Critical pedagogy meets world Englishes
The role of a decolonized curriculum in learner investment over time

ENGLISH @CUHK

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Goal: To examine how invested Hong Kong (HK) English learners are in their "present (English learner, Cantonese speaker) and imagined (legitimate multilingual and Hong Kong English/HKE) identities" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 47)

Main point: A critical, World Englishes-informed pedagogy shapes second language learners' investment in Hong Kong English and helps decolonize educational practices in the region.

Abstract

This study investigates the role of a critical pedagogy informed by World Englishes (WE) in influencing how multilingual students in Hong Kong invest in the Englishes of their own linguistic repertoire. It specifically focuses on three learning activities in an undergraduate WE course at CUHK:

(1) instructor-led **discussions** supplemented by learner pre-discussion notes,
(2) an independent project: learner-led collection of authentic **linguistic data** involving varieties of English in HK in the form of sociolinguistic interviews, time-aligned transcriptions, and corpus compilation, and
(3) a collaborative **mini-corpus-based-research project** (ICE-HK) between learners that showcases how they connect and apply WE-related concepts to real-life scenarios with empirical evidence.

	Hong Kong English	British English	*Marginal Row Totals*
gonna + verb	42 (22.39) [17.17]	9 (28.61) [13.44]	51
going to + verb	686 (705.61) [0.54]	921 (901.39) [0.43]	1607
Marginal Column Totals	728	930	1658 (Grand Total)

Figure 1. Students' Group Project Outcome

Procedure

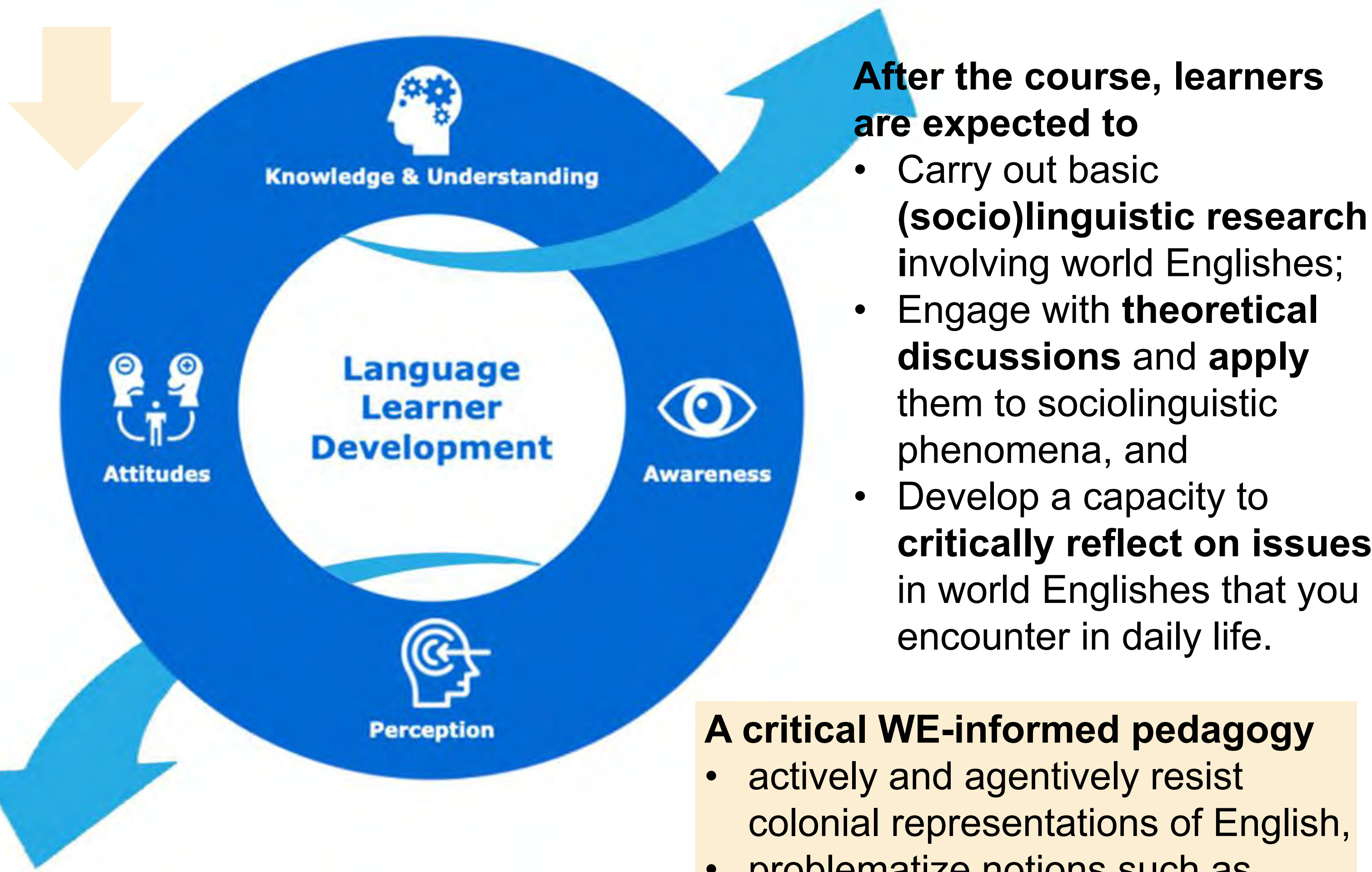| Data sources	Data analysis
Participants' individual and group project outcome (PowerPoint slides, video-recordings of presentation, WhatsApp messages, interviews, etc.)	Course: 2022R1 World Englishes and Their Cultures (ENGE2600-UGEC2189, lecturer: Prof. Gonzales, teaching assistant: Yue Zhang)
Student verbal responses as reflected in lecture and presentation recordings	Participants: Cantonese as the first language undergraduate students
Research team computer-mediated conversations	Coding scheme: model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015)
Participants' tutorial responses, post-course reflective accounts, and interactions with the research team	Analytic method: thematic analysis
Post-course, online, follow-up techno-reflective narrative interviews(~60 mins) conducted by the first author via ZOOM in English (Zhang, 2023)	Focus of analysis: describing and understanding how learners invest in learning and 'performing' world Englishes and how they make sense of such practices

After the course, learners are expected to
- Carry out basic **(socio)linguistic research** involving world Englishes;
- Engage with **theoretical discussions** and **apply** them to sociolinguistic phenomena, and
- Develop a capacity to **critically reflect on issues** in world Englishes that you encounter in daily life.

Figure 2. A Model of Language Learner Development in the WE Paradigm [Gonzales & Zhang, forthcoming]

A critical WE-informed pedagogy
- actively and agentively resist colonial representations of English,
- problematize notions such as standardization, legitimacy, and nativeness as well as
- challenge existing ideologies that marginalize students' own English varieties (HKE)

Implications
- Develop HKE speakers' **healthy** self-positioning and dispositions
- Pedagogical and language ideology: WE varieties as **resources** for learners to deploy and perform **legitimate** multilingual identities
- Bottom-up and top-down approaches to WE education: from passive knowledge-keepers to **invested**, self-reflective learners

Findings

Learners in this course
- Reflect upon their own English as a second language (ESL) learning history and **HKE practices** from authentic daily interactions and texting experience,
- Engage in agentive discussion on **challenging the existing norms, notions, and ideologies** related to HKE ("standard", "legitimacy", "nativeness", etc.),
- Recognize a shift of HKE from exonormativity to **endonormativity** in their own linguistic community,
- Reframe the **power relationship** between the lecturer (non-HKE speaker) and HK students (native HKE speakers as knowledge expert & local as content expert of the sociocultural context)

HKE Speaker
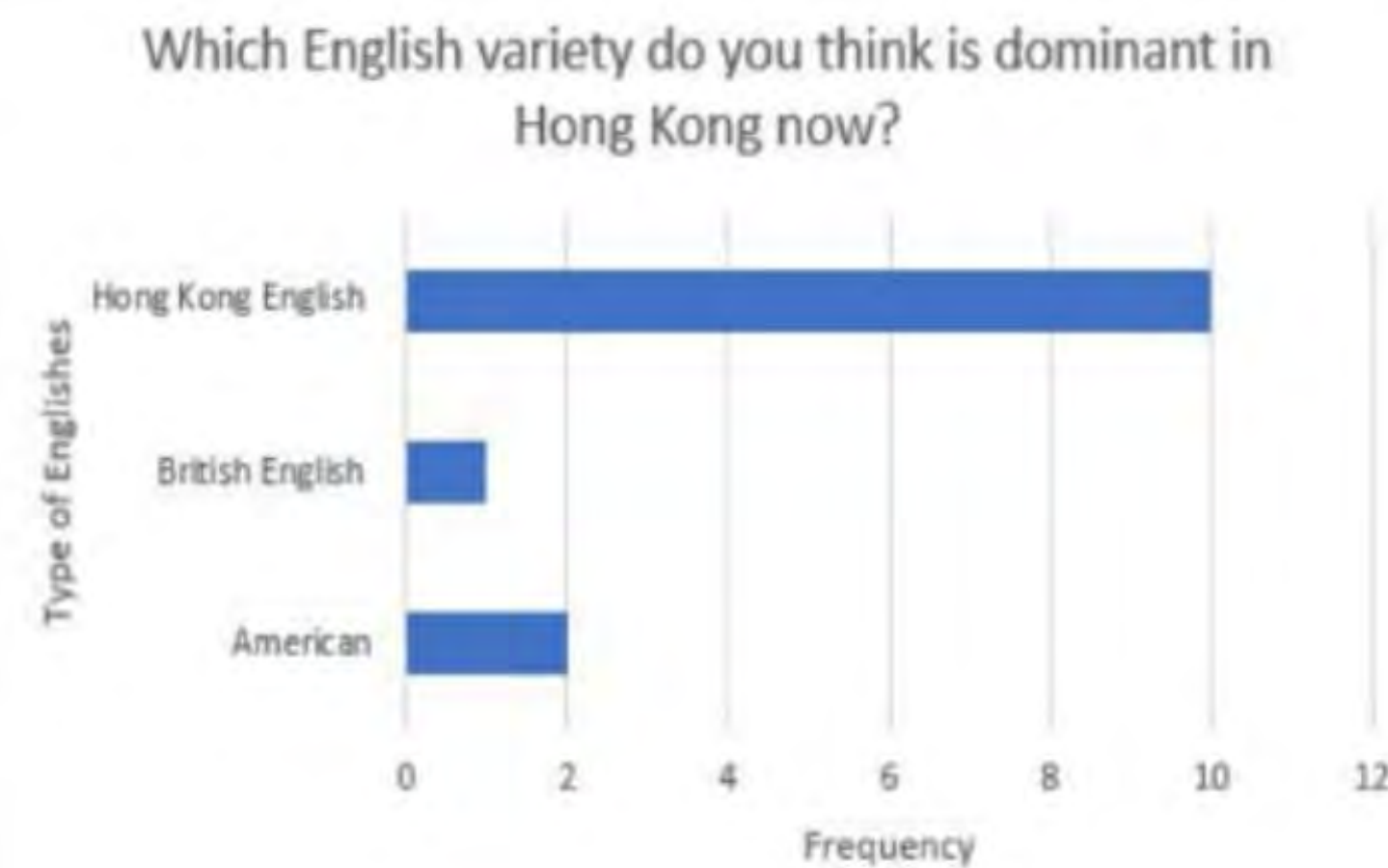**Figure 3**. Legitimate HKE User Identities

Figure 4. The Perceived Role of HKE

Figure 5. HKE as Capital That Empowers

Discussion

Learners
- Developed a **cognitive, critical, and affective** awareness of and **knowledge and understanding** of WE and demonstrated **perceptual** changes of HKE as resource,
- The ability to invest in their own WE variety as **decolonized** practices to perform legitimate, **multilingual**, and competent **identities** (Darvin & Zhang, in press),
- Autonomy from instructor-led discussions related to WE as much as from **self-discovery** in the form of **learner-led** data collection and collaborative projects

HKE
- Exonormative stabilization (Chan, 2013; Groves, 2011) to **endonormative stabilization** (Hansen Edwards, 2015)
- Long before nativized local forms of English (Li, 2002): **exonormative TEFL practices** in local schools (Chan, 2021) , especially EMI and international schools
- '**Linguistic self-hatred/ schizophrenia**' (Groves, 2011; Zhang, 2013) still exist among students with both CMI and EMI backgrounds
- **Symbolic value** of English in portraying Hong Kong and linguistic identity (Chan, 2002; Hansen Edwards, 2015; Hio Mei, 2022)

Conclusion
- Real-time development of learners' **HKE investing trajectories**
- Crucial to provide spaces for learners to explore and **legitimize authentic sociocultural experiences** in their daily lives
- A critical WE-informed pedagogy: underscores **respect for multilingualism, cultural diversity, and multi-faceted identities** – contributing to the decolonization of educational practices in the region

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