

Problems in Writing for Scholarly Publication in English: The Case of Hong Kong

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Through in-depth interviews, this paper identifies a range of problems which confront Hong Kong Chinese scholars in writing for publication in English and which they feel put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis native speakers of that language. These problems are as follows: they have less facility of expression; it takes them longer to write; they have a less rich vocabulary; they find it difficult to make claims for their research with the appropriate amount of force; their process of composition may be influenced by their L1; qualitative articles are more problematic than quantitative articles; they are restricted to a simple style; and the introductions and discussions to scholarly articles are particularly problematic parts. Given the reduction of emphasis on English in Hong Kong following the reversion to Chinese sovereignty, these problems are likely to increase. A number of recommendations are made to remediate the situation.

English is now indisputably the language of international scholarship and research.¹ Academic research is at the forefront of an ever-increasing trend of globalisation, along with transnational companies, the internet, Hollywood, and other global entertainment and information providers. International databases, such as the Science Citation Index and many international journals, can now be accessed on-line. The language of all of this information is predominantly English. Where in the past, a language such as German held an important place in, for example, chemistry, this is no longer the case, and English has come to predominate (Wood, 1997a, 1997b). A similar decline in the use of languages other than English in the research literature of various disciplines is true for French, Japanese, Russian, and other major languages. Because the international databases primarily list English language journals, the ascendancy of English is self-perpetuating (Gibbs, 1995). Libraries subscribe to journals that have the greatest impact—those that are included in the databases. Because journals publishing in languages other than English tend not to be included in the databases, they consequently are not held by libraries internationally. Articles published in these jour-

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nals therefore receive little attention and few citations, and scholars thus are less inclined to publish in them.

With the increasingly market-oriented management style of higher institutes of learning worldwide (Bridges & McLaughlin, 1994; Brown, 1995; Hartley, 1995; Whitty, 1996), scholars are coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate their worth in measurable terms. One commonly used measure is "research output," which usually is calculated in terms of number and quality of publications, quality often being determined by whether or not a publication is included in one of the citation indexes. To succeed professionally, therefore, scholars need to produce a stream of publications that will be cited in the indexes, and these of course are likely to be in English.

Most attention given to the question of the dominance of English as the language of scholarly publication has been in the scientific disciplines (see below for review), but English also is making strong inroads in the social sciences and humanities. A recent study by Burgess (1997), for example, shows how Spanish linguists are increasingly publishing in the international language. Even where a strong *prima facie* case might be made for writing in a language other than English—where the source material, for example, is in that language—publication often will be in English, to ensure international exposure. One of the participants in the study to be reported in this article, a Chinese historian, for example, emphasised the importance of publishing in English his findings concerning the thirteenth century porcelain industry in Southern China.

To the extent that nonnative English-speaking (NNS) scholars continue to publish in their first language, this is likely to be their less significant work. As an indication of this, Grabe (cited in Wood, 1997a, p. 6) points out that French or Japanese scientists cite their own work in English three to four times more than their work in their first language. Similarly, Swales (1997) refers to the case of Swedish, where the last medical journals to accept articles in that language have recently switched to an English-only policy, the only Swedish language publication in the discipline remaining being a newsletter.

The hegemony of English in academic research brings with it a number of important benefits. Without it, the rapid dissemination of human knowledge, which is now a commonplace, would not have been possible. Dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge has the capacity to bring with it progress in education, health, and social welfare, as well as very significant material benefits on a world wide scale. In addition, English, as a common *lingua franca*, has the potential to create cross-cultural understanding and the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations. On the other hand, however, the predominance of English has its negative aspects. As writers, such as Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994), have warned, English carries with it a lot of ideological baggage. The language never can be separated from the contexts in which it is used, these writers argue, transmitting ideology, "with, in, and through itself" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 1), devaluing local languages and culture, and perpetuating inequalities between native and

nonnative speakers (p. 306). In line with this position, Mauranen (1993) has pointed to the linguistic impoverishment that is created when a language ceases to be the vehicle of a sophisticated genre such as the research article: "Insofar as rhetorical practices embody cultural thought patterns," Mauranen argues, "we should encourage the maintenance of variety and diversity in academic rhetorical practices—excessive standardization may counteract innovation and creative thought by forcing them into standard forms" (Mauranen, 1993, p. 172, cited in Swales, 1997, p. 380). Kothari (1987) (cited in Pennycook, 1994, p. 58) is more strident in his description of the impoverishing role of English on other cultures alluded to by Mauranen, Philippon and Pennycook, referring to it as "the homogenizing monoculture of the mind."

In referring to the cultural impoverishment brought about by the encroachment of English on other languages, one might think that it is the "softer," "creative" disciplines of the humanities that writers such as Mauranen and Kothari are thinking of, rather than the "hard-core" disciplines of the physical sciences. But the hegemony of English is not without its dangers in the physical sciences also. Some commentators, such as Widdowson (1978, 1979) and, more recently, Wood (1997a, 1997b) have claimed that the culture of science (including its discourse) is universal.² Whereas in this postmodern age, even scientists themselves might doubt the tenability of such a positivistic view, even if one were to accept it, the hegemony of English in the scientific domain is accompanied by a significant drawback in the way that it excludes science being conducted outside the mainstream. As Gibbs (1995, p. 77) points out, although developing countries include nearly a quarter of the world's scientists, most leading English language journals publish far smaller proportions of articles by writers from these regions. This may deprive the industrial world, as well as the developing nations, of important knowledge. Gibbs (1995) cites the editor of the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*, who explains that the only way to understand infectious diseases such as the Ebola virus that are spreading from third world countries to the West is to publish the work of local researchers.

Another negative factor relating to the need for scholars to publish in English is the potential advantage that this gives native-English-speaking (NS) scholars vis-à-vis their nonnative-English-speaking (NNS) peers. A number of studies have referred to the disadvantage NNSs experience in writing for international publication in English compared with their NS colleagues. Swales (1990) cites Jernudd and Baldauf's (Jernudd and Baldauf, 1987) findings concerning the disadvantage that Scandinavian researchers in the field of psychology felt. St. John (1987, p. 114), in a study of Spanish scientists, cites one of her subjects, who stated that "It [English] is lamentably but inexorably the international scientific language."

To date, the debate on the hegemony of English in scholarly publication has been conducted in general terms, considering the macro picture. For a number of reasons, however, if the contribution of NNSs to the international literature published in English is to be encouraged, then it is important to conduct research at

the micro level, in terms of individual linguistic and cultural backgrounds and in terms of individual scholars.

Attention needs to be directed at individual linguistic and cultural backgrounds because circumstances may vary greatly. Economically advanced countries, such as France, Germany, and Japan, are likely to be better positioned in terms of material resources for publishing in English; access to technical writers and translators is likely to be better (Canagarajah, 1997). For some places, writing in English may be less of a challenge because of a better education system. Some linguistic contexts will be more amenable to writing in English because the mother tongue is typologically closer to English. In some contexts—postcolonial countries, for example—the status of English may be higher than in others; English may be considered to be the national language, or one of the national languages, and the education system may, to a greater or lesser extent, have English as the medium of instruction. In such contexts, although not the mother tongue, English may be the language of literacy.

Attention needs to be focussed on individual scholars because it is important to discover the perceptions, problems, and strategies used by NNS scholars in writing for publication in English. Awareness of how nonnative writers view their situation and how they relate to it is necessary if any positive action is to be taken to ameliorate their position.

The present article takes a microlevel approach to the situation by focussing on a group of NNS scholars in one location, Hong Kong. By means of in-depth interviews, the purpose of this study is to begin to develop an understanding of how this group of Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong scholars perceive themselves as writers of academic articles in English. The article is part of a broader, multi-method approach to studying the issue of writing for publication in English from the Hong Kong perspective. It was conducted in parallel with a quantitative survey, text analysis, interviews with journal editors, and analysis of correspondence with editors. The method used for this study, however, is in-depth interviews with Hong Kong nonnative writers. Specifically, the focus is on the disadvantage the NNS writers feel themselves to be at vis-à-vis their native-speaking peers, a striking feature of the interview data that was collected.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With van Lier (1989, p. 43), I agree that the ethnographer (and the qualitative researcher in general) “walks a fine line between naïve observation and externally imposed interpretation.” Whereas the approach here is that of in-depth interview, and the purpose is to discover the priorities from the perspective of the participants, not of the literature, the existing literature on second language writing and writing for scholarly publication has not been ignored.

The literature is useful in identifying a number of key areas where NNS writers experience difficulty in writing for publication. These include grammar; use of citations; making reference to the published literature; structuring of argument; textual organization; relating text to audience; ways in which to make knowledge claims; ways in which to reveal or conceal the point of view of the author; use of "hedges" to indicate caution expected by the academic community; and "interference" of different cultural views regarding the nature of academic processes (Adams-Smith, 1984; Bazerman, 1988; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Johns, 1993; Mauranen, 1993; St. John, 1987; Swales, 1990). Whereas there is no doubt that NNS writers have difficulty with "surface" features of grammar and citation, it is generally agreed that it is the other more abstract areas of difficulty just listed that are more problematic (Fox, 1994; Parkhurst, 1990), the surface errors being susceptible to correction by a good copy editor. Because of their more abstract nature, research has revealed, introductions and discussion sections are more problematic than the other more formulaic sections of method and results (St. John, 1987).

Whereas the literature just referred to indicates there to be a certain amount of analysis of the product of the academic writing of NNS scholars, there is little on the writing process as they actually experience it.³ One of the few papers in this area is St. John's (1987) study of the writing processes of Spanish scientists publishing in English. St. John found that her subjects had a good grasp of the information structure of the scientific article, that they rarely undertook structural revision, and that their main concern was the precise expression of their thoughts in the second language. In addition, whereas some of her subjects initially used translation, most wrote at least a part of the article directly into English.

Another area of possible difficulty for NNS writers getting published is the possibility of prejudice on the part of editors and reviewers. Gibbs (1995) is not alone in reporting on perceptions of prejudice on the part of NNS scholars. As far as NNS scholars' attitudes towards having to write in English are concerned, however, there are, to my knowledge, no systematic studies concerned with this issue. We have only anecdotal references, such as that of Gibbs (1995), the statements of the Scandinavian psychologists cited by Swales (1990) from Jernudd & Baldauf's (Jernudd & Baldauf, 1987) study cited earlier, and stand-alone statements like those made by the Spanish scientist from St. John's article just quoted on the "lamentable" situation of having to write in English.

To remedy this situation, in parallel with this study, I conducted the survey of Cantonese scholars. Among other factors, this survey found that the Hong Kong academics surveyed consider international refereed journal articles in English to be the most important outlet for publishing the results of their work by far. The small amount of publication in the mother tongue, Chinese, was in the so-called "soft" disciplines and was published primarily in regional and local journals. Just over two thirds of the subjects felt themselves to be at a disadvantage in publishing in English as compared with NSs.⁴ The most frequently indicated difficulty in

writing for publication was technical problems with the English language, which were viewed as more serious than abstract aspects, such as rhetorical patterning, innovative thinking, and reporting the literature. In spite of the problems indicated by the subjects, however, confidence in being able to write a paper in English and getting it published was high. This contrasted with low confidence levels for writing and publishing a paper in Chinese.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND IN HONG KONG

To understand what the participants in this study have to say, it is necessary to know something about the sociolinguistic background they come from. Hong Kong is a very homogeneous society linguistically, with over 98% of the population being Cantonese speaking. From the 1840s, however, until 1978, the only official language was English. The colonial language predominated in government, the law, and among the higher echelons of the business community. Even with the advent of the language act of 1978, which accorded Chinese status as an official language alongside English, the colonial language still predominated in those areas mentioned right up to the reversion of sovereignty in 1997.

In education, both English and Chinese were used as the medium of instruction at secondary schools during the colonial period. From the 1970s, however, English-medium instruction began to dominate. Because of English's gate-keeping function in controlling access to prestigious careers, parents, who were free to send their children to whichever type of school they liked (as long as they could satisfy the entrance requirements), preferred their children to receive education through that medium. Because of difficulties in actually implementing an English-medium policy,⁵ however, many of Hong Kong's so-called English-medium schools, in fact, have used what is referred to as a "mixed mode" of teaching, with English as the language of the instructional media and examinations, but with Cantonese (with English terminology) as the medium of classroom exposition and discussion (Flowerdew, 1998).⁶

At the tertiary level, English also has been predominant in Hong Kong. The University of Hong Kong, established in 1911, is English medium. Hong Kong's second university, established in 1963, the Chinese University, in spite of its name, teaches in both Chinese and English. Among the four newer universities, established in the eighties, one has a bilingual policy, whereas the others are all English medium. However, following a massive tertiary expansion in the 1980s and early 1990s and a concomitant decline in (average) English standards of those entering university, as in the secondary schools, a mixed mode of teaching is beginning to manifest itself at university level also (Flowerdew et al., 1998).

Due to the fact that, until the expansion of the eighties and nineties, university education was very elitist, open to only 2% of the population, many Hong Kong students went overseas to study, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level,

where they were likely to be immersed in an English-speaking environment. Because a large proportion of the academic staff of Hong Kong's universities were expatriates, the 2% of students studying in the colony also were inducted into an English-speaking environment. With some 18% of the relevant age group now able to enter university, however, while many still prefer to go overseas, it is now possible to study right up to doctoral level in Hong Kong. This has two important ramifications. First, because the younger academics are now doing their undergraduate and postgraduate training in Hong Kong, their own exposure to English and consequently their proficiency in the language is reduced. Second, because of their reduced competence in English, these younger academics are more likely to teach in Cantonese, further perpetuating the decline in the general level of use of English in the universities.

Although their secondary and tertiary education (unless they have been overseas) is most likely to have been English medium or mixed mode, Hong Kong people's educational experience is nevertheless firmly rooted in a Cantonese/Chinese context.⁷ Outside school, their life-world is predominantly Cantonese/Chinese: family life, the media, signage, etc. are all in the medium of Cantonese/Chinese. In addition, the early literacy experience of most Hong Kong people, from the age of three, when they start learning the Chinese character system in kindergarten (kindergarten is the norm for children in Hong Kong), until they enter secondary school, is Cantonese/Chinese.

This sociolinguistic background has important ramifications as far as the Hong Kong Chinese scholars who participated in this study are concerned. Living in a Cantonese-speaking environment, they have little need to use English outside their work, where they may only use it for writing and some teaching. Because of the limited opportunities for university study in Hong Kong, unless they are very young, these scholars are likely to have spent at least some time studying overseas in English-speaking countries. Their kindergarten and primary education is likely to have been Chinese-medium and their secondary education English, or, more likely, *de jure* English-medium, but with *de facto* mixed mode teaching.

Whereas, at kindergarten and primary school, participants in this study will have developed their literacy skills in Chinese, from secondary school on, it will have been primarily English. This raises the question of whether it is appropriate to talk about these people as second language writers, given that since the beginning of secondary school, for writing, their first language has been English. Of course, this situation is not unique; it pertains in many postcolonial situations.

METHODOLOGY

Social Constructionist, Grounded Approach

Given its goal of developing an understanding of how Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong scholars perceive themselves as writers of scholarly articles, the

methodology used in this study is, broadly speaking, social constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985). The aim is to allow the second language writers to voice their perceptions of the situation they find themselves in, to recreate, in effect, their own reality as they perceive it. In so far as it derives the categories for analysis from the voices of the participants themselves, the approach is emic (or "grounded") rather than etic (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In this type of approach, as it is adopted here, there is a decentering and deprivileging of the researcher. The centre of gravity is shifted from the researcher identifying what is important to the subjects introspecting and identifying for themselves what is to be referred to, interpreted, and analyzed. The assumption is that individuals have the ability to explain the meanings of their actions and to analyze the social situations of which they form a part. An "insider" perspective thus is created in which subjects are no longer objectified, but are empowered to define themselves. The individuals involved in the research indeed become participants, not subjects. In this way, social and psychological phenomena that are normally hidden from the outside researcher are brought to consciousness and multiple and indeterminate meanings are created, instead of the fixed and singular meanings of positivistic research.

In selecting the reflective interview as the methodology for the study, the aim was to provide a context within which participants could recount and reflect upon their experience. The purpose was to learn from the participants rather than to study them (Spradley, 1979). The NNS writers tell their stories and give their reflections from their point of view rather than the researcher telling the stories for them. The researcher is the student in the conversations and the NNS writers are the experts. The role played by the interviewer is to enable the NNS writers to contribute directly to generating hypotheses, explaining meanings of the research process and formulating conclusions. Having said that, however, note that the interviews were conducted within the framework of a much larger study and that the ongoing data being collected within this broader framework is likely to have inevitably affected my predispositions in certain ways.

Of course, the textual arrangement of the description that follows in itself carries certain meanings. As Atkinson (1990, p. 15) has written of qualitative (ethnographic) accounts, "the text cannot simply transcribe or report, but it must also persuade." The qualitative text, like any other, uses rhetorical devices designed to convey a particular point of view of the writer and to persuade the reader. Analysis is presented in implicit, as well as explicit, ways. In this article, accordingly, the categories selected as the headings for each part of the results section represent my analysis of what I consider to be the most salient points in the interviews concerning problems expressed by the NNS writers and the relations between them.

Participants

The participants involved in the study are listed in Table 1. The number of participants included ($n = 26$) was determined when saturation of information

TABLE 1
Participants Involved in the Study

Code	Discipline	Position
P1.	History	Assistant Professor
P2.	Rehabilitation Engineering	Professor
P3.	Organizational Psychology	Assistant Professor
P4.	Occupational Therapy	Assistant Professor
P5.	Electrical Engineering	Assistant Professor
P6.	Systems Simulation	Assistant Professor
P7.	Pattern Engineering	Assistant Professor
P8.	English	Lecturer
P9.	Linguistics	Assistant Professor
P10.	Professional Development	Lecturer
P11.	Teacher Education	Assistant Professor
P12.	Education	Associate Professor
P13.	Medicine	Associate Professor
P14.	Mathematics	Assistant Professor
P15.	Social Psychology	Assistant Professor
P16.	Geography	Assistant Professor
P17.	Chinese Family Studies	Assistant Professor
P18.	Business Management	Assistant Professor
P19.	Biomechanics	Assistant Professor
P20.	Rehabilitation Sciences	Assistant Professor
P21.	Mass Communications	Lecturer
P22.	English for Business	Lecturer
P23.	Chinese Phonetics	Associate Professor
P24.	Chemistry	Associate Professor
P25.	Urban Planning	Associate Professor
P26.	Chinese Philosophy	Professor

was achieved, that is, no new data was found that contributed anything of particular interest (Minichiello et al., 1990). The participants were selected to provide a sample of Hong Kong scholars in terms of various genders, ages, ranks, disciplines, and universities.⁸

Interview Method

The interviews (which were all recorded) were conducted over a three-year period, from mid-1995. Some of the participants were selected by means of personal contacts, whereas others were chosen by means of the university telephone directories. The overall aim in dealing with participants was to build trust and encourage openness and self-disclosure. This was more easily done with those participants already known to the interviewers. With those participants who were not known previously to the interviewers, time was taken to carefully explain the purpose of the study, to answer any questions, and generally put the participants at ease. Where possible, more than one meeting was held. My own status as a

Hong Kong academic and my prior knowledge of the general sociolinguistic and academic setting were an advantage in this respect. To guard against the "Hawthorn effect" (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1985, p. 2138), that is, the possible tendency for participants to either converge or diverge from the perceived position of the interviewer, participants were encouraged to be as truthful and open as possible.

Before each interview, participants were invited to complete a standardised questionnaire (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) designed to collect basic biographical and professional data. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants and lasted between one and two hours. The "reflexive" interview format (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) was designed so as to minimise the influence of the researcher on what the interviewee said, but at the same time provide a framework to ensure that certain key areas identified in preliminary studies were covered. Based on earlier research conducted with Hong Kong academics (Flowerdew & Miller, 1992, 1995, 1996a, 1996b), the framework of interview questions was organised into individual sections on perceptions, problems, and strategies. In designing the set of questions, over a dozen pilot interviews were conducted with Hong Kong scholars to determine what the broad issues seemed to be. Pilot interviewing was shared between the researcher and a research assistant, who was not familiar with the literature, the latter allowing maximum freedom for the agenda to be set by the participant/interviewee. The interviews conducted as part of the main study also were shared by the researcher and a research assistant. Having more than one interviewer allowed for a degree of investigator triangulation to the data (Patton, 1987).

Questions asked in the interviews were designed to elicit a large sample of utterances (Spradley, 1979). Participants were told at the beginning that the longer their answers were the better, and that although the interviewer had a set of general areas for discussion, participants were encouraged to introduce any information or interpretation that they felt appropriate.

Initial questions (Appendix 1) were mostly open-ended and descriptive (Spradley, 1979). "Can you describe your experience in getting published?", "How would you describe your written English?", and "What do you think are your individual problems in writing in English for publication?" are typical descriptive questions.

Structural questions (Spradley, 1979), such as "Could you give me other examples of problems you have had with editors?" and "What other types of assistance do you get from native speakers in preparing an article for submission to a journal?", were adapted to each individual participant, to follow up on descriptive questions, to test hypothesised categories, and to elicit examples to fit into hypothesised categories.

Contrast questions were used to compare participants across interviews.⁹ "Some people I have interviewed have said that there is more need for writing

in Chinese in the arts and humanities. Do you agree?" and "Editors I have interviewed and some Hong Kong writers have said that grammar and spelling are not a real problem. What is your view on this?" are examples of contrast questions.

After each interview, the recording was transcribed by the research assistant, and a copy was sent to the participant to verify that it was accurate. Participants were offered the opportunity of modifying anything they had said, although only a few took advantage of this opportunity.

Method of Analysis

Analysis was conducted by means of ATLAS.ti qualitative research software (Scientific Software Development, 1997). ATLAS.ti allows researchers to store, select, index/code, and annotate large amounts of research material, such as interview data and notes. This data can then be sorted and retrieved according to the categories established.

Just as having the researcher and a research assistant conduct the interviews allowed for triangulation in data collection, so did having both people participate in analysis. Data was loaded onto the ATLAS.ti software and sorted and re-sorted into categories.¹⁰ The aim was to look for both commonalities and differences within the group of participants. Rather than just considering the uniqueness of the specific culture of NNS writers, differences such as discipline, educational and professional background, and amount of exposure to English were looked for. During this analysis, opportunities were taken to return to the participants for confirmation of statements they had provided, for further elucidation of such statements and for additional data. This supplementary data also was incorporated into the ATLAS.ti database. I emphasise that a deliberate effort was made to avoid forcing the experiences and perceptions of subjects into pre-established categories, although as already stated, the extant literature on second language writing was not ignored altogether. At all times, I was conscious of the need to avoid applying stereotypes of what the literature tells us about L2 writing and end up with a deficit model (although, as it turned out, this is the picture that developed). I also was conscious of Hong Kong's unique (postcolonial) situation and the likelihood that my findings would be unique in some respects, but similar to other NNS contexts in others.

Once the data had been sorted and resorted, it was clear that scholars' problems concerning writing for publication in English made up a distinctive subset of categories. These categories are represented by the headings in the findings section of this article and in Table 2.

They were selected from over 40 categories overall. The most interesting features from among this subset are identified and reported in this article in the participants' own words.

TABLE 2
Categories of Participants' Problems in Writing for Publication in English

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- NNSs have less facility of expression
 - NNSs take longer to write
 - NNSs have a less rich vocabulary
 - NNSs are less capable in making claims for their research with the appropriate amount of force
 - NNSs are better suited to writing quantitative articles
 - NNSs' L1 may intervene in the composition process
 - NNSs are best advised to write in a simple style
 - Introductions and discussions are the most problematic parts of research articles for NNSs to write
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RESULTS

The interviews contain a wide range of data concerning participants' perceptions, problems, and strategies, but one of the most striking subsets of the categories that were coded relates to problems identified by participants in writing for publication, especially in terms of a disadvantage compared with NSs. Although scholars accepted that they needed to publish in English (this view pervades all of the interviews and conforms with the finding of my earlier quantitative study in which 92% of respondents said that the most important language for them to publish in was English), they all felt themselves to be at some disadvantage to NSs. This disadvantage manifested itself in a number of ways, and these categories form the basis for the findings presented in this article.¹¹ The categories, the individual identities, and total number of participants making comments fitting into each category are shown in Table 3. This table thus gives an overall picture of the pervasiveness of the various attitudes. Given the open-ended nature of the interviews, however, this data should be treated with caution. The fact that individual participants are not recorded in a given category does not necessarily mean that they did not share this attitude, although it does indicate that the attitude was not particularly salient for the given individual at that moment in time.

NNSs Have Less Facility of Expression

First of all, participants felt themselves to be less able than NSs in expressing themselves in English in a sophisticated manner, as the following quotations indicate:

P9: I think one distinct feature about Cantonese scholars in writing English papers is that they cannot write with style that kind of touch . . . stylish touch to your paper is quite difficult I cannot possibly have that touch similar to that of a native speaker. On the whole, I think this is the part that is missing from Cantonese scholars in general when they write a paper.

P16: No matter what, you cannot express as good as the native speakers I come to the concept that my expression skills are inferior to them When you are thinking what to write, you are just creating an idea. But when they think what to

TABLE 3
Summary of Participants' Comments Regarding the Disadvantages of Publishing in English

Disadvantages of Being a NNS	Participant Code (P) ^a	Number of Scholars Who Expressed Views on this Point
Have less facility of expression	3 4 5 7 8 10 11 13 17 20 21 23 24	13
Take longer to write	2 3 7 8 11 13 17 22	8
Have a less rich vocabulary	3 4 5 7 8 10 11 19 23	9
Are less capable in the subtleties of argumentation	1 4 8 17 20	5
L1 may intervene in the composition process	2 5 7 19	4
Are more capable of writing quantitative articles	2 5 20 23	4
Often relegated to writing in a simple style	7 19 20	3
Introductions and/or discussions become the most problematic parts of research articles to write	2 3 4 5 7 13 19 20	8

^aSee Table 1.

write, they already are building up their words and expression skills. That's why it is different. It doesn't matter whether I am using Chinese or English while thinking. But the outcome would not be that coherent or articulate And I will always have that feeling that I don't express as good as them.

NNSs Take Longer to Write

NNSs need more time to write compared with NNSs:

P17: I need to spend more time [compared to NSs] than I should. Of course, they are fluent English speakers, so they might be comfortable in writing, and I might not be that smooth-going in terms of writing up. Of course, my time and effort would be more than the native speakers.

P4: I think timing is also very important. We can write like the native speakers, but we need longer time to complete an article. We might spend twice the time a native speaker spends in writing a paper. We have to recheck and rewrite. Of course, for the native speakers, there is a natural flow of ideas. Just like when we talk in Cantonese, we can talk faster and express better. This is also the same for the native speaker.

NNSs Have a Less Rich Vocabulary

Another problem faced by participants, as NNSs, was what they felt to be a less rich vocabulary:

P7: They [NSs] have a greater range of vocabularies.

P16: I don't know which particular word to use. Sometimes, when I think of an idea, I could just have a Chinese word for that. But for them [NSs], when they come up with an idea, they already have the particular term for that. So it is difficult for me at this aspect.

NNSs Are Less Capable in Making Claims for Their Research with the Appropriate Amount of Force

As NNSs, participants felt they were at a disadvantage to NSs when they were required to make claims regarding findings and arguments they were putting forward. They experience difficulty in expressing themselves with the appropriate amount of force and are often overassertive:

P2: In terms of learning to be more assertive or less assertive, I think this is more of a problem.

P4: Of course, daily language communication is not a problem, but writing on a more professional or higher level basis is very different, especially on how to be convincing and strong with your language.

P11: I think one thing of concern for nonnative speakers, especially Cantonese speaking staff, is that we are too assertive. Sometimes we don't have enough evidence to prove what we are saying We should be using terms like "appeared to", "most likely" rather than "it is", "will happen", etc.

NNSs' L1 May Intervene in the Composition Process

In considering the process they go through in writing, a number of participants noted a difference in the way they compose as compared with NSs:

P19: For us Chinese, we think in the Cantonese way. So, when we are trying to compose something, we always use the Cantonese way of thinking. And this is very difficult because not only you are thinking in a different language, you also have a limited range of vocabulary. That's why at times it is very difficult to represent what you want to say. Maybe you need to talk about a certain topic using sentences, or maybe use different approaches just trying to explain a topic, while a native speaker might only need a phrase or a sentence to fully explain it. I think this is the limitation of a Chinese speaker when it comes to writing in English.

A number of participants described how, at times, they had gone through an early stage of expressing themselves in Chinese first and then translating to English:

P5: My own problems? In the very early beginning, when the first time I did the writing, I will do the translation method. For instance, when I want to say something, I will think in the Chinese way and then convert them in English.

However, in the case of this participant, as with others, this strategy was soon abandoned:

P5: That was at the early beginning. I know that this method is very bad. Because sometimes, when you are translating the Chinese ideas to English, the presentation techniques might not be that good. Representation from Cantonese to English is very different. Also, if I am using this method, it is quite difficult to let a native speaker understands what you want to say. So, there are some grammar differences as well as style differences.

NNSs Are Better Suited to Writing Quantitative Articles

A number of participants stated that they thought NNS writers were better advised to restrict themselves to writing the sort of quantitative papers typically found in the sciences, rather than trying to write the qualitative style of papers that are more commonly found in the humanities and social sciences:

P20: For a Chinese speaker, I think they are better off with a quantitative paper, because they are solid facts that they can use for discussion.

P5: I can say writing in science or engineering materials is relatively easier than the arts. In the field of science or engineering the format is quite logical. There is a set of format to write a paper. Normally there are some common steps to write a paper. And also the use of wordings are quite simple and straightforward.

NNSs Need to Keep to a Simple Style

In keeping with this emphasis on the more conventionalised style of writing associated with quantitative studies, various participants felt that local Hong Kong writers should keep to a simple style of writing:

S19: I don't think we can write flowery phrases. Even if we try, it won't be that natural.

This finding ties in with the earlier one concerning Hong Kong writers' perception that they have less facility of expression than their native peers.

Introductions and Discussions Are Particularly Problematic Parts of Research Articles for NNSs to Write

Within the research article, some parts are found to be more problematic than others. The methodology and results sections are the least problematic, needing only a very conventionalised and formulaic style of writing:

P5: The easiest part? I think the methodologies and results sections. . . . In my area of research, we are more on the science and engineering papers. Most often, the paper format are quite similar with the different research work. So, I can use the same style of writing. I just edit them in the same format using my data. . . . There are

some common standard format for this field. I just choose one or two suitable format for my paper, then I can create my own paper. So they are quite straightforward.

The most difficult parts, on the other hand, are the introduction/literature review and discussion/conclusion sections. These parts are more problematic because they require a persuasive style of writing in which the individual voice of the author needs to come through. Writers have to convince their readers (including editors and reviewers) in these two sections of the importance of their research and the arguments they are putting forward:

P5: I think [I am] quite similar to some other writers that the introduction and literature review will be comparatively more difficult than the other part. . . . All the rest of the paper are quite standardised. . . . But the literature review is always difficult, because you need to change for different papers all the time.

P4: That's why I think introduction is very difficult to write. Since this is the part where you lead the readers to think the way you think. This is the most difficult part—using the shortest words in a short period of time to relate what is the problem.

P2: The most difficult part . . . I think I am quite weak in the discussion part . . . This is the part where you have to imply the significance of your study.

P7: I would say the conclusion section is difficult. . . . The difficult part, most often, is whether the results can be generalised or make some conclusions which will be able to convince the readers. Or actually, to convince the editors and reviewers as well.

DISCUSSION

In the long term, if China's economic development continues at the present rate, it is conceivable that there may come a time when research publication in Chinese is equally, if not more, prestigious than English. In this discussion, however, I will restrict my remarks to the short and medium-term situation within the context of the current hegemony of English, specifically for this study, in Hong Kong.

Based upon the findings of this study, this discussion begins with some recommendations for academic policy makers in Hong Kong (and, by implication, other similar NNS contexts). Finally, some conclusions and a recommendation are made in terms of global knowledge and scholarship.

In a parallel study currently in progress, I have been interviewing journal editors to obtain their perspective on second language scholars submitting to their journals. Editors frequently have pointed out that a lot of the difficulties encountered by NNSs are also shared by NSs. However, as articulated by the Hong Kong participants in the present study, whereas some (although not all) of these problems are shared by NSs, it must be kept in mind that NNSs, who are probably using English only in the professional context, are likely, other things being equal, to be more challenged than NSs, who are immersed in the language on a

permanent basis. Looking to the future, in Hong Kong, from this perspective, the difficulties of local Hong Kong scholars are likely to increase because, as noted in the earlier part of this article, Chinese is taking on a greater role in Hong Kong in general and in education in particular, and as a consequence opportunities to be exposed to and use English are likely to decline.

The question therefore arises as to what can be done to remediate the situation. When asked about this issue, participants felt that taught courses in academic writing would be of little benefit at their level. They preferred some sort of one-on-one supervision, where advice could be sought on specific problems related to a given research paper. In addition, they felt that some sort of editing service would be useful, although they acknowledged that this would only iron out the surface grammatical errors and not deal with matters of substance. At a higher policy level, it would seem sensible that if the universities want to maintain and enhance their publication rates in international refereed journals in English, they would do well to take measures to facilitate opportunities to engage in academic exchanges with English-speaking countries. In this way, the benefits of research and publication collaboration with native speakers in an English-speaking environment would be made available to Hong Kong scholars who would not otherwise have such opportunities.

Turning now to ramifications of the study for global scholarship, I would like to consider two specific issues articulated by the participants involved in the study. The specific issues are, first, the particular difficulty the NNS participants in the study find with introductions and discussions and, second, the claim by some participants that NNSs are better able to write quantitative articles, due to their more formulaic nature. Both issues are crucial because they are likely to critically affect what gets published by NNSs on a global scale.

Introductions and discussions have been identified by a number of experts on scholarly discourse as the parts of articles where readers—including, importantly, editors and reviewers—are “persuaded,” where they are convinced or not that the research is sound, significant, and worthy of publication (Atkinson, 1990; Lofland, 1974; Swales, 1990). Proficiency in writing these sections, which are the most problematic for NNSs, is therefore potentially critical to acceptance or rejection of an article, whatever the merits might be of the actual findings. Writers therefore may find themselves in a double bind; on the one hand, from the point of view of getting published, introductions and discussions are the most important section of an article, but, on the other hand, it is these sections that cause them the greatest difficulty.

If, as suggested by some of the participants involved in this study, NNSs restrict themselves to quantitative articles, the international literature in qualitative research—a paradigm that is increasingly being accepted, even in some of the physical sciences disciplines—is likely to suffer from a particular deficiency in terms of NNS contributions. This situation is especially worrying because qualitative research methodology is particularly suited to studying culture-specific phe-

nomena, which, of course, are best investigated by people from the cultures being studied.

To conclude with a further recommendation of a global nature, in the introduction to this article, I referred to the negative impact that the exclusion of NNS writers may have on global scholarship, by, in effect, depriving the world of important knowledge that may only be developed in non-English-speaking contexts. The picture of disadvantage painted by the NNS participants in this study suggests that compensatory measures of an international nature may be needed to ensure that more NNS scholarship gets published internationally. One such measure would be to increase awareness on the part of journal editors and reviewers of the problems encountered by contributors from non-English-speaking countries and thereby encourage them to take this into account when reviewing manuscripts. One journal with which I am familiar (*Japanese Association of Language Teachers [JALT] Journal*) offers a mentoring service to nonnative writers; authors of articles with potential for publication, but with linguistic problems, are put in touch with NS mentors who work with them to refine the language of their articles. Another journal I know of (*The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*) runs writers' workshops in conjunction with the scholarly society associated with the journal. These workshops allow writers to focus on developing their conference papers for publication and have led to special issues of the journal. Looking at the problem from another angle, university administrators in NNS contexts or in NS contexts who hire NNS academic staff who work alongside NSs also should develop awareness of the possible added burdens of NNSs and bear this in mind when considering research output as a measure of academic performance, in particular, and workloads, in general.

NOTES

1. I would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of Alistair Wood on an earlier version of this paper and the invaluable contribution of my research assistant, Daniel Reeves.

2. This view is expressed by Widdowson (1979, p. 5), for example, as follows:

Scientific and technical English thus are represented not as a variety of English text but as a textualization of a variety of discourse that is itself independent of any particular language and expressive of a secondary and universal culture that scientists and technologists acquire through education.

3. But see Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) for a detailed account of the academic writing processes of first language writers.

4. There is an apparent discrepancy between the percentage of survey respondents who stated that they felt themselves to be at a disadvantage to NSs in

the earlier survey and the interview participants reported upon here, all of whom expressed themselves to be disadvantaged.

5. A number of reasons contribute to this difficulty in implementing an English medium of instruction policy. They include learning difficulties of pupils required to operate in a second language, a lack of adequate training of teachers able to teach in English, and social pressure for solidarity between Cantonese-speaking pupils and teachers.

6. Because of the widespread use of mixed mode teaching, the government has for some years been encouraging those schools that are not capable of truly English-medium instruction (a majority) to switch to Chinese medium. This non-mandatory approach has not been successful, however, due to the strong demand, mainly on the part of parents, for English medium. As a result, in 1997, the government issued a directive that forced the majority of schools to make the switch.

7. Cantonese is the variety of Chinese spoken in Hong Kong. It uses the same character-based writing system as other varieties of Chinese, including Puthonghua, the national standard (except the latter, in the Mainland uses simplified characters). That is, while different varieties of Chinese sound different, they are written essentially the same way.

8. The number of universities in Hong Kong is six, and they were all represented in the study.

9. My use of the term "contrast question" is different from that of Spradley.

10. Conceptually, categories represent logically and situationally grounded constructs that the researcher has identified as meaningful within the context of the research. A category therefore need not be supported by any arbitrary number of mentions in the text. When an example of a category is noted in the data, it can be in the form of sentences, phrases, or even single words. In the process of analysis, categories may be created, renamed, deleted, and combined. Analysis also involves the organisation of categories into hierarchical logical structures.

11. There is an apparent discrepancy between this finding and the survey referred to earlier. In the survey, when respondents were asked if they felt themselves to be at a disadvantage to NSs, just over two thirds indicated that they did and just under a third that they did not. In all of the interviews, however, participants described various disadvantages they felt themselves to be at vis-à-vis NSs. There is clearly a difference in being asked a yes/no question on a survey questionnaire and being asked to describe ones attitudes and feelings more broadly in a face-to-face interview. The important point, however, is that in both the survey and the interviews the clear majority felt themselves to be at a disadvantage.

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APPENDIX

Initial Interview Questions

Perceptions

Do you enjoy writing in English for publication? What do you like/don't like about it?

Can you describe your experience in getting published/trying to get published for the first time/first few times?

Can you describe the typical process you go through in preparing a paper for publication?

What about follow-up after the editor has contacted you with their decision?

How would you describe your written English?

Which parts of the academic article are most problematic/least problematic for you and why?

Would you like to have more opportunities to write for publication in Chinese? Why/why not?

Do you see any change after 1997? If so, what sort of change?

Problems

Do you feel at a disadvantage compared to native speakers when you submit a paper for publication (why/why not)?

Do you think editors and reviewers are biased against nonnative speakers? Why/why not?

What do you think are the special problems, if any, of Chinese/Hong Kong Chinese scholars in getting published in English?

What do you think are your individual problems in writing in English for publication?

What are the particular problems *of your discipline*, if any, when it comes to publishing in English?

Which parts of the paper do editors/reviewers most often ask you to revise? Why?

Strategies

What are your particular strengths in writing in English?

What strategies have you used in developing/improving your English writing?

Do you enlist the help of anyone else when preparing a paper for publication?

If so who and in what capacity?

If time and money were not a problem what would be the best way for you to improve your academic writing in English?