

A Review of Accents in L2 English—Taking Chinese Accent as an Example

Shuo Feng

School of Linguistic Sciences and Arts, Jiangsu Normal University, Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: *This review examines attitudes towards foreign English accents among second-language (L2) learners, contrasting traditional views on native versus non-native accents. Research indicates that accents play a crucial role in language learning, with personal preferences affecting how English is learned. Despite arguments against overemphasizing accents, existing study highlights the need for proper guidance on accent attitudes in English teaching. Focusing on Chinese English learners, the largest group in L2 acquisition, the paper analyzes the Chinese accent's characteristics and phonetic features. The analysis aims to enhance understanding of the Chinese accent for English educators and researchers, guiding future studies on learners' accent attitudes.*

Keywords: *L2 English, Accent, Chinese Learners, Language Acquisition*

1. Introduction

It is believed that accent will be gradually more valuable, as second language acquisition receives more attention (Moyer, 2013)^[1]. This is supportive of the meaning of this review which is about exploring foreign English speakers' attitudes towards accents. Generally speaking, it is not a simple thing to define accents since the intrinsic changeability in it (Moyer, 2013)^[1]. They state that our accent depends on our experience in the past and people around us, and it could be evidence showing our educational levels, genders, features of regions and even social groups and so on. We can see that it is a complex process to form an accent. And accent is a multifunctional component in our verbal communications. Existing literature implies that accent as an essential constituent of language, needs to be discussed in a social dimension (Moyer, 2013; Wang, 2020; Xiaoxia, 2006)^[1]. From this, it is evident that users with various English accents possess certain cultural and social attributes. This is also the research objective of this paper, namely: to identify the characteristics of English accents among specific groups within particular first-language contexts, through the analysis of a specific accent—the Chinese accent.

2. L2 English learners' accents and attitudes

According to Lippi-Green (2012)^[2], the general definition to interpret 'accent' is 'a certain mode to speak'. However, scholars have not found an academic way to precisely define 'accent'. They state that it has to be compared with something else to understand an accent (Lippi-Green, 2012)^[2]. For example, an American from New York cannot know about the Scottish accent until he first hears a Scotch speak or arrives in Scotland. This indicates that an accent can only be meaningful when comparison happens. Since the complexity of defining accent, this part of literature review focuses on how L2 learners treat it and its functional roles in pragmatic communications.

2.1 The faction of native accents

There is a common phenomenon that L2 English learners wish to have a native-like accent (Wang, 2020)^[3]. Nejjari et al (2019)^[4] find that participants expect they can erase their central European accents and 'sound like a native speaker of English'. There is a concept to introduce here, which is the 'concentric circles' of World English. Places using English can be divided into three circles: 'the Inner Circle', 'the Outer Circle' and 'the Expanding Circle' (Kachru, 1985 as cited in Moyer, 2013)^[1]. Firstly, the Inner Circle stands for the countries where English is the mother tongue, such as the UK, America and Australia etc. Secondly, the Outer Circle contains other English-speaking countries like India, Malaysia and Kenya etc. Thirdly, the Expanding Circle refers to those regions that do not use English

as an official or second language, such as China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia etc.

Looking back to Nejari et al (2019)^[4]'s finding mentioned before, it indicates that even some learners in Europe, which is closer to the Inner Circle, wish to get rid of their localized European accents. There is no wonder that pursuing standard English is a collective consciousness for learners worldwide. According to Hack, Marinova-Todd & May Bernhardt (2012)^[5], it is valuable to assess to what extent people who speak more than one language can speak standard English. This view justifies the meaning that L2 English learners' desire a native-like pronunciation. Despite the ubiquity and relativity of accents, which means all of us have accents in each language (Moyer, 2013)^[1], the ideology of 'standard' English exists anyway. What's more, Nejari et al (2019)^[4] point out that there is a common agreement regarding native and standard English accents. Namely, it can be measured that to what extent a certain accent is native or standard, and recipients can recognize the representativeness of the articulations. This is a reflection that 'nativeness' and 'standardness' are intangible to some extent. Knowing about this is helpful for L2 English learners to build confidence when they are acquiring a second language. Therefore, existing literature, on one hand, points out that there is not a certain rule to define the criterion of accent (Moyer, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012)^{[1][2]}. On the other hand, the standard degree of accent is measurable (Nejari et al, 2019)^[4].

Some learners believe that if they are able to speak in a native-like accent, the interaction between interlocutors would be more intelligible (Sung, 2016)^[6]. This verifies L2 learners' firm belief of the native-like accent. According to Moyer (2013)^[1], a part of the participants imply that it may decline the understanding of speech if they think the articulation is not native. This is a typical situation that shows the quality of communication could lie on distinctions of accents. There is even a superior and arrogant feeling when they sound like native speakers (Sung, 2016)^[6]. In the same vein, Li (2006)^[7] finds that English seems to be regarded as a symbol of capital because of its high position in global languages. At the world-wide level, a large number of literate families encourage their offspring to learn English as early as possible (Li, 2006)^[7]. These indicate the higher linguistic status of English in the international stage. Wong (2018)^[8] finds out that some Austrians highly look upon people who speak in Received Pronunciation (RP) and consider them as the best model with education, organization, and courtesy. The worse situation is sometimes there might be discrimination, prejudice and negative attitudes towards accents, especially 'nonstandard' ones. A non-native accent with regional characteristics could be disrespectfully regarded as stigmatic, low-grade, impure, unpleasant and indecent (Sung, 2016)^[6]. In severe cases, the negative evaluations of localized accents make learners feel insulted and embarrassed, which may lead to self-denial (Sung, 2016)^[6].

Previous research manifests the high degree of concern about a native-like accent's acquisition (Moyer, 2013; Wong, 2018; Sung, 2016)^{[1][6][8]}. So what are the reasons that plenty of L2 learners aim to master it? Explained by Moyer (2013)^[1], the reason that some listeners are reluctant to non-native accents may be they are inherently or linguistically easier to accept the so-called standard pronunciations, or it might be their own bias towards certain accents. Moyer (2013)^[1] points out that biased perspectives on accents are adverse to L2 English learning. More incisively, Li (2006)^[7] argues that a non-native speaker is not generally authorized to 'judge' whether the second language is correct or appropriate. Thus, foreign English speakers are supposed to prevent prejudice on accents.

2.2 The faction of non-native/local accents

Notwithstanding, a part of foreign English speakers are not pursuing a native English accent (Moyer, 2013)^[1]. There are generally three patterns of English language teaching for L2 learners: standard English pattern, native-like English pattern and localized lingua franca pattern (Li, 2006)^[7]. Therefore, non-native speakers should not blindly request a native proficiency for themselves. Researchers suggest that L2 learners are not able, and not supposed to stick to standard accent, since a successful interaction does not necessarily need it (Moyer, 2013)^[1]. Sung (2016)^[6] also emphasizes the intelligibility and practicability of non-native accents and clarify that they are not a necessary interference or problem of English speech. This suggests that using native English accents is not the only way to improve the intelligibility of communications. And a nonnative accent is a prominent actor representing English as a lingua franca and a world-class language.

The number of L2 English learners has grown to four times the number of native users (Li, 2006)^[7]. Consequently, Li (2006)^[7] states that there is an increasing number of L2 English interlocutors communicating with each other where no L1 users are involved. Since the quantity of L2 English users is rapidly rising, Kirkpatrick & Zhichang (2003)^[9] state that, apart from minor groups, speaking to L1 users is not likely to be the prior aim for learners. Therefore, it is even more pointless to confine

ourselves in the trap of pursuing native-like accents. Furthermore, Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006)^[10] find out that accents of the Inner Circle are not the easiest to comprehend or the best source to teach anymore. This implies that local accents of foreign speakers could be increasingly applicable in English pedagogy. Even though it is possibly necessary for L2 users to be exposed to native pronunciation at the beginning of learning the target language, they are supposed to know the disadvantages of purposeless imitations of Inner Circle's accents (Fang, 2016)^[11]. This suggests that as language learners, we have to be clearly aware of the process of studying and know what the goals are for each step. Fang (2016)^[11] further points out that the acquisition of L2 English deserves various aims under the globalized background because of constantly changing linguistic, social, and international situations. Existing literature explains why L2 learners should have a long-term and macro perspective to acquire English from a starting point of accent (Li, 2006; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Fang, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2003).^{[7][9][10][11]}

Objectively speaking, it is originally almost impossible for L2 English learners to achieve a native-like accent (Kung & Wang, 2019)^[12]. This is on account of the difficulty in English phonology. According to Smith (2005)^[13], there is a relatively large number of English vowels and diphthongs in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which is difficult for learners in the Outer Circle to master. For example, by contrast, Japanese and Spanish use only five vowel phonemes, and Italian has at most seven (Smith, 2005)^[13]. As a result, L2 English pronunciation is a challenge for many learners due to the 'supernumerary' vowels, which they do not use in their L1s. This reveals the common phonetic problem that a majority of learners confront. In addition, Smith (2005)^[13] finds that the combination of multiple consonants is another issue for foreign learners who are used to insert vowels between individual consonants. These findings are objective factors reflecting that pursuing a native-like accent is not applicable for general L2 English acquisition and it is technically not possible to reach.

In subjective aspects, a fairly large part (approximately a half) of participants are willing to accept non-native accents, because these L2 learners believe there are complicated gaps and difficulties between native and non-native speakers in aspects of cultures, English varieties and speech systems (Wang, 2020)^[14]. Further explained by Wang (2020)^[14], this part of learners admit the equality among various accents and they believe each accent represents a particular cultural and linguistic identity behind it. This suggests that accents are not comparable and there is no 'good' or 'bad' accent originally. Since linguistic behavior is a shadow of the relevant sociological context (Xiaoxia, 2006)^[15], we have to relate L2 English accents with specific local linguistic circumstances to analyze. Although there are participants who express that underlying cultural or social background is not necessarily displayed by local accents (Sung, 2016)^[6], it still cannot be ignored that a substantial number of learners hold an accepted attitude towards foreign or so-called nonstandard accents (Wang, 2020)^[14].

Beyond that, He & Li (2009)^[16] state that some L2 learners do not consider standard accent as a necessary element when they only need to complete normal communications with people using English. This reminds us that the main function of language is to communicate (Xiaoxia, 2006)^[15], rather than focus on or judge some personal accents. In the same vein, Sung (2016)^[6] points out that the importance of accent decreases since the primary goal of learners becomes whether they can communicate effectively in L2 English. This refers to the significance of intelligibility again.

As another argument supporting local accents in L2 English acquisition, Brutt-Griffler (2002)^[17] states that any speaker is not able to master the entire linguistic knowledge in a certain language. The meaning of language is beyond individual level and on a social level (Brutt-Griffler, 2002)^[17]. Therefore, nobody has a 'perfect' accent. We should study languages in linguistic communities rather than a particular person (Brutt-Griffler, 2002)^[17]. This indicates that the scope of accent research also needs to be enlarged to a social level. Although personal traits and experiences are important to constitute an accent, it relies on conventional factors, too (Moyer, 2013)^[1]. A large amount of accent originates from specific conversation backgrounds and the interactions between listeners and speakers. For instance, if a learner has a foreign accent, it probably reduces when the learner is communicating with a native English teacher in an English speaking country or class. Kung & Wang (2019)^[12] find out that learners are subject to interlocutors' influence. For example, most of the time native speakers' accents and flows of utterance unknowingly lead participants' production of L2. This can be regarded as another aspect of accent's variability. Namely, one certain accent of a person is not changeless.

An additional research is conducted by Nejari et al (2019)^[4], they recruit participants from the Netherlands to evaluate, instead of the level of standard, how much the tested speech is accord with localized Dutch English accent. Because Dutch English is not a formal category of World English, which has the same situation as China English. This experiment provides an innovative method to explore L2 users' attitudes and comprehension about English accents. It breaks the conventional

limitations of mechanisms that focus on native or non-native issues.

In general, a crucial premise of advocating localized accents is to enhance local instructors and students' perception of the reasonableness of regional varieties in English accents (Li, 2006)^[7]. Those findings in previous literature mentioned before reflect L2 learners' various attitudes towards accents. Therefore, as L2 learners we should realize that diverse accents, even foreign accents, are becoming increasingly legitimate, which means the input of 'standard' or 'native' accents in pedagogy needs our critical thinking. Since this paper aims at exploring students' attitudes towards accents, their opinions and feelings about L2 acquisition methods are also important. According to Wang (2020)^[14], if L2 learners feel pleasant when they are studying a language, it can be attractive to them and trigger a positive linguistic behavior. This applies to accent attitudes, as well. In simple words, students' interest in certain accents or the diversity of accents could contribute to their acquisition of English speaking and listening. Specifically, Wang (2015)^[18] states that some participants find more pleasure when they receive native English accent, some feel more comfortable with localized or other types of English accents. This emphasizes that attitudes towards accents depend on personal factors to a great extent. Regardless of this, Wong (2018)^[8] finds that L2 learners' preferences of accents and their capability to distinguish accents are mismatched. Thus, attitudes towards accents still need correct guidance and instructions in English teaching.

2.3 The role of accent

According to Moyer (2013)^[1], accent is related to whether the utterance is fluent to some extent. This relationship impacts on listeners' auditory perceptions and even on their judgement about the speaker's capability of a certain language. This implies that accent provides the first impression of language between interlocutors. In addition, it is believed that the ability of L2 learners' speaking and listening dominates their expectant requirement of the target language (Li, 2006)^[7]. This indicates that phonetic knowledge is in high status of language acquisition. Similarly, Cook (2002)^[19] demonstrates the base division and a practical order of English pedagogy: 'passive (listening and reading) before active (speaking and writing), spoken (listening and speaking) before written (reading and writing)'. Moreover, Wang (2015)^[18] points out that pronunciation is a vital task in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and English Language Teaching (ELT). These suggest that accent deserves more attention in the acquisition of L2 English, let alone it is considered as an essential concern related to learners' English competence (Kuteeva, 2014 as cited in Fang, 2016)^[11].

In contrast, there are some researchers arguing that the role of accent in second language acquisition should not be exaggerated. Zhou, Deterding & Nolan (2019)^[20] state that an L2 learner's language production is a failure when it is intelligible. On the contrary, once it completes the requirement of intelligibility, it is regarded as a success, even though there is an obvious foreign accent. This decreases the role of accent in communications. Furthermore, Lippi-Green (2012)^[2] points out that there is a weak connection between accent and the ability of communication, or the effectiveness of interpreting L2 speech in various situations. According to these studies, the role of accent is multidimensional and determined by different linguistic aspects.

3. Analysis of Chinese accent

'China English' has become a new variety of English as a lingua franca, which contains Chinese phonological, syntactic and lexical characteristics (Li, 2007)^[21]. We can consequently consider that the Chinese accent is approaching a legitimate status in World English. In the same vein, Yajun (2002)^[22] states that China English might be an inappropriate version for the Inner Circle, but it is still theoretically 'English' as long as it works in communications.

To analyze the Chinese English accent, Yajun (2002)^[22] applies to two categories of phonology: 'segmental and suprasegmental'. Studies always focus on the first one (Yajun, 2002)^[22]. However, the Chinese features are mainly embodied in the later one - suprasegmental level, such as stress, juncture, weakening, assimilation and liaison (Du & Jiang, 2003)^[23]. Nevertheless, they cannot be avoided during the process of acquiring L2 English, neither segmental or suprasegmental issues (Du & Jiang, 2003)^[23]. As a result, Chinese accents should be studied at a comprehensive linguistic level.

Additionally, fossilized suprasegmental characteristics bring bigger understanding problems to interlocutors (Yajun, 2002)^[22]. Explained by Yajun (2002)^[22], as learners in higher proficiency know wider vocabulary and speak fast, the fossilized habits more severely interfere in communications. This

suggests that issues of pronunciations and accents need to be paid attention to as early as possible in the progression of L2 English acquisition. As to specific Chinese accent features, Yajun (2002)^[22] generally emphasizes the syllable-based style and the lack of mutation in speech. For instance, Chinese learners are habitual to stress on 'be' verbs or some pronouns. The following part will specifically enumerate distinct Chinese accent's characteristics by referring to the conclusions from Deterding (2010)^[24].

Subsequently, a detailed analysis of the characteristics of the Chinese accent will be conducted. There are basically 10 modules of typical features in Chinese accent as follows (Deterding, 2010)^[24]:

3.1 The 'TH' sounds

According to Yajun (1995)^[25], phonemes /ð/ and /θ/ are hard for Chinese speakers to pronounce, since there are no sounds like these in their L1 Mandarin. As a result, they normally tend to articulate the sounds of /z/ and /s/ rather than /ð/ and /θ/, for example, the word through and mother are easy to be replaced by 'srough' and 'moser'. Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006)^[10] point out that these two sounds as 'dental fricatives' are common difficulties for other nonnative speakers to pronounce. This implies that the issue of 'TH' sounds does not only exist in the Chinese accent, but also in other foreign accents.

3.2 Voiced fricatives

Deterding (2010)^[24] emphasizes three voiced fricatives: /v/, /z/, /ʒ/. For the first two phonemes, Chinese learners are subject to omit or weaken them in words like 'traveler' and 'as' (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. Some high school students in China pronounce 'words' and 'was' without the /z/ sound at the end of the words. Particularly, they even pronounce 'was' with a final /s/, which should originally be a /z/ sound.

3.3 Final /n/

This nasal consonant is usually weakened in Chinese accent, sometimes it omits the sound completely (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. The typical case provided by Deterding (2010)^[24] is that the word 'sun' is always produced as /sʌ/ without the ending consonant /n/. Reviewing many Chinese learners' accent, it can be found that they pronounce the word 'clone' almost as /kləʊ/. Technically, these learners did not omit the ending sound, it is more accurate to say that they articulate it into a /ŋ/ sound instead, which is a common phoneme in Chinese. This also suggests that a particular accent would have symbolic characteristics of its own local language.

3.4 The Distinction Between /n/ and /l/

This feature derives from Chinese learners' L1, which means some of them can not distinguish /n/ and /l/ even in Chinese. According to Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006)^[10], some southern Chinese participants are usually confused by these two sounds; they would pronounce words like 'last' and 'law' with an initial phoneme /n/. Deterding (2010)^[24] also finds that Chinese learners from the south are likely to merge the lateral and the alveolar nasal, especially in Hong Kong (Deterding, Wong & Kirkpatrick, 2008)^[26]. Explained by Yajun (1995)^[25], learners who are not able to differentiate these two sounds do not consider them phonologically distinct in the original vernaculars. It is a cross-linguistic problem that gives rise to a mess between word pairs, such as 'night/light' and 'nap/lap' (Yajun, 1995)^[25].

Thus, this manifestation of accent is influenced by the linguistic capabilities of the learners themselves, and it occurs not only among Chinese students.

3.5 Final Consonant Clusters

Native speakers often omit final /t/ or /d/ sounds when the following word starts with a consonant (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. Chinese learners, however, find this omission problematic and habitually insert an additional schwa /ə/ as a closure of the former word (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. This is due to the shortage of ending consonants in Chinese. Lin & Johnson (2010)^[27] state that 'Mandarin has a total of 22 consonants, with 21 (except /ŋ/) allowed in the initial position and only /n/ and /ŋ/ in the final position'. It's worth noting that Chinese students often add a schwa sound after words such as 'looked'. Deterding (2010)^[24] concludes that it is acceptable to add a final schwa as long as there is no meaning change

because of the extra phoneme. For example, if the word ‘wind’ sounds like ‘window’ in the phrase ‘wind blew’, and the word ‘fast’ sounds like ‘faster’ in the phrase ‘fast speed’, this adding would be unacceptable. This proves that, again, foreign accents are legitimate with the premise of intelligibility.

3.6 Vowel Quality and Quantity

The features that Chinese accent has in the quality of vowels are generally because of the differences between textbooks in GA and RP system, therefore it is not considered as problematic (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. As to vowel quantity, Deterding (2010)^[24] emphasizes that the Chinese accent usually reduces the duration of long vowels.

For instance, Chinese students possibly articulate ‘sheep’ like the sound of ‘ship’. This feature does not influence the meaning of the utterance due to there is a whole context about sheep to refer to. Otherwise, it would make listeners confused about the main idea of the recording. What’s more, Yajun (1995)^[25] finds that short vowels are frequently prolonged by Chinese English learners, because Mandarin does not linguistically distinguish long or short vowels. Consider the Chinese accent in English, where students might pronounce ‘different’ as /dɪ: frənt/. They also tend to say ‘seven’ as either /sævən/ or /saɪvən/, which is a form of prolonging the vowel /e/.

At this point, it is worth noting that there is a shared problem of feature 5 and 6, which is they would cause an intelligible level of confusions (Zhou et al, 2019)^[20]. Thus, Chinese English learners need to be careful with omitting syllables and simplifying consonants.

3.7 Vowel Reduction

The description of this feature is the weakening of vowels in unstressed syllables or in some functional words like ‘than, to and of’ (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. Whereas Chinese learners seem not used to this mutation in English speech. In this vein, Yajun (1995)^[25] points out that Chinese accent sounds excessively accurate for English speakers in south Britain, because southern British accents are originally used to weaken the short vowels as the schwa /ə/. For example, Chinese learners usually ignore the weak forms of the word ‘and’ and ‘for’. It is normal for them to pronounce the full sounds of /ænd/ and /fɔ:/, whereas in certain spoken sentences these phonemes are better to be reduced as /ən/ and /fə/ (Yajun, 1995)^[25]. Sometimes they essentially pronounce every ‘to’ in its strong form /tu:/ throughout a phonetic fraction, where in some instances it can be articulated in the weak form as /tə/.

This feature can be attributed to a pronunciation habit of the Chinese accent, which seems indifferent in English communications. But Yajun (1995)^[25] finds that this articulatory habit can lead to misunderstanding when it comes to compound nouns and modified nouns, such as ‘girlfriend’ and ‘greenhouse’. It can be imagined that if different syllables are stressed in words like these, the meaning of these compound words as a combination is lost. To some extent, this proves that a foreign accent can make communication more difficult.

3.8 Rhythm

The basic phonetic form of native English has a ‘stress-based rhythm’ and ‘the alternation of strong and weak syllables’ (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. This kind of ‘stress shift’ in English rhythm is commonly ignored by Chinese learners (Yajun, 1995)^[25]. Chinese accent is characterized with a ‘syllable-based rhythm’ which is approved and verified by Lingua Franca Core (LFC). LFC is an assemblage of phonological characteristics that is stated as valid fundamentals for global communications (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. Furthermore, the above-mentioned feature 7, lacking vowel reductions, is considered to be helpful for perceiving this ‘syllable-based rhythm’ (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. The examples for this feature are similar to feature 7 which does not have to be repeated. These illustrate that Chinese English learners tend to pronounce words with the stress applied when they are pronounced independently at any time (Yajun, 1995)^[25]. In addition, Deterding (2010)^[24] finds that it is a usual case for many other foreign accents to use the ‘syllable-based rhythm’, not only in Chinese accent.

So far, feature 7 and 8 reflect an extended Chinese pedagogical problem in which the majority of learners pay too much attention to individual vocabulary memorization. This is one of the most important reasons that the Chinese accent has a special and representative way of stressing (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. Since Chinese is classified as an isolating language in linguistics, syllables are inclined to be pronounced individually, indicating that the Chinese accent reflects the cultural and social background of the speaker.

3.9 Stress on the Final Word

Chinese accent tends to particularly emphasize the ending word in random collocations, which can be understood as a method to show the closure of certain phrases or sentences (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. LFC claims that the positions of core stresses are essential for linguistic communications, hence this feature of Chinese accent may trigger off potential misunderstandings between global interlocutors (Deterding, 2010)^[24]. For example, the sentence ‘Cloning is a method that scientists use to produce a genetic copy of another individual’ should be focused on the explanation of the technique of cloning, but a speaker with a Chinese accent still stresses the final word ‘individual’ on account of his Chinese accent.

3.10 Intonation

Deterding (2010)^[24] uses relatively less length of writing to discuss this feature. He states that it is not necessary for Chinese learners to imitate the changes of pitch in English, because they are originally diverse in different places of the Inner Circle. This implies that it is highly acceptable if the Chinese accent has its own intonations in utterance. Therefore, we won’t go into it deeply here.

To sum up, the Chinese accent is only slightly problematic in English speech. As a supportive finding, Zhou et al (2019)^[20] state that little and rare problems happen when Chinese learners communicate with native speakers in Britain. And the main phonetic factors which impact on English utterance are syllabic missing or adding (Zhou et al, 2019)^[20]. So the correct pronunciations of key syllables should be the first concern for the Chinese accent. One notable thing is that the 10 characteristics above only exist in a large portion of Chinese learners but do not refer to the whole of them. According to Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006)^[10], it is normal that some Chinese learners do not have these features in spoken English or even speak in a native-like accent, because there is always a deficiency in the statistics from research. Therefore, when we discuss the Chinese accent, not all Chinese learners can be covered. Even if some of them are in the same level of English proficiency, various features can be found among their articulations.

4. Conclusion

This review compares the varying definitions of English accents as perceived by both researchers and second-language (L2) English learners, and further categorizes the extent to which researchers strive for a native accent into distinct factions. Given that Chinese English learners represent the largest group worldwide (Yajun, 2002)^[22], this paper, using the Chinese accent as a case study, examines the definition, characteristics, and causes of the Chinese accent from the viewpoint of specific phonetic features.

It is believed that this analysis will assist Chinese English teachers and researchers in gaining a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the specific manifestations of the Chinese accent in L2 English. The findings underscore the need for proper guidance on accent attitudes in English teaching. Consequently, future research could concentrate on qualitatively exploring learners' attitudes towards their teachers' accents.

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