likeness, 2) clarity and accuracy in pronunciation, 3) fluency, 4) expressiveness in intonation, 5) naturalness in
articulation, 6) acoustic comfort to the ear, 7) personal preference, and 8) social prestige each variety would possibly represent (see Appendix B).

**Results**

With reference to research question 1, participant perceptions were obvious, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant judgments (averaged scores in %) of the two models/varieties of English pronunciation/intonation when exposed to two input-tasks (N=60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Input</th>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Tom Passage</th>
<th>Overall Rating (averaged)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaker Type A</td>
<td>Speaker Type B</td>
<td>Speaker Type A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-likeness</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and accuracy</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressiveness in intonation</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalness in articulation</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acoustic comfort</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal preference</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social status</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Averaged Rating</strong></td>
<td><strong>74.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall averaged rating indicated that the participants expressed their preferences for the native-speaker variety (Speaker Type B) and the pattern seems to be quite consistent (71.8% vs. 97.8%). This means that, although the nonnative speakers (Speaker Type A) spoke good English, participant
judgements indicated their knowledge that native speakers and nonnative speakers were different in many aspects. The greatest difference in the perception of the two varieties was found when the participants were asked to weigh the two varieties in terms of the “social status” each variety enjoyed. A look at the percentile rating suggests that the nonnative speaker variety was more or less stigmatised, as a score of 51 was given to the nonnative speakers on this item. In contrast, the native variety was accorded 98%. Participant “preferences” for a native-speaker variety also turned out to be prominent (90.5%). The nonnative variety was given only 54%. Nevertheless, it might be due to the nonnative speakers’ high attainment in pronunciation and intonation, they were regarded 80% native-like; whereas the native speakers 99.5%. On two items, which focused on the articulation of sounds, i.e., “clarity and accuracy” (88.5% vs. 99%) and “fluency” (90% vs. 99.5%), minimal differences between the two speaker varieties were found, suggesting that participant discrimination against the nonnative variety was not as great on these two items as on others. This is quite reasonable, as explained earlier, because the nonnative speakers were either “Intensive Reading” or “Phonetics” teachers, who spoke a variety of English that was quite close to the native one, especially in producing individual sounds or shorter sentences. On two other items, “expressiveness in intonation” (72.5% vs. 99.5%) and “naturalness in articulation” (71.5% vs. 99%), the nonnative speakers were shown to be put at a disadvantage as well.

The final overall averaged rating seems to crystallise participant perceptions of differences in pronunciation and intonation between the two types of speakers or models/varieties. This was especially clear when the nonnative speakers had to read the passage and their recording was compared with that of the native speaker that had been recorded on the published audiocassette-tape. Interestingly, participant judgements seemed to show that they regarded the nonnative speakers’ overall speaking performance almost as highly as they did the native speaker when both speakers read individual sentences (74.3% vs. 99.5%).
97.3%). However, when they read the Tom passage, a greater difference was found in participant perceptions generally (69.3% vs. 98.3%). Participant perceptions of both speakers’ English were also evident in the Tom passage. These were reflected in the participant judgements of “expressiveness in intonation” (67% vs. 100%), “naturalness in articulation” (71% vs. 100%), “acoustic comfort to the ear” (66.5% vs. 97%), and most importantly, their “personal preference” for a pronunciation model (52% vs. 92%). The native speakers were also rated as enjoying much higher social status (50% vs. 97%). There was also a big difference between the two speaker types in terms of the participants’ overall rating on the average (71.8% vs. 97.8%). All this suggests an overall participant preference for the native speakers. It is also interesting to note that participant perceptions of both varieties on the individual sentence task were not as clear as on the reading passage task. These findings motivated the next phase of the present study.

**Phase II: Awareness-raising**

Given that the participants showed their strong interest in and preference for the native-speaker model, the aims and objectives of Phase II were to explore possible impacts of awareness-raising activities on participant perceptions of their performance improvement in speaking English in their daily life or future jobs. In other words, through explicit instruction this part of the study was interested in examining any benefit of the awareness-raising activities on the importance of pronunciation and intonation in relation to effective communication.

**Participants**

All the participants in Phase I were invited to participate in this Phase II study. They had been informed of the results of Phase I study before this awareness-
raising component was conducted. They were clearly told that their voices were taken as the basis on which this Phase II study was conducted.

**Material and Procedure**

The male nonnative-speaker teacher-researcher conducted the awareness-raising activities. In addition to the material used in Phase I Study, two additional pairs of dialogues (Excerpts 1 and 2) and an additional passage on language learning and teaching (MOHAN, 1986) were used as means of extended practice. The seven sentences and the *Tom* passage (HILL, 1977) and the language teaching passage (MOHAN, 1989) recorded by the native British English speaker were played in the class many times and the male nonnative EFL teacher-researcher practised together with the students by reading them aloud or when there was a need, role-playing them. This was an interactive process in which the teacher-researcher and the students discussed different illocutionary meanings and perlocutionary implications or effects. The sentences preceded the passages in the order of presentation. The practice lasted for six 50-minute double-period sessions (for other specific pedagogical procedures, please refer to ZHANG, 2003).

Prior to the awareness-raising activities, a brief survey was conducted on participant perceptions of their own ability to identify native and nonnative varieties of English and their confidence to speak in English (see Appendix C). The results from such a survey indicated that they were very weak in the areas indicated in the survey. Except for a minority of them, the majority did not show their awareness of the seven areas listed in the survey. Most of them filled in their answers in the “Not very clear” category. In order to make sure that what the teacher-researcher was going to do was what they really aspired, another question was asked of the participants to confirm the validity of such a pedagogical effort. The question was “Do you want to learn more about how meanings are affected because of a speaker’s use of different intonation?” And
the answer was overwhelmingly affirmative. The language for instruction was English throughout the study.

The participants were then informed that there would be a feedback discussion session upon completion of the awareness-raising sessions. Therefore, after the discussion was over, the feedback form (see Appendix D), which was a modified version of the survey that had been given to them before the awareness-raising activities were conducted, was distributed among the participants to elicit information on the impact of the awareness-raising activities, especially on how they would view such comparative instruction. Specific steps for the awareness-raising activities are described below.

*Introducing the Tonetic System*

A synthesis of the KINGDON (1958) and the ROACH (1991) models of tonetic description was the basis upon which the awareness-raising activities were conducted. ROACH’S (1991) classification of tones is concise, but for my pedagogical purposes, KINGDON’s model was chosen. In KINGDON’S classification, English intonation is systematically divided into two major types—Static and Kinetic. The Static Tones (level tones) include the High Level Tone and the Low Level Tone and the Kinetic Tones include Tone I High (I_H, tone marked as ’), Tone I Low (I_L, tone marked as ´), Tone II (tone marked as ‘), Tone III (undivided, tone marked as ∨) and Tone III (divided, tone marked as \ / ). In teaching intonation the researcher followed KINGDON’S advice by ensuring from the outset that he had a clear understanding of what stresses and tones actually entailed.

An emphasis was also placed on the differences between the kinetic and static tones. This is because “the active elements of intonation are the tones” (KINGDON, 1958: 3). As KINGDON further explains, in the Kinetic Tones “the pitch of the voice is moving upwards or downwards—or first one and then the other—during the whole duration of the tone”. The change taking place in
pitch may be concentrated on a stressed syllable or it may begin on a stressed syllable and end on an unstressed syllable. The Static Tones are the level (high and low level) tones, which are accompanied by stress, highlighting the importance of the words in the sentence. Both theoretically and in actual fact, except the explicit changes of pitch in which the high level tone has the value of a full stress and the low level tone has the value of a partial stress or falls in the lower half of the voice change, other changes in the tone are less evident. He also says that in the Kinetic Tones the pitch of the voice is changed by adjusting the length and the tension of the vocal cords. So, the whole process of raising TEFL students’ awareness of the importance of discourse intonation through two stages was practical.

After the participants were introduced to KINGDON’S classification of English intonation, they had a better understanding of the phonological features, especially the melody of the language. The overall approach was that once the participants understood the basic classification of the tonetic system, a step-by-step explanation of the system started, first through demonstration, then intensive classroom practice and finally, constant contextualised consciousness-raising activities. The reason for so doing was mainly that there was less contact for these EFL students with English-speakers. Asking them how they interpreted the meanings of different intonation patterns, the affective input of the speaker and the general tone of the discourse in interaction was one way to achieve the goal of improving communicative competence as well as efficacy in teaching.

As stress co-occurs with changing pitch (ROACH, 1991; TENCH, 1996), for easier practice, my instruction also involved teaching stress patterns. Although no research has produced strong evidence to indicate that EFL students in China have severe difficulty in locating the stress of the words which causes communication failures, the potential difficulty that might arise from reading aloud a complete discourse or completing a connected speech utterance looms
larger. This was mainly because, when asked, they said that they did not have any clear awareness of the functions of intonation in expression. So, at this stage, teaching the participants to locate the stress of individual words and stressed words in a connected discourse preceded that of the intonation of larger discourses. In the following section the ways that these tones were exemplified and activities for contextualized intensive practice were organised are explained.

Teaching the Tones

KINGDON (1985) notes that the Static tones are comparatively easier to learn. So the static tones were taught first. This was mainly because there are fewer variations in this type of the tone—the High Level Tone (tone mark \( \uparrow \)) and the Low Level Tone (tone mark \( \downarrow \)). As stated above, the Kinetic tones are more complicated, they convey different speaker-intentions. Because of this, comparatively more classroom time was devoted to the teaching of the kinetic tones than the static tones. The Kinetic Tones comprise 5 basic tone types—Tone I (High, tone mark \( \uparrow \)), Tone I (Low, tone mark \( \downarrow \)), Tone II (High Falling and Low Falling Tones, tone marks \( \\uparrow \) and \( \\downarrow \)), Tone III (Undivided, tone mark \( \\up\)), Tone III (Divided, tone mark \( \\up\\down\)). Once these tones were introduced to participants, they were then furnished with examples to illustrate their uses in demonstrative utterances, as shown below.

**Extract 1**

a) I am \( \uparrow \) sure you can learn English intonation well. (*High Level Tone*)
b) \( \downarrow \) Are you interested in English intonation? (*Low Level Tone*)
c) Is English intonation \( \up\) interesting? (*Tone I, High*)
d) He isn’t interested in English intonation. (*Tone I, Low*)
e) We are going to learn two types of \( \up\) tones. (*Tone II*)
f) \( \up\) Never \( \down\) mind, if you don’t know how to \( \h\) do it \( \w\) well. (*Tone III, Divided*)
g) He \( \up\) wants to learn intonation \( \w\) now. (*Tone III, Undivided*)  

(KINGDON, 1958: 23-38)
Contextualising Intensive Practice

After participants were taught these intonation patterns and the meanings in connection with them, the next task was to engage them in communicative activities, which involved practising these intonation patterns. This was implemented through listening to the limited authentic audio- or audio-video materials available and making judgements as to the meanings of utterances in larger discourse contexts. The examples provided by KINGDON were used as good sources for introducing participants to the system and encouraging their familiarisation with it. In addition to a good ear, participants were reminded to pay attention to people’s verbal interaction patterns that were associated with the use of intonation in their encounters with the nonnative- and native-speaker English teachers. Materials provided in other works on English phonetics published in China were also used as supplements (e.g., LAO, 1983; ZHANG, 1992). This was further consolidated in larger discourses or communication activities, where different tones were combined, as shown below.

Extract 2

Tom saw an advertisement in a newspaper for a beautiful modern bicycle which cost £54.99, so he went to the shop which had put the advertisement in and asked to see one of their wonderful bicycles. The shopkeeper was very happy to show one to Tom, who examined it carefully and then turned to the shopkeeper, saying, “There isn’t a lamp on this bicycle, but there was one on the bicycle in your advertisement.” “Yes, sir,” answered the shopkeeper, “but the lamp isn’t included in the price of the bicycle. It’s an extra.” “Not included in the price of the bicycle?” Tom said angrily. “But that’s not honest. If the lamp’s in the advertisement, it should have been included in the price you gave there.” “Well, sir,” answered the shopkeeper calmly, “there is also a girl on the bicycle in our advertisement, we don’t supply one of them with the bicycle either.” (HILL, 1977: 36)
Extract 3

Scenario: At the airport, JH, a nonnative-speaker English lecturer is awaiting a professor’s (JS) arrival from England, whom he has never met before.

Dialogue A

JH: (When seeing a Caucasian-looking gentleman, he assumes that he is Professor Smith from England)
   Excuse me, are you Professor John Smith from England? ||
JS: Sorry, you’ve asked the wrong person. I am Dr. Swatzberg from Germany. ||
JH: Sorry, I thought you were. ||
JS: That’s OK. ||

Dialogue B

JH: (When seeing a Caucasian-looking gentleman, he thinks that he is Professor Smith from England, so he goes up to meet him)
   Excuse me, are you Professor John Smith from England? ||
JS: Yes, I am. ||
JH: I thought you were. Welcome to China, Professor Smith. I am Jerry Hang from the Shanghai Institute of Education. ||
JS: How do you do? ||
JH: How do you do? ||
JS: Your English is perfect. Where did you learn it? ||
JH: Thanks for the compliment. I learned it in China. (The dialogue continues ...)

Extract 4

As an extension of the above activity, a passage more complicated in discourse patterns was used so that the participants would be given another
chance of listening to and practising a connected discourse with longer sentences.

Most oral language courses will contain language in action situations. As yet, a major, and unsolved, problem with the course is how learning about language can be organised in concert with learning about situations. In many of these courses, we are trying to teach situational information as well. The unresolved problem, therefore, is how to respond to students’ need to speak and act in the target community. Usually, however, this difficult problem is avoided by attending to the language only and ignoring the action situation. This reduces language in action situations to dialogues, to which we will now turn. (MOHAN, 1986: 55-56)

Results

To answer Question 2, participant feedback was collected by asking them to answer seven questions related to their awareness of the factors pertaining to their improvement in understanding differences in English varieties and discourse intonation and their communicative competence. Results show how they themselves reflected on the nonnative-speaker teacher’s adoption of a native pronunciation/intonation model for awareness-raising. The overall responses indicated their willingness to practise in the native-speaker model to improve their communicative competence.

Table 2 shows participant reflections on the impact of intonation-awareness-raising activities on their perceptions of seven major factors. Results indicate that because of the awareness-raising activities an overwhelming majority became more aware of their ability to see differences in models/varieties of English pronunciation/intonation (86.7%), especially differences between RP and the local model/variety in their suprasegmental features (95%).
Table 2: Participant feedback on awareness-raising activities (averaged scores in %, N=60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Points</th>
<th>Not very clear</th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Very clear</th>
<th>Extremely clear</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Need to see differences in models/varieties</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Differences between RP and local model/variety in their suprasegmental features</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meanings and functions expressed in intonation in the sentences and passages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reasons for having personal preferences for a particular model/variety (e.g., each model/variety has its own characteristics, socially desirable, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Psychological and sociocultural needs of native model/variety (e.g. EFL teachers are role models; RP is more prestigious, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Enhancement of confidence in speaking</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Overall improvement in oral-aural effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Some percentages are not exact due to rounding.*
The meanings and functions expressed in intonation also became more transparent to them (96.7%). They were clearer about why they preferred a particular model/variety (98.3%). They also became more conscious of a fact that EFL teachers were role models and standard British English, or PR for that matter, was more prestigious (95%). Therefore, they had the aspiration to speak in a nice way. More importantly, their confidence in speaking was enhanced (90%). Their overall improvement in effective oral communication was also related to their confidence (93.3%). All these findings were expected, as the textbooks in schools and at the tertiary level are audio-recorded by native speakers, and almost all the EFL learners had very high expectations of the standard in pronunciation (e.g., GRANT & LIU, 1993; JACQUES & LIU, 1995).

Discussion

TEFL Student Voices

The present study was conducted in two phases, with each having its own focus. Phase I produced results showing a uniform tendency among TEFL students to accord a better score to the native speaker model/variety on all the eight “sources of input”. The nonnative-speaker model/variety was disadvantaged. It is evident from the judgement tasks given to them that an overwhelming majority (98%) of the participants were clear about the two models/varieties, with the native speaker model/variety being rated higher than that of the nonnative (99.5% vs. 80%), which suggests that they were not ambivalent in attitude towards the two. So, the prestige that comes with a native-speaker model was recognised, which accounts for why they personally preferred the native speaker (90.5% vs. 54%). This is also in agreement with their judgement of the social status of the two speakers (98% vs. 51%). It is reasonable that they predominantly favoured the native speaker, as, in their learning experience, a
perfect pronunciation has always been highly valued by teachers, peers and society at large. This indicates a possible influence that the learning context and the input-poor environment, where EFL learning and teaching take place, have had on students’ perceptions and their preference for the native-speaker model.

Moreover, the Chinese learning culture does not allow for imprecision in anything a person does or says. This cultural practice might be reflected subconsciously in their preferences for the native speaker model/variety (cf. CORTAZZI & JIN, 1996). Translated into foreign language learning and teaching contexts, this means that learners must learn to speak as a standard native-speaker does. It is evident that, for the first time, these learners were given a chance to choose what they wanted, and the freedom given was also taken seriously. The findings also seem to mirror what PIRT (1990), MORLEY (1991, 1994), ANDREASSON (1994), and others are concerned about. Of course, the students might have realised the difficulty in achieving precision and accuracy in pronunciation and intonation, yet they did not want to give up. Such being the case, in pedagogy, teachers might need to explain to students that, if they aspire to speak as a native speaker does, they have to be realistic and set feasible learning objectives. Otherwise, with too high expectations, the hurt will also be greater if they fail in their attempt to achieve their objectives or aims.

Impacts of Awareness-Raising Activities

The intonation awareness-raising activities seemed to be rewarding. From Phase II of the study, the participants’ alignment with the native model indicated their acknowledgement of the benefits that such a model would bring to them. For example, they were clearer about why they preferred the native model to that of the nonnative, and they were more conscious of the prestige that came with the model in which they spoke, as they regarded themselves as role models in EFL classrooms. It is also worthwhile to note that their stronger awareness of differences between the native and the nonnative models/varieties would help
them enlarge their repertoires and extend their reach in future verbal encounters with English speakers of different L1 backgrounds, as is argued by some scholars familiar with the Chinese EFL context (ZHANG, 2000). More interesting and thought provoking are their conceptualisations of the impacts of such explicit classroom intervention. They reported that their confidence in speaking was enhanced and the overall effectiveness in aural-oral skills also improved, as they now became more or less conscious of the fact that there were differences in intonational meanings. The results are in contrast to what they responded before the awareness-raising activities were conducted. This suggests that the pedagogical efforts had some intervening effects.

In addition to the results obtained above, positive responses were received from the participants when the teacher-researcher exchanged views with them on the issue in the feedback discussion session on the awareness-raising activities. Clearly, because of their many years’ EFL teaching experience, they had realised the importance of pronunciation and intonation. In addition to clearly indicating their recognition of the importance of the intonation component in TEL preparation, they also commented that the intonation component was especially useful when school textbooks in China were becoming communicative in orientation, which requires that teachers have some degrees of familiarity with English intonation. This understanding of the importance and the usefulness of intonation in EFL learning further echoes PENNINGTON and RICHARDS’ (1983: 211) position; that is, “intonation is an essential component of the prosodic continuity that makes connected stretches of speech—as opposed to individually spoken words or syllables—coherent and interpretable by the listener”.

As Table 2 shows, their judgements were based both on their knowledge of phonological features and their own sociocultural and psychological orientations with specific reference to the practice tasks used in the study. It seems that their feedback on the awareness-raising activities further found expression for the
beneficial effects of having this intonation component in the TEFL education programme. For example, 86.7% realised that it was necessary to see differences between native and nonnative models, which seems to suggest that the native and the nonnative models could mean differently in their language learning experiences.

It needs to be pointed out that, although in the awareness-raising sessions they were asked to show their understanding of the importance of intonation when using English, I was not sure, at that time, how they would have to respond to such instructional efforts. Nevertheless, by virtue of the examples provided to them for practising different intonation patterns, they showed their improved understanding of the intonation system, and their feedback on the kind of awareness-raising activities appeared to be positive. Nonetheless, it is not sure whether they really mastered the intonation system, as, intrinsically, mastering the English intonation system could be a quite a challenge to some EFL learners, which was not set as an objective of the present study.

Participants’ comments similarly show that they accorded importance to the teaching of discourse intonation. They said that intonation needs to be taught explicitly in such an input-poor environment as China as much as the basic sounds of English. Or, at least, students’ awareness of the importance of discourse intonation should be raised. Such instruction should be integrated into the phonetics course, which usually emphasises accuracy in sound production. They observed that the traditional practice of training them in accurately producing vowels, diphthongs and consonants cannot give them enough information about how these sounds could be effectively produced or understood in a flow of speech in relation to layers of meanings. In contrast, intonation instruction helps them not only decipher speaker-intentions more accurately but also enhance their communicative competence and intelligibility in real verbal interactions, which are more often displayed on their conversation partners’ facial expressions and the use of different intonations and contours (as
in “Follow Me” TV series). By and large, intonation instruction increases their confidence to use English in the classroom and beyond when they are to face the challenges of delivering the newly launched English textbooks (*Junior English for China* and *Senior English for China* series, 3-year programmes respectively and other newly-released textbook series).

Like many of the course participants, QIU (pseudonym), a typical representative of the TEFL students, observed that his prior EFL learning experience had not given them sufficient training in two major areas. One area was productive linguistic skills and the other various functions that the language could perform when it was contextualised. This was why he thought that besides training in teaching methods, his EFL proficiency should not be downplayed, and intonation should be one important component for his proficiency and competence:

Although our school textbooks are becoming more and more communicative in contents and their guiding principles, we EFL-trainee-teachers should realise that it is precisely because of their communicative orientation we need to know more about the usefulness of intonation in speech.

RUI shared almost similar views on such an intervention, although her thinking was based more on reflection. By relating what was done in her TEFL programme to how she had learned English and her failure to capture the intentions of native speakers, she seemed to appreciate more strongly the awareness-raising activities. She observed:

I remember watching “Follow Me” (a BBC ELT series) on CCTV (China Central Television), in which the cast spoke so beautiful English. But sometimes, I was unable to get at what they implied when the conversation was getting more delicate. Now, our middle-school
textbooks are becoming more like this type, which means that the communicative orientation coupled with “the eclectic approach” will be the mainstay in ELT in China after many years’ dominance of the traditional grammar-translation method. This part of intonation training really helped me to understand the English language better, especially the implications that different intonations might convey. It also constantly reminded me how I could put my meaning across without causing misunderstandings in my conversation with my foreign teachers here.

Sociopolitical and Pedagogical Implications

The importance of English intonation tends to be either ignored or neglected in many TEFL education programmes, particularly in China, on the grounds that it is too difficult or complicated for students to learn, or that students themselves can pick it up gradually. Notwithstanding the mentality leading to the neglect of intonation instruction, reported here is an educational intervention in classroom practice of raising TEFL students’ awareness of the importance of intonation within the KINGDON (1958) and ROACH (1991) framework (see also TENCH, 1996). This was implemented based on TEFL students’ perceptions and sociocultural and psychological needs.

The findings here might trigger further discussions on the notion of “linguistic imperialism” and “linguicism” as such (PHILLIPSON, 1992, 1996). Does the notion really reflect EFL learners’ psychological inclination in reality? Or the formulation of it derives only from the writer’s own perception and reflection? It seems that we really have not understood our students’ sociocultural and psychological needs, nor have we given sufficient attention to their voices. Part of the data here suggests that the TEFL students had a stronger interest in the native-speaker model and they wanted to practise it so that their variety will not
deviate too much from the norm, and some would like to have the native speaker model/variety as part of their own speech repertoires (see also NEUFELD, 2001).

On a broader front, BRAINE (1999: vix) argues that “PHILLIPSON dealt inadequately with the topic in his thought-provoking Linguistic Imperialism (1992). In fact, nonnative English teachers may not show opposition to the power and spread of English. Indeed, English has been their passports to better educational and career prospects and the gateway to career, economic, and social betterment” (cf. CANAGARAJAH, 1999). Although the data from the present study do not directly address learners’ concerns over “linguistic imperialism”, their attitudinal inclinations seem to lend support to the view represented by BRAINE. An issue arising from such findings, it appears to me, is one that is related to political correctness, rather than pedagogical suitability. It might be argued that TEFL students are not confident about their own variety (should they know that they had one), but being in an EFL environment, the difficulty of their developing an intelligible variety is perceivable. Moreover, the “intelligibility” issue is really complex (see FIELD, 2003, for a recent review).

Therefore, to cater to student needs, teachers’ provision of both native and nonnative models/varieties to students seems necessary. This is because, if teachers are really concerned about helping learners to grow in a foreign language they learn, any effort to expose them to both varieties would offer students more options from which they are entitled to choose a model they prefer. Consistent with JENKINS’ (1998) proposal, the adoption of a native model in the present study was proven to be an effective means in helping TEFL students to become aware of the importance of suprasegmental features to enhance intelligibility and communicability (see e.g., BRAZIL, 1997; BROWN, 1996; DETERDING & POEDJOSOEDARMO, 1998, for more detailed theoretical descriptions). This effort conforms to some scholars’ call for greater language awareness in language teaching (JAMES, 1999).
It is clear that, through the awareness-raising approach, the participants began to have a newer perspective on the language they were learning. Further instructional emphases still need to be placed not only on the sound level but also on the suprasegmental level in the communicative implementation of EFL teacher-training initiatives. This is because “the attitude ‘it’s good enough’ is the enemy of the better and ‘we’re better off now’ is the enemy of the best” (HAMMERLY, 1991: 61). Instructional efforts to extend the learners’ repertoires will merit credit in the long run.

So far, the products of the joint project between Longman Asia and PEP Beijing, in the form of two sets of books (Junior English for China by GRANT & LIU, 1993; and Senior English for China by JACQUES & LIU, 1995) have been widely used in schools across China. These books are communicative in orientation. Recent textbooks published in China have equally clear communicative orientations (e.g., PEP, 2001a, 2001b). Therefore, TEFL students’ command of English in general and pronunciation/discourse intonation in particular will surely not only stand them in good stead and boost their confidence to use English in teaching but also assist them in encouraging their future students to have a more intelligible pronunciation and intonation.

Cautions and Limitations

Several points of caution are also in order. The procedures I have suggested are nothing but some fundamental aspects necessary for raising TEFL students’ awareness of the importance of intonation, or more exactly, to expose these students to the richness of the meanings of English intonation contours based on their own interest and sociocultural and psychological needs. While teachers can conduct intonation instruction in a neutral and affect-independent context, students interested in advanced learning of English intonation need spend much more time and effort, as advised by KINGDON (1958). As learners make progress in understanding different patterns of intonation and their contours,
they can be further instructed in the expressive implications of intonations in situational contexts. Teachers should not expect to reach these objectives within one or two sessions of instruction. Patience and resilience are necessary for both teachers and their TEFL students.

Although a British model was chosen in this study for awareness-raising because of my own and the mainstream EFL teachers’ and TEFL students’ educational experiences and readiness, this did not exclude possibilities of EFL teachers’ adopting other models of intonation in the teaching of such a dynamic aspect as discourse intonation (cf. GUI, 1985, who systematically introduces features of American English phonology; see also ZHANG, 2000, who proposes widening EFL teachers’ perspectives).

Obviously, this paper has addressed the intelligibility concern only from the speaker’s perspective. While it is clear that nonnative English teachers should not adopt a pure native-speaker norm as instructional objectives because it is impractical for learners, other nonnative models, if there is one that is carefully described and documented, can be suggested as models in teaching. Unfortunately, there was a lack of an established nonnative-speaker intonation model when this intervention study was conducted. This should not impede teachers’ educational efforts to help EFL students to understand that, with the aim of enhancing communication competence, we have to realise that human communication in English (or in any other language) can take different forms, e.g., native-native, native-nonnative, nonnative-nonnative speech situations, and the speaker is not the only person contributing to intelligibility. In each situation, the listener has equal obligations in constructing meaning to achieve intelligibility. Thus, native speakers and nonnative speakers need to construct meaning jointly in each encounter.

It also needs to be pointed out that ROACH (1991), by updating KINGDON’S (1958) and others’ work, posits that the “tonetic” approach prior to the 1950s
gradually became inadequate for dealing with natural spontaneous speech. As such, in raising TEFL students’ awareness, teachers need to explain this to students. Furthermore, KINGDON and ROACH, among others, also recognise the importance of the initial and final unstressed syllables. “Preheads” and “tails” are used to describe the unstressed syllables in the initial and final positions of utterances to make the system an organic whole. Variations of these tones in different contexts are also dealt with regarding meaning-expressions in their work.

For example, according to KINGDON (1985), the Rising-Falling Tone (/\), the Rising-Falling-Rising tone (/\ /, divided), and the Rising-Falling-Rising Tone (/\/, undivided) are dynamic variations of the basic intonation patterns that are used in English, whose connotations are rather pertinent to meaning-making in situational contexts. Tertiary-level pronunciation/phonetics/phonology teachers need to study all this carefully and systematically before classroom teaching proceeds. The most important thing is that, should lecturers want to teach students discourse intonation, they also need to emphasise the necessity of not only learning by imitation but also practice through use (KINGDON, 1958), and particularly in situations where differences in intonation really can be determinants in discourse interpretation and effective communication. Indeed, the awareness-raising approach is only part of the picture if intelligibility is a major concern in communication.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The present study, designed and conducted in two phases, explored possibilities of teaching discourse intonation to raise EFL students’ awareness of its importance in communication. Such attempts were based on participant perceptions of the need to approximate to a native-speaker model. Results showed that TEFL students in an EFL context such as China, who were to become teachers of English, expressed their aspirations for learning to speak
English by referring to a native-speaker model. The awareness-raising activities based on such perceptions also produced some evidence that supports the teaching of discourse intonation to EFL students to build their confidence and to improve their communicative competence. I would like to conclude that even if it is unrealistic to expect TEFL students to reach native-like pronunciation/intonation, the kind of training reported here helped them to lay a solid foundation for their professional development, which, in turn, will help deepen their understanding of the models/varieties in existence and then develop their own in the future. The role that this kind of training played in helping them to improve listening comprehension should also be obvious (e.g., BROWN, 1996; GILBERT, 1995; HAMMERLY, 1991; MENDELSON, 1994; MORLEY, 1991).

However, given that China is an EFL context, students did not show strong signs that they wanted to stand out as one unique group of speakers of English; that is, their EFL identity was overshadowed by their strong aspirations to speak English as perfectly as possibly—a native-speaker model. Whether this identity issue is crucial will depend on researchers’ further effort to see how Chinese EFL learners will cast themselves in the sociolinguistic and sociopolitical frameworks within the larger context of an increasingly globalised China.

References


258


**Acknowledgements**

I thank my former colleague Ms Donglan Zhang for her assistance in data collection. I also thank Dr John Field of King’s College London for sharing his thoughts with me on this topic. I am indebted to Dr Peter Garrett of Cardiff University, and my colleagues, Dr David Deterding and Dr Mick Randall, for their careful reading and incisive, critical comments on earlier versions of the paper. I am obliged to all the participants for their warm cooperation. Any error or omission remains my responsibility.

**Appendix A**

Sentences used in awareness-raising activities

a) I am sure you can learn English intonation well. *(High Level Tone)*
b) Are you interested in English intonation? *(Low Level Tone)*
c) Is English intonation ‘interesting’? *(Tone I, High)*
d) He isn’t interested in English intonation. *(Tone I, Low)*
e) We are going to learn two types of tones. *(Tone II)*
f) ‘Never mind, if you don’t know how to do it well. *(Tone III, Divided)*
g) He ‘wants to learn intonation’ now. *(Tone III, Undivided)* *(KINGDON, 1958: 23-38)*
Appendix B
Participant judgments of the models/varieties of English produced by native and nonnative speakers

Instructions: You are not to be informed whether the voice in the two recording tasks is that of a native or a nonnative speaker. The first task consists of seven sentences and the second task is a passage. You will hear the recorded voices of two speakers reading the two tasks. After hearing them, you are requested to fill in the chart given below with reference to the prompts given. Please feel free to make your judgement according to what you have learned from your previous training courses as learners of EFL as well as your intuitive feeling, as you are given full autonomy to do so. Please indicate your personal preference for either of the models/varieties. Please also try to see what kind of social status each speaker would enjoy. The results from this exercise will not be recorded in your semestral transcript. Please give a score to rate the two speakers according to the percentage each scale carries in terms of how close each variety is to the standard native British variety, or commonly known as Received Pronunciation (RP), i.e., Southern Standard British English. Please take the following as a guideline. You are requested to give a specific score to each speaker type.

Not at all close to RP: 0-19
Not close to RP: 20-39
Close to RP: 40-59
Very close to RP: 60-79
Extremely close to RP: 80-100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Tom Passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Speaker Type A</td>
<td>Speaker Type B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-likeness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and accuracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressiveness in intonation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalness in articulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acoustic comfort to the ear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
Participant perceptions of various factors relating to native and nonnative models/varieties of English prior to the awareness-raising activities

What do you think of the following factors in relation to learning English pronunciation/intonation? Please indicate how clear you are about each of the following factors by choosing one of the four options (A, B, C, & D):

1) a need to see differences in the models/varieties of pronunciation and intonation?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

2) differences between RP and local model/variety (EFL) in their suprasegmental features?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

3) meanings and functions expressed in intonation as represented in the sentences and the passages?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

4) of reasons for having personal preferences for a particular model/variety (e.g., each model/variety has its own characteristics, socially desirable, etc.)?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

5) psychological and sociolinguistic needs for a native model/variety (e.g., EFL teachers are role models; RP is more prestigious, etc.)?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

6) the role that the awareness-raising activities played in enhancing your confidence in speaking?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear

7) overall improvement in effectiveness in speaking?
   A. Not very clear   B. Clear  C. Very clear  D. Extremely clear
Appendix D: Participant feedback after awareness-raising

Dear ____________:

We have completed six sessions (almost 12 hours) on the importance of intonation in verbal communication. It is time that we reflect on what we have done. We have dealt with, to varying degrees, different shades of meaning that possibly come along with the intonation in which an utterance is made. We have done so mainly by comparing a native speaker model/variety with that of a nonnative speaker. We have practised around the tasks that were presented through frequent reference to the native-speaker model, Southern Standard British English, commonly known as RP, based on your preferences. In this way, we have become more or less aware of the co-existence of at least two models/varieties of English pronunciation and intonation—RP and the other a local variety. However, I am not sure how strongly you have become aware of the strengths such activities brought to you. So, if you could let me know how you feel about the awareness-raising activities we have gone through, particularly, the benefits you have gained from them, I will appreciate it very much. After reading each of the complete statements, please tick a choice that best suits you.
To what extent have you become aware of -
(Note: For the complete statements listed here, please refer to Appendix C)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Points</th>
<th>Not very clear</th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Very clear</th>
<th>Extremely clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Need to see differences in models/varieties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Differences between RP and local model/variety in their suprasegmental features</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meanings and functions expressed in intonation in the sentences and passages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reasons for having personal preferences for a particular model/variety (e.g., each model/variety has its own characteristics, socially desirable, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Psychological and sociocultural needs of a native model/variety (e.g., EFL teachers are role models; RP is more prestigious, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Enhancement of confidence in speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Overall improvement in speaking effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author


Address for correspondence:

Dr Lawrence Jun Zhang  
English Language & Literature Dept.  
National Institute of Education  
Nanyang Technological University  
1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616  
REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE  
Tel: (65)-6790 3474 (office)  
Fax: (65)-6896 9149 (office)  
Email: jzhang@nie.edu.sg