



**Cross-Cultural Communication**  
Vol. 15, No. 4, 2019, pp. 25-29  
DOI:10.3968/11453

ISSN 1712-8358[Print]  
ISSN 1923-6700[Online]  
[www.cscanada.net](http://www.cscanada.net)  
[www.cscanada.org](http://www.cscanada.org)

## A Study on Chinglish From the Perspective of Cultural Self-Confidence

LIN Haoming<sup>[a], \*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Foreign Language College, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 3 October 2019; accepted 9 December 2019

Published online 26 December 2019

### Abstract

Since China's reform and opening up, Chinese culture and other cultures in the world communicate with each other, and then Chinglish was born. Chinglish, as a variant of English, its form of expression is influenced by China's politics, economy, culture and other factors, and it has been widely concerned by many scholars. The rise of Chinglish shows us the self-confidence of Chinese culture in the context of Sino-foreign communication. This paper will analyze the rationality of Chinglish and discuss how to disseminate Chinese culture with the help of Chinglish.

**Key words:** Chinglish; Chinese Culture; Cultural Self-confidence

Lin, H. M. (2019). A Study on Chinglish From the Perspective of Cultural Self-Confidence. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 15(4), 25-29. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/11453>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11453>

### INTRODUCTION

Since the reform and opening up, China's comprehensive national strength has greatly improved, which is obvious to all in the world. China's rapid economic development, abundant scientific and technological achievements, cultural prosperity, and China's international influence is also increasing. The concept of seeking common ground while reserving differences and the community of human destiny put forward by President Xi Jinping pointed out the direction for world peace development.

China's development and the world's development cannot be separated. This close relationship is not only

reflected in the level of economic development, but also in frequent cultural exchanges and interactions. Culture is all the spiritual activities and products of human beings that relative to politics and economy. Language is the carrier of culture. While culture is based on a nation and society, the prosperity and development of culture cannot be separated from the ground of it. Chinese culture has a long and profound history. The Chinese nation has been passed down from generation to generation. In the long history, China has been ruled by ethnic minorities for many times. However, the fire of culture has spread to more and more places instead of extinction. In the long history, Chinese also encountered many foreign words. At last, Chinese coexists harmoniously with them and develops together, which is a community with a shared future for mankind. With the increasing need of international exchange and cooperation, more and more Chinese people go abroad to connect the world. They not only use English as a language to introduce foreign advanced technology into China, but also shoulder the great mission of disseminating Chinese culture. Although Chinese people are enthusiastic about learning English, English did not come to China for a long time and the process of localization of the language is bound to be tortuous. Chinglish appears when Chinese encounters English.

In recent decades, Chinese and foreign scholars have a heated discussion on Chinglish. Li Wenzhong (1993) believes that "Chinglish is a kind of abnormal language phenomenon, which will gradually decrease or disappear with the popularity of English and the self-evaluation of Chinese English users. Pinkham (2000) published a book in order to correct many Chinglish expressions in translation, and she also thinks Chinglish can be called English with Chinese characteristics. Both above scholars have negative comments on Chinglish and believe that they do not conform to the norms of standard English. The so-called standard of English basically refers to British English or American English, and the "standard

status” of these two languages is determined by the influence of their countries. There are also some scholars who question the hegemony of English. Robert Phillipson (1992) directly conceived English hegemony as a new cultural imperialism and called on people to break this cultural hegemony. Pinker (2005), an ecolinguist, regards language as a part of the earth’s ecosystem, which has the characteristics of biological life dynamics and biodiversity, and is interdependent and influential with its external environment and its own environment. The wide spread and use of English in the world can be interpreted as a common core of language from the perspective of ecological linguistics. And English is influenced by the language and culture of different countries, the language has transformed into a distinctive language variety, which is in line with the objective law of language development.

Wang Shouren (2002), a famous scholar, once pointed out how to spread Chinese culture through English that “Chinese native culture needs to achieve ‘globalization’ through English. If Chinese scholars can’t tell the world about Chinese native culture in English, cultural communication may become self-talk, and they can’t hear the voice from China from the perspective of multi-culturalism.” And Chinglish has become a bridge for the dissemination of Chinese native culture to the outside world. As a major power with world influence, China can talk to the world with Chinglish, which is also the enhancement of cultural self-confidence. This paper will demonstrate the rationality of Chinglish and put forward some suggestions on how to make Chinese culture go out with Chinglish.

## 1. A LONG HISTORY OF THE LOCALIZATION OF ENGLISH IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

English is the official language of UK, and it spreads with the expansion of British colonialism. The United States, the largest country in the world today, and the so-called American English is the process of American localization of English. American English is different from British English in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary, for example, soccer is called football in England. On the premise that the British empire is no longer glorious in the world, Now, the United States, with its comprehensive national strength and great cultural influence, also promotes the popularization of English in the world. American English is also influenced by the local Indian language in the development. For example, there are 50 states in the United States today, and the names of 27 states are all from Indian language. Nevertheless, American English is also deeply influenced by Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Japanese and even Chinese. As a multi-ethnic country, the United States has developed its culture and language. Such kind of phenomenon of English localization not only occurs in the United States,

but also in India, Australia, New Zealand and other British colonial countries.

Irish English is also a prominent example, English was first brought to Ireland in the late 12th century after the Norman invasion of the three British Islands, but it did not spread on a large scale until the Tudor conquest of Ireland. English became one of the main languages of Ireland in the late 19th century. Until now, Irish English is still deeply influenced by Irish. These influences are reflected in the lexicon, grammatical and sentence structure, and pronunciation. For example, the Prime Minister of Ireland is called “Taoiseach” rather than “prime minister”.

In fact, English has not been unchangeable since its birth. The ancient English of the Anglo Saxons’ was influenced by Scandinavian, French, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, German and Greek in the development.

As a dominating language, English learns expressions from many different languages. The degree of localization of English varies in different regions. In some areas, the integration of English and local languages is still at the stage of interlanguage. Graddol (1998) pointed out that cultural trends encourage the use of informal and more colloquial languages, which are more tolerant of language diversity and personal styles. In order to fight against language hegemony and facilitate better culture communication, the varieties of English should be respected which is formed according to different regional culture, which can not only promote the development of economic globalization, but also contribute to the deepening of multi-culturalism.

## 2. THE IMMERSION OF CHINGLISH IN ENGLISH

The immersion of Chinglish into American English began at a very early time, which can be traced back to the “long time no see” in the late 19th century. “Long time no see” is a short greeting sentence in English, translated as “好久不见” in Chinese. However, “long time no see” does not strictly conform to the standard English rules. “Long time no see” was used by a large number of Chinese laborers who immigrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century. Since then, with the commercial and maritime activities between Britain and the United States, it has entered the field of British English. In addition, for example, there is a common usage of “lose face” in English. Its source is from Chinglish. Borrowing words from other languages to fill in concepts that are not available in our country is called borrowing. With the development of linguistics, such examples are gradually increasing in the academic field. For example, Stephen Levinson’s face-saving theory is inspired by the Chinese people’s understanding of “face saving”.

From vulgar to elegant, Chinglish plays an important role in the process of disseminating Chinese culture to

the outside world, which embodies the tolerance and self-confidence of the Chinese nation, it greatly enriches the form of expression and cultural connotation of English and benefits cultural diversity.

The West and the east not only influence each other in daily life, but also communicate more frequently in academic network. Academic research is a process of mutual promotion. Experts and scholars from different countries hold different views, which undoubtedly expands the depth and breadth of research. And scholars from different countries learn from each other to make up for each other's shortcomings, which makes today's era of information explosion coming. The world's culture has never been so prosperous. Western countries do not have to be complacent, they also benefit a lot from cultural communications and mutual learning. We should use an open and inclusive attitude to view the development of Chinglish. But China is facing the threat of Western cultural hegemonism. We should make full use of English as a tool to disseminate Chinese culture and send out Chinese voice to the world.

### 3. THE RISE OF CHINGLISH

Today, catching up with fashion has become one of people's lifestyles. Thirty or forty years ago, there were few people who could speak English, but now the number of people who can speak English is increasing every year. At the same time, using both Chinese and English has become a routine work for many Chinese people. Speaking Chinglish has become a fashion, especially in the space of the Internet. Now let's list some Chinese people's creation of English. The first example is a sentence that many people are familiar with "好好学习, 天天向上". It is translated into "good good study, day day up". According to the standard English expression, the right translation is "work hard and make progress every day". Another example is the idiom "人山人海", which describes a large number of people. It is translated as "people mountain people sea". In fact, its standard translation is "crowds of people". In this way, Chinglish is a direct translation method that people use to translate Chinese. It seems that it can be called "literal translation", but in fact, literal translation is a translation method based on grammatical correctness, and some forms of Chinglish do not meet the requirements of standard grammar. Ford (1988) defined Chinglish as "a dialect of English, usually formed by translating Chinese directly into English, and this translation method is usually inappropriate". It is also inevitable that many people question the rationality of Chinglish.

Objectively speaking, some inappropriate expressions of Chinglish do affect foreign friends' understanding of Chinese people and Chinese culture. For example, the Chinese National Park (中华民族园), located in the

southwest of the Asian Games Village in Beijing, was once translated into "racist park". Such low-level mistakes not only hurt some ethnic minorities, but also made foreigners have a huge misunderstanding of China, which should be corrected. It is precious for the international environment to keep peace now, which has a great deal to do with people's attention to observing rules and order. However, many Chinese have not yet mastered the rules of English grammar. How can we achieve true literal translation or even flexible translation with various skills to learn? Of course, expressions that don't follow the rules are confusing, but is chaos necessarily a bad thing? Of course not. Mr. Lu Xun once said, "in fact, there is no road on the ground, and there are many people walking, so it becomes a road". The emergence of language in human society has also experienced a process from chaos to order. The development of Chinglish is also the same. The development of a language variant needs to go through a process from confusion to order, and the objective law of language development should be respected

If we excessively intervene in the natural development of language and resolutely strangle Chinglish in the cradle, then such an action is overdone. There are examples to prove this. In Chinese supermarkets overseas, many Chinese teas are sold, such as West Lake Longjing (西湖龙井), Dongting Biluochun (洞庭碧螺春), etc., all of which are labeled green tea. In order to make it easy for foreigners to understand, it has sacrificed many unique charm of Chinese culture, and different varieties of tea cannot be effectively distinguished, which cannot help but make people feel sorry. Language, as a unique cognitive process, has its inherent regularity. Language is deeply connected with society and culture. Excessive or even violent human intervention is likely to backfire and cause bad repercussions and huge losses. For example, in 1977, shortly after the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Character Reform Commission tried to carry out the second movement of simplifying Chinese characters. However, the reform of Chinese characters failed because it deviated from the law of language development and seriously damaged the ideographic function of Chinese characters.

In fact, some words of Chinglish have been recognized by foreigners. We don't need to be obsequious. Foreigners are not so stubborn. For example, the world-famous Oxford English dictionary contains 250 words of Chinglish, more than 50 of which have been added in the past half century, many of which are related to Chinese food and traditional culture. For example, there are dim sun (点心), tofu (豆腐), Shumai (烧卖), Qipao (旗袍), Samfu (衫裤), and so on. Among them, the word "add oil" is particularly impressive. I believe that many Chinese will feel more cordial when they see it. There is also a word with a strong Chinese atmosphere, guanxi (关系), which we are popular in China, but its meaning is different from

“relationship” in the West. For people from other countries, regions and cultures, “guanxi” often brings strong cultural shock. I believe that these Chinglish forms not only greatly expand the scope of English, but also open a window for the world to understand China better.

The author asks you to think about a question. Why is Chinglish so popular now that it has become a fashion? Obviously, it has a close relationship with the rise of the Internet. The birth of the Internet is of epoch-making significance. It not only truly connects the people of the world, but also shortens the communication distance between different nationalities. The people of the world can really listen to each other and truly unite into a community of common destiny. The vast majority of the people are exerting their creativity on the Internet, and a series of brand-new Chinglish came into being in the process of mutual communication. A survey of “Chinglish” has been carried out on the Internet, and 70% of netizens approve of the use of Chinglish. No wonder some people are complaining, “There can Indian English, American English and Australian English exist. Why can’t Chinglish exist?” According to historical materialism, the people are the creators of history and social spiritual wealth. For Chinglish, the creation from the people, we should lead it to play a positive role, rather than simply destroy it.

---

#### **4. CHINGLISH AND CHINESE CULTURAL SELF-CONFIDENCE**

---

As for the definition of cultural self-confidence, president Xi Jinping pointed out, “cultural self-confidence is a firm confidence of a nation, a country and a political party to fully affirm and practice their own cultural values and hold the vitality of their culture.” Since the eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi has made a series of important discussions around “cultural self-confidence”, emphasizing the confidence of socialist road with Chinese characteristics, theoretical self-confidence and institutional self-confidence. In one word, cultural self-confidence should be strengthened; cultural self-confidence is a more fundamental, broader and deeper confidence; cultural self-confidence is a more basic, deeper and more lasting force.

The emergence of Chinglish is inseparable from the inclusion of Chinese culture, cultural self-confidence, and cultural communications between China and the West. For example, the establishment of Confucius Institute is a typical example of cultural communication between China and foreign countries. As of December 2018, 548 Confucius Institutes, 1193 Confucius Classrooms and 5665 teaching sites have been established in 154 countries and regions. In addition, cultural communication activities such as “Chinese culture year”, “Chinese Culture Week” and “Chinese culture day” have been held in many countries and regions. These activities

can not only enhance the friendly relations between China and people around the world, but also disseminate Chinese culture and provide a suitable study place for local students.

Although there are differences between the Chinese nation and other countries in value orientation, cultural form, customs, thinking mode, ideology and other aspects. But now with the trend of globalization, people of the world have more and more close connections. As the carrier of culture, the difference of language may bring some communication obstacles, but the people’s creativity cannot be ignored. Through the communication of, people of the world are bound to overcome the difference of language and so on, so as to seek common ground while reserving differences and jointly build a community with a shared future for humanity. All these situations also provide the ground for the emergence and development of Chinglish. The spread of English in China demonstrates China’s demeanor as a major power, and also meets the needs of China’s opening-up. The birth of Chinglish reflects people’s desire to strengthen communication with other people in the world, which is also a manifestation of cultural self-confidence. China should use Chinglish to show the world its openness and inclusiveness, which also meets the requirements of cultural self-confidence.

---

#### **5. THE DISSEMINATION OF CHINESE CULTURE VIA CHINGLISH**

---

With the help of Chinglish, the dissemination of Chinese culture can be realized from the following aspects.

First, by inviting foreign experts and scholars to participate in the discussion of Chinglish, we can expand the depth and breadth of academic research, and communicate different views between China and the West, disseminating Chinese culture at the same time.

Second, the visit of Chinese students to foreign countries should be encouraged. This action can not only strengthen Chinese students’ enthusiasm for English learning, but also correct some improper expressions in Chinglish. And interactive communication is conducive to the construction of China’s national image.

Third, in response to the needs of “the Belt and Road Initiative”, we should further explore the profound Chinese cultural connotation in Chinglish, formulate relevant national strategies, and promote the Chinese culture going outside.

Chinglish, as a variety of Contemporary English, should be respected. And we should identify its symbiotic relationship with English, respect the diversity of language, realize the dissemination of Chinese culture, realize the harmonious development of different languages, and realize the grand blueprint of the community with a shared future for humanity.



---

## CONCLUSION

---

The birth of Chinglish is of historical necessity, and it will continue to develop as a variety of English. It can be said that with the course of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Chinese culture continues to disseminate and develop, and at the same time, it communicates and interacts with the western culture to seek common ground while reserving differences. China's international status and influence continue to increase, power of speech also continues to develop, and cultural self-confidence becomes increasingly prominent. Chinglish is a kind of "cultural self-construction" produced in the process of Chinese and Western cultural communication. Chinglish will still play an important role in disseminating Chinese culture and enhancing the influence of Chinese culture.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction* (pp. 56-311). Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2012). *English as a global language*. Cambridge university press.
- Ford, D. J. (1988). *The twain shall meet: the current study of English in China*. McFarland & Company.
- Graddol, D. (1998). The future of English. *London: The British Council*.
- Graddol, D. (2004). The future of language. *Science*, 303(5662), 1329-1331. Phillipson, R. (1992). Linguistic imperialism. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, 1-7.
- Henry, E. S. (2010). Interpretations of "Chinglish": Native speakers, language learners and the enregisterment of a stigmatized code. *Language in Society*, 39(5), 669-688.
- Li, W. Z. (1993). China English and Chinglish. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 4, 18-24.
- Pinker, S., & Jackendoff, R. (2005). The faculty of language: what's special about it?. *Cognition*, 95(2), 201-236.
- Pinkham, J. (2000). *The translator's guide to Chinglish*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Wang, S. R. (2002). Views and thoughts on comprehensive methods of strengthening China's English education. *Foreign Language Education*, 2.