

## ENGLISH PORCELAIN – ITS ANTHROPOLOGICAL INFLUENCES IN THE SOCIAL LIFE AND RECOMMENDATION FOR ITS INCLUSION IN TEACHING ENGLISH AND ENGLISH CULTURE WORLDWIDE

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**Abstract.** Being recognized worldwide for its aesthetic value and durability, English porcelain has been a strong longingness among many people from anywhere in the world. Apart from its commercial value, it also carries out non-materialistic notions that can be seen through anthropological analysis within this essay. It, initially, is a means for people of certain occupational sectors to define themselves in the streamline of the social life. In addition, the inspiration it generates uplifts these target people to a rank of incredibly superior intuitions. Even more, it sets a global network of people with a mutual interest where they communicate, make business deals in porcelain, and support one another. Nevertheless, English porcelain seems to be left aside in the list of English cultures in English courses worldwide. It, therefore, urges a necessity to include English porcelain as a cultural significance in teaching English globally, depending on the teacher's optional method, for a more comprehensive training framework of one of the most internationally used languages (English).

**Keywords:** porcelain/ English porcelain, bone china, pottery, English culture, English teaching/ training.

### 1. Introduction

Being first brought by Marco Polo from China, porcelain was called by him as “*porcellana*”. This nickname means cowry shell in Italian which has a shiny and white surface much similar to porcelain. Also, it shapes like a belly of *porcellini* (a little pig). Two these words sound like “*porcellina*”, a slightly dirty word, but porcelain has always been a part of the slightly dirty business with piracy and pilfering afterward. Porcelain is made mainly of two ingredients, which are *kaolin* (so called china clay) and *petunse* (known as pottery stone) (La Force, 2015) [1]. After being decoded, porcelain was reinvented in Europe and then upgraded with the addition of bone ash by Spode around 1800 in England to be what is called today as bone china (or English porcelain). English porcelain nowadays has become a popular and world beating rival to the Chinese and Continental European-made ones (as cited in <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld>

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/objects/iF1pr2HiRbWZtZwmoU1Row) [2]. This essay mainly examines English porcelain from anthropological perspectives with its three significant features. Firstly, English porcelain with its crystal-like beauty has been a tool for its lovers in different professional fields to make their self-definition in society. Besides, the obsession generated by it makes the owners, collectors or simply the observers extraordinary with unexplainable imaginations. Moreover, it connects people globally, forming their social circle with buy and sell activities and passion sharing. However, with its bold features deserving to be an English treasure, English porcelain has probably not been shortlisted into training programs of English and English culture so far. For this gap to be filled up, it is highly recommended to reserve a room for English porcelain in courses of the target language and country studies around the world, with the teacher's decision on the class organization.

## **2. Content**

### **2.1. The Development of English Porcelain**

#### **2.2.1. The Definition of Porcelain.**

For the definition of porcelain, the one given by Freestone (2000) [3] is taken as a representative of many other ones. According to his explanation, porcelain is a translucent and white ceramic with its first production in China in the 6 century AD. It had become well-known in Europe as an exotic material thanks to the travelers like Marco Polo. The first Chinese porcelain items were believed to be imported to the European part of the continent from the 14th century.

Being viewed as a material of exoticness and luxury, porcelain held a high value for its sensuously alluring qualities. Porcelain made items were possessed by the wealthiest and the most powerful people in the society at that time. They often displayed them on mounts made of precious metal. When the trade between the East and West expanded, a high number of porcelain items were transported from its country of origin to its new homeland. Alongside its expansion people at the time had become more aware of its value and desirable beauty. During the 1970s, in accordance with the popularity of porcelain, pastimes of tea or coffee drink and chocolate became fashionable and it was even much in need of the people coming from the middle class. Besides, the trade of porcelain was so bustling between the two parts of the continent leading to the mania for it, and the trend of porcelain collection in some social groups appeared as a result. If a master kept his secrets of porcelain production he was then definitely regarded as a man of great wealth.

#### **2.2.2. The Definition of Bone China.**

When considering the idea of bone china it is noticed by Marchand (2020) [4] that in the history of porcelain the masters of the previous centuries never stopped to transfer pioneering techniques for making porcelain of a better quality. Porcelain producers competed hard with faience makers whose sales volume and market shares were always larger. But unlike porcelain, faience was clunkier and not enough translucent, it also did not have a perfect white color. Therefore, the search for the secret of making “true” porcelain had begun.

The English eventually set up a number of private firms to produce “bone china” or “bone porcelain” by mixing clay with a different formula of proportions and ingredients. Unfortunately, these private firms did not gain much profit, thus porcelain was then seen as rather a different animal than it should have been in central Europe.

Until 1815 porcelain was still tricky to be made and fired. It required three or even more firings for some fancy pieces, for each of those the risk of ruin was always suspended. Even the well-operated manufactories documented a high number of defective artists’ work. There was not exactly the same paste as the formula of clay mixture was different from manufacturers to manufacturers. Also, they never tried to apply a new mixture for their wish to keep the low costs, fuel savings and to enhance the flexibility and strength of the paste. For example, at Sèvres, there were 66 percent of clay in their mixture, this percentage was 40 at Sèvres’s competitor (Limoges) including much more feldspar. Meanwhile KPM (Kjobenhavns Porcellains Maleri) wares were added in with the quartz content to 45 percent by Seger though it was 25 percent before. This application at KPM allowed to lower the firing temperatures as well as to reduce the clay used. English “bone china”, the one perfected by Minton and Spode by stretching kaolin with bone ash, contained 40-50 percent cattle-bone ash to make its clay become a white and strong final product.

When considering bone china, it is essential to name the man who was its discoverer, Josiah II Spode. Being a son of a true craftsman (Josiah I Spode, 1733-1797), he had an amazing business acumen and discovered a correct formula to make a worldwide-known English porcelain called bone china by adding cattle bone ash into clay. His father was recognized for bringing to perfection a commercially successful method of producing blue and white ceramics (so-called blue under-glaze printing). The Spodes were different in orientation but they both were pioneering figures in the critical redefinition of the British pottery industry making the British ceramics reach the top world level (as cited from <https://www.spode.co.uk/spode-about-us>) [5].

### **2.2.3. Porcelain and Bone China in Comparison.**

According to Wardell (2020) [6] porcelain and bone china are sometimes mistakenly viewed with no difference in between. However, they differ one from another in both historical and technical ways. In spite of some similar raw materials and characteristics, they contain different ingredients, recipes, rates of shrinkage and their individual qualities are formed and highlighted by different firing treatments.

Porcelain and bone china both have whiteness, translucency and strength to some extent. They are both being fired at a high temperature and vitrified when mature. The subtle differences, anyway, are found between them in terms of their properties. While porcelain holds its warmer state with its color tones ranging from creamy-off white (as being fired in oxidization) to bluish-white (as being fired in the lower temperature), bone china, on the contrary, shines with its ice-white color or cold color. In case bone china has not been adequately fired, it then shines with a pink hue. It is believed that the color of the body decides on the way the clay looks, even when both porcelain and bone china have been fired to the right temperatures required for each of them.

In the “green” (meaning “raw”) state porcelain is basically stronger and this enables some techniques for decoration such as piercing during the leather-hard stage, meanwhile

bone china should be fired at a soft temperature no higher than 1000°C and the ware is safely coped with afterward. High-firing temperatures determine the fired strength of these materials.

The table below describes the basic recipes measured in percentages and temperatures measured in degrees of the census for both porcelain and bone china provided by Wardell (2020) [6].

<b>Porcelain</b>	<b>Bone China</b>
50% china clay	50% bone ash
25% feldspar	25% china clay
25% quartz	25% Cornish stone*
2–3% ball clay/bentonite.	1% ball clay.
Standard low biscuit firing: 1000°C.	A type of feldspar now replaced by a more stable Italian feldspar.
Standard glaze firing: 1280–1450°C (hard-paste porcelain).	Standard high biscuit firing: 1250°C + 1hr 30min soak.
Shrinkage after firing: 12–15% (depending on the firing).”	Standard glaze firing: 1020–1080°C.
	Shrinkage after firing: 10–12% (depending on the firing).
	The average length of the biscuit firing cycle: twenty-four hours, including cooling.

As it can be seen clearly from the table, the noticeable differences between porcelain and bone china are that one contains no bone ash (porcelain) and the other contains no felspar and quartz (bone china). They both also vary in terms of temperatures for biscuit firing and glazing firing as well as percentages of post-firing shrinkage. Although kilns are used in the ceramic industry to enable the fast-firing, they are anyway not a good recommendation for the individual ceramicist, since this will soon cause damages to the elements of a studio kiln. Cattle bones were imported from the countries like Argentina, Sweden or Holland for making bone ash, which was then added into the bone china recipe as a by-product. Animal bones are primarily used for making glue, after being boiled for manufacture the residue from the bones is calcined and ground and then put into the china body. While cattle bone is commonly used for making bone china, the ox bone ash taken from a Dutch glue factory is more common at the Royal Crown Derby. By-products are prominent features in china industry because bone china biscuit seconds are bulked like a landfill near Tarmac roadways.

#### **2.2.4. The Brief History of English Pottery**

Although one of the targets of this essay is the inspiration of English porcelain on its fans worldwide, it is sensible to describe its process of development in the streamline of English pottery history. Based on the study of Poole (1995) [7], since the first days it has been made during the Neolithic period (3000-2000 BC) English pottery could only take off as a leading innovative manufacturer in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. After its arrival, English pottery has made it a runner-up with its rival (Chinese porcelain) for its outstanding functional and aesthetic qualities.

What makes English pottery production generally striking is its wide range. The unglazed and lead-glazed earthenware from the Middle Ages were merged by using tin-glazed earthenware (so-called delftware) in the second half of the sixteenth century. A century later, salt-glazed stoneware was launched. All of these had been in production until the eighteenth century when tin-glazed earthenware was gradually put out of production. Apart from these main kinds, English craftsmen also developed many other kinds of lead-glazed earthenware and stoneware, among that creamware and pearlware, jasperware and stone china are taken for granted, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The pottery objects were also diversified in types. Kitchenware, diary wares, garden utensils and decorations; pharmaceutical and industrial devices like drug pots, crucibles and storage jars; architectural ceramics of any type such as colorful wall tiling or bricks and chimney pots; even sanitary wares like sinks, lavatories, or drainpipes were produced making English pottery widely-ranged.

Geographical and geological factors enable English pottery abundant in ceramic types and products. The beds of clay appropriate for coarse pottery are situated in many parts of England, however, in some parts of the country, such as North Staffordshire, there are several kinds of clay with the properties which make them suitable for a variety of products, like bricks or teapots, for example. Not far from Barnstaple and Newton Abbot in Devonshire and around Poole in Dorset, a considerable number of clays that turn white after being fired were found in the eighteenth century. It made it possible for cream and white bodies to develop at that time. The white clays were called “ball” clays as they were transported in huge balls with a weight of about half a hundred. Alongside the country coast in the eastern and south-eastern counties, the one which was ground and mixed with these clays for the strong and white body can be found and called flints. Besides, tin, lead and salt for glaze and other kinds of minerals like iron used for pigment are available in England. The typical temperate climate of England also facilitated abundant timber for firing kiln until when timber started to be exhausted in the seventeenth century. In addition to that, coal could be found in North Staffordshire and many other places.

Transportation of raw materials, which were transported alternatively within the mainland by labor in packhorses or carts, was aided by the bustling harbors and navigable rivers such as Severn, Weaver and Trent. Transportation became even more convenient after the construction of canals in the eighteenth century and railways in the nineteenth century. The major manufacturing centers were determined by the areas where raw materials, fuel and nearby markets were available in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those areas were London, Bristol, North Staffordshire villages (later known as the Potteries and now as Stoke-on-Trent), and many others. Significantly, among these, some were ports from which pottery was transported to arrive in the colonies and Europe. The variety of English pottery did not undergo any challenge as the result of the gradual concentration of massive production in certain areas. Many small potteries in both rural and urban areas even went on with prosperous local trade-in slipware and other earthenwares between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

However, during the nineteenth century, as caused by the lower demand for the rustic products and the huge output of low-priced wares from the industrially-made potteries, many of these small potteries, (specifically the ones in towns) were run out of business.

This downfall was somehow offset due to the Art Pottery Movement at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. This led to a high demand for manually-made and decorative ware and urged some rural potters to switch themselves fully or partly to the new trend instead of staying with the traditional one. Even more, some of the small potteries could struggle to survive but the depression of the 1930s made a sharper drop in their number.

In the 1920s and 1930s, fortunately, there was a Studio Pottery Movement introducing a new kind of hand-made pottery. It emphasized form and glaze instead of superficial decoration. The small-scale potting was revived in which the potteries (established at St Ives in Cornwall by Bernard Leach in 1920 and at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire by Michael Cardew in 1926) played a leading role. When the Second World War ended, studio pottery was on its trend with a number of kilns set up fifty years later. The studio potteries have been further expanded and did not depend on the areas with raw materials and fuel available for production, meanwhile, the previous small potteries did. They now use gas and electric kilns, and in case of need, use ready-prepared clay from outsourcers. They produced earthenware and stoneware for domestic use and worldwide-known ornamental ceramics with a high sense of individualism. Nevertheless, the same period witnessed a dramatic decline in industrial potteries as the result of closure or amalgamation. The urge for modernization in manufacturing methods due to the higher health requirements and adverse economic conditions was strong, and manual work had been minimized as well. But this period is only the one before what is aptly called Dynamic Design from about 1940 to 1990.

The diversity of English pottery is also determined by socio-economic factors. The emergence of the middle class across the country with their increasing prosperity from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries made their great demand for high-quality domestic ware and decorative items, which consequently promoted the production with a wide variety. The larger class of workers became a potential market for country pottery and the wares of lower price and fashion from the major centers. After the 1760s' English pottery was widely used by the richest people in the society as before this period its greatly upgraded quality made it affordable. Despite the hesitation, before the 1760s' the rich purchased a great deal of pottery for their family use and occasionally did for individual use. Moreover, Wedgwood, a leading brand name of English pottery, had learned about the importance of being stamped with aristocratic and royal customs. It was a great delight for Wedgwood to be given a commission from Queen Charlotte in 1765. The upward trend of tea and coffee from the late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries and the adoption of more sophisticated ways of serving meals with a larger number of dishes on the table at the same time increased demand for a wider range of tableware with different functions. Turning to the eighteenth century the tableware used in the richest families was often made of silver, glass and Oriental porcelain, including a little Continental porcelain imported mostly from Meissen and Sevres. That porcelain manufacture was absent in England before the 1740s was, anyway, an advantage for the pottery industry. It urged to produce the delftware for attractive decoration and developed the refined earthenwares and stonewares to satisfy the customers who were comfortably off but still found porcelain unaffordable. Middle-class people continued to use pewter as an alternative, but it was viewed as less classy compared to creamware or pearlware. After the setup of

English porcelain factories during a decade in the first half of the eighteenth century, porcelain still remained luxurious, and its use was slowly spread out to the lower scale of the society afterward with the main purpose of tea drink and ornaments. In many middle-class families, daily dinner service was still made of earthenware or stoneware, meanwhile, porcelain or bone china service was given as a wedding gift or brought out only for special events.

The middle and lower classes' demand for pottery figures also encouraged the manufacturing after the eighteenth century. They were at a better price compared with porcelain-made figures though with the same design. The subjects of early porcelain figures had satisfied the taste of aristocracy but by the end of the eighteenth century, the pottery figures largely represented features of pop culture. They look both naïve and realistic, shine with bright colors, therefore possess a vitality that is not seen in most porcelain figures at that time.

Turning to the twentieth century, the rapid change in society, especially the decline in the number of full-time domestic servants and the rise in the number of women working outside the home, has made the pottery manufacturers adapt their products to it. Being introduced in the 60s of the century, oven-to-table ware was made to save up the time for washing. About twenty years later the improved models were made even better to be dishwasher and freezer safe. Daily meals have been less formal, therefore the needs for crockery have become different. Mugs, a kind of the ceramic equivalent of the labor-saving T-shirt, have all but exclude cups and saucers in some households. The worldwide demand for durable tableware used for the emerging hospitality industry and large academic institutions has also required an inventive response from the manufacturers.

The style of English pottery has, probably, always been mixed with others. It seems to be influenced by contemporary art and architectural styles, but practically, the degree of influence fluctuates greatly. In the Middle Ages, English pottery was made with a number of regional styles, which are believed medieval in character, though it is hard to link it with specific characteristics of Romanesque or gothic design. Except for floor tiles, most of the gothic pottery was actually made in the golden time of revivalism of the mid-nineteenth century. Dating back to the sixteenth century, the English pottery industry was left behind by the Continental one, and the features of Renaissance art were not reflected in its products like in Italian maiolica, German stoneware, or French 'Saint-Porchaire'. However, during this period the introduction of new forms and decorations was made. After 1600, fashionable styles greatly influenced the way the finer earthenware and stoneware were made in the biggest production centers despite that it was usually lagged when one was utterly replaced by another. For example, it took about ten years for the rococo style to be introduced after neo-classicism was. The nineteenth century was the period of revival styles and the twentieth was when both revival and contemporary patterns were on production. The change of fashion did not influence much the smaller urban and rural made pottery. Some items were still traditionally made at a very slow pace. The difference in style between industrially-made products and small potteries continued to exist in the twentieth century. Besides, there was a huge contrast between the restrained studio pottery produced from the 1920s to 1930s and that produced by the big brand names such as Wedgwood, Spode and Doulton, or even by the newcomers such

as Poole Pottery, A. E. Gray and A.J. Wilkinson with brightly-colored Art Deco wares. This contrast still existed until the second half of the century between the products of the new trend of studio pottery and that of the factories such as Midwinter, Hornsea and Portmeirion. Nevertheless, to some degree, studio potters with a country-style had an influence on the simpler oven-to-table wares of the 1960s and the 1970s. Alongside the generalized influence of European art styles, from the sixteenth century, the design of English pottery has also undergone another influence in two directions: firstly, by the immigrants who arrived in with new techniques, and secondly, by ceramics imported from the Far East, the Low Countries and their neighbors in the mainland (France and Germany). The forms and decoration of non-ceramic (metal) made items were also adopted by the potters. The combination of all these influences has made a quintessentially English pottery in spite of many traits similar to that of other European countries. Some features can be typically English, but some are more clearly seen than another in one kind or in one period. One quality among many others makes English pottery appealing is its joyful and vigorous character. This is so obvious in slipwares and other country pottery as it is originated from their solid forms, warm, earthy coloring and glossy yellowish or treacly-brown lead glazes. Their decoration is full of liveliness with warm messages for blessings or invitations for drinks and merry occasions in the fire-lit parlors of the farmhouse or inns where bucolic celebrations were conjured up. Some brown salt-glazed stonewares, Measham ware and brightly-colored, polychrome delftware of the seventeenth century possess the same qualities. There was a tendency for understatement and restraint, which was equally characteristic. Its association with excellent but simplistic throwing and turning and full attention to details, like applied sprigs, spouts and handles, is frequent. Medieval jugs and John Dwight's sophisticated marbled stonewares are the best illustrations for this. So are the neat, lead-glazed redware and agate wares of the period from 1726 to 1775. The significant feature of the pottery manufactured during the early neo-classical period is restraint. It is found in the perfection of creamwares, the elegant jasperware and black basalt produced by Wedgwood and other contemporary brand names. In spite of their plain and light decoration, they were undoubtedly a beauty. Besides, among many exuberant pottery items of the Victorian period, the reticent pots were found like a low pitch in a melody. Ridgway's Bulrush'jug, skillfully molded in a humble grey stoneware, is the best example of the beauty in simplicity.

Humor is sensed prominent in English pottery wares. The example for this feature is puzzle vessels which represented slapstick comedy with unwitting or tipsy drinkers from its contents. There were also puzzle toys, puzzle jugs and fuddling cups (so-called Jolly Boys at Donyatt), which all were produced from at least the thirteenth century onward. Surprise jokes can be found on the mugs, on which there are lifelike toads similar to the ones made by Sunderland in the nineteenth century. The humor is commonly found sly and moralizing. It usually targeted at a certain class, for example the clergy, or referred to relationships between genders, for example, the early nineteenth-century group The Battle for the Breeches which made fun of couples with bossy wives and weakling husbands. As long as transfer-printing was introduced in mid-1750s, the gradual appearance of caricature and political satire was common enabling potters to re-make prints and their inscriptions on ceramics. On the round-shaped items like mugs, jugs,

figures and busts, caricatures were made as well. Some of the English pottery items are funny as they evoke a sense of amusement and quaintness. Even from the Middle Ages, both manufacturers and buyers have been amused with vessels masquerading as something else, for example, bear jugs or camel teapots or a number of the Toby jug versions. These fancy or even malformed vessels were made for fun, but they unintentionally resulted in quaintness with an unsophisticated interpretation of style or model. To illustrate this, the peculiar but charming way of how Sevres or Meissen coloring grounds were copied on white salt-glazed stoneware is taken.

The drawing was not always a strength of the English pot painters. Even now the human figures, for example, Adam and Eva decorated on delftware “blue dash chargers”, seem to be hilarious but absurd. However, this absurdity had made English pottery of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at the most endearing qualities. Generally, in those centuries, painting on English pottery could not surpass that of Dutch delft or French Jaience as it was not enough sophisticated in comparison. However, one of the features making English pottery ravishingly appealing is its painting of floral design, views and genre scenes. In his book “The Englishness of English Art” written in 1956, the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner coined the term “Observed Life” for the flair of English craftsmen and artists for portrayal, among them the English potters and decorators took an unsplit part. In their artworks, people and daily activities like hunting, farming, drinking, tea-drinking, courting or just sitting were illustrated. It shows a close relationship between English everyday life and pottery, and so do the other kinds of ceramics which reflect the flow of life, starting from model cradles and reaching out to memorial tiles.

### **2.3. Passion and Obsession Originated from English Porcelain.**

In this part of the essay, the ravishing attraction of English porcelain is being referred to as a passion, and even more, an obsession among its fans. The word “fans” is being used in this context for a reason. English porcelain has inspired not only the professionals in the target domain but also the amateurs-collectors, and even the laypeople who have no understanding about or no money spent for it. It seems impossible to group them all with one word of definition. So, the word “fans” is probably the best available description.

English porcelain has been being studied by experts in arts and there has been definitely plentiful research on this, majorly in the light of aesthetics. However, within this essay, the attraction of English porcelain is being viewed from a different perspective, which seems to be less conventional with more contemporary data. In more details, the approach to this topic is more on a daily basis with more life-rooted cases. When examining English porcelain, the description of its beauty is abundant. Even more, beauty is appreciated based on no standards. However, there are evidences for its inspiration, even obsession, coming from completely different aspects which will be listed further below.

Considering its monetary value, the sale of British-made ceramics, in general, is rocketing up to records, an item can be sold for a six-figure sum (as cited in <https://www.ceramicreview.com/auction-eye/auction-eye-sothebys-ceramic-highlights/>) [8]. An example is taken for English porcelain, in particular, is a group of six Spode (a famous English brand name) table articles, circa 1815-20. This collection is painted in

pattern 1166, decorated with blue ground, gilded scales and floral design. It consists of a potpourri vase and a pierced cover, a garniture of three urn-shaped vases with cylindrical pedestal bases and two plates. And the bidding was closed for this six-piece collection at USD 6.000 though it was estimated at only USD 1.000-1.500 (as cited in <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/a-collecting-legacy-property-from-nelson-happy-rockefeller-n10004/lot.379.html>) [9].

From the above example, it can be said that the attraction of English porcelain has been the same magnetic as it was thousands of years ago. It is viewed as “the white gold” (La Force, 2015) [1], for why its values are measured in huge cash. And this also indicates that English porcelain is an element classifying social layers. It would define a person’s personality, his social background, and even his self-definition based on the value of the porcelain he owns. To illustrate further, long-time investors of porcelain always have to take consideration before deciding on their investment, as antique porcelain can make a fortune at the auctions. Moreover, the investors’ choice is only made based on their pure passion. Even though the copies of the first works of porcelain have been made in a large edition nowadays by reputable manufacturers, the high-class collectors are still recommended to stay away from them (Streit, 2015) [10].

While the above case exemplifies how a long-time collector of porcelain is classified, the further one is the way how British potters tried their best to pursue their passion for porcelain, particularly or ceramics, generally. According to Brara (2021) [11], in recent years, the appearance of the new generation of British potters of Black origin has breathed a new wind into ceramics. A representative for this trend is the London-based Spanish ceramist Bisila Noha. This young potter has started her experiments with sculptural forms for which she gained an inspiration from her interest in her origin of birth (Equatorial Guinea). She is sometimes making pots by mixing Baney clay with porcelain and English Draycott stoneware. Her passion for porcelain or pottery is awaking her Blackness and making herself in the way she originally is. Her self-definition through pursuing this career may have been considered too risky or exclusionary in the time of her grandparents, who immigrated to England in the second half of the twentieth century from the Caribbean, West and Central Africa, or some European parts. The young pottery makers like Bisila Noha are now making a redefinition of the medium through work that reflects their own identities and, more broadly, Britain’s. In other words, it can be reasoned that while attempting to redefine their selves by searching for their biological origins, these African British potters have made their products characterized with Britishness but still imbued with Blackness. And this combination has shaped their own identities in “Britain’s great melting pot” (Kelner, 2012) [12] making them not only typically British but also completely outstanding. For them, the “white road”, coined by De Waal (Jamie, 2015) [13] is no longer a question of livelihood, but above all, it is a means for them to identify themselves in the society.

This is also interesting to note that the obsession for English porcelain is sensed with intuitive feelings that cannot be logically worded. This is exemplified by the story of De Waal, an English potter, artist, and writer. When De Waal sees a vase, he can imagine not only the kind of room that vase inhabited before but also the type of woman who probably brushed her fingertips across its lip. When reading his works about porcelain, one can

immediately understand that is dedicatedly written for a perfectionist (“*Pinch a walnut-sized piece between thumb and forefingers until it is as thin as paper until the whorls of your fingers emerge. Keep pinching. It feels endless. You feel it will get thinner and thinner until it is as thin as a gold leaf and lifts into the air. And it feels clean. Your hands feel cleaner after you have used them. It feels white*”). De Waal is so obsessed with porcelain that he counts pots on sleepless nights. In his hands’ porcelain means everything, it is power, beauty, greed and destiny. It even carries out love, desire and passion or an escape from the real life. In his explanation porcelain is above materialism, it has never been simply a necessity. Above all, it is the pleasures of making others envy, fear, or the pleasures of looking down at all the new possessions, in short, it is all kinds of pleasure. However, De Waal at the same time seems to be a slippery writer, who is disinclined to face arguments. He seemingly turns to spin pottery instead of writing and offers his self-contained scenes one by one (La Force, 2015) [1].

Another story that illustrates how a person becomes obsessed with the English porcelain is the case of Molly Hatch writing “*A Passion for China: A Little Book about the Objects We Eat from, Live with, and Love*” (Hatch, 2017) [14]. Hatch is an American artist and ceramicist, but she has fallen in love with English porcelain during her visits to a museum which saves the whole top floor to display ceramics. As she walked through the grand halls of the museum, she examined the pots made by all of her ceramic idols from Britain and otherwise. A sense of discovery grew inside her and she felt a close connection with the makers from the past that she had never experienced before. As she said, when searching for domestic porcelain, the interest and fervor are found the same in both England and continent as porcelain was more precious than gold in its heyday and no one would deny discovering its formula and manufacture. Hatch sets her love especially for hand-made or handcrafted objects and she believes that even today there is still a large room for handmade things even though the manufacture made ones are more common. In her view, when one can see the stories behind the porcelain items he lives with, he will ask whether they are handmade or factory-made, where he would reach when making his first cup in the morning, what item he loves and how it looks. Like De Waal, when looking at a pot, Hatch can feel a delicate nature on its surface, she can also feel its place of origin. She is always urged with a curiosity of how an item came about or what meaning it has. In her imaginary world, everything is floating or impossibly bunched. There is no existence of creatures yet somehow it all feels as if it refers to something else but not only what is visibly seen. For Hatch, each of the porcelain objects holds a special meaning in a person’s life in its own way. It means that, for her, porcelain items no longer are inanimate objects, they have their life told in the stories by their owners or makers. This sense is made only when the love for porcelain grows far beyond big.

The cases of De Waal and Hatch again show that porcelain is molded by humans, but then human identities are molded by porcelain. It may first start with simply a passion, then it goes deeper as an obsession, and becomes an identity afterward that makes a man stand out from others. And on a larger scale, porcelain creates an association of connoisseurs of porcelain, ceramics experts, professional or amateur collectors, or simply a group of UK vintage porcelain lovers. It is again reasonable to point out why English porcelain generates such an enchantment upon its fan community. Although being the next destination (after Europe) in the westward journey of porcelain from its country of

origin (China), England has gone far ahead of its counterparts in porcelain manufacture with innovation, creativity and charm. Despite some similarities, English porcelain differs (or surpasses, if possible) from that of Continental Europe for two main reasons. As being privately-owned without depending on the royal or princely patronship or governmental support, and heavily dependent on the local raw materials to reduce the manufacture costs, English porcelain has its own open way for the development of its own recipe, making it completely different from the others. And the back-stamp with “made in England” is a selling point to create the worldwide thirst for English porcelain (as cited in <https://www.christies.com/features/How-to-collect-British-porcelain-11657-1.aspx>) [15].

The passion for English porcelain has been witnessed so strong that promotes vibrant commerce on both large and small scales. The ceramics category, alongside crude oil, iron and steel, nickel, etc. is included in the table showing the United Kingdom Exports. In spite of the Covid 19 pandemics crisis, there was an increase of the total value of ceramic product export from 35.89 GBP million in June up to 40.56 GBP million in July of 2021 (as cited in <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-kingdom/exports-of-ceramic-products>) [16]. However, these statistics are not the target of the analysis. As mentioned above, this essay addresses the cases which show the concrete protagonists in their own life-based stories about their passions for “the white gold” (La Force, 2015) [1]. On a smaller scale, the trade-in English porcelain is no less bustling. It can be listed with a number of Facebook personal accounts or pages on which UK vintage porcelain is exchanged. This online buy and sell approach makes no geographical borders as the netizens visiting these sites are connected with a mutual passion for English porcelain. There are examples for those Facebook accounts but the given ones (Hội yêu đồ sứ vintage UK Facebook, Gốm sứ Anh Quốc, Trà chiều vintage H&T, Ban Công Homemade Happiness, Na’s Gallery, Victorian Tea Time, Mom’s Finest Collections, Bagsy That China, China Searching UK) are taken for the list.

When visiting these sites, it can be learned that their users do not have blue ticks, often owned by public figures for which attract many views, likes and shares. However, their passion for English porcelain is reflected by their expertise and fruitful business, and more importantly, their passionate feelings for it make their sites visited by a great number of other Facebookers. They can be different people from different corners of the world with different backgrounds, but they come together to form a social circle. And it is noticeable that their circle is operated with its own rules and regulations making it a well-organized community. This again proves that porcelain “marks the passage of life” (Poole, 1995) [3]. Being originated from one country (China), traveling across the continents (Asia- Europe) to arrive the new lands (with the first destination in France and the next shift to Germany), and then being improved with new versions on a separate island (England), porcelain has shaped lives on its route of development. Until nowadays there are minor communities with their activities spinning on the wheel with porcelain, both online and offline. People join, share their knowledge and experiences, buy and sell porcelain, or facilitate exchanges of porcelain. The existence of these communities is physical, even though they are mostly active online. This is undeniable that the influence of porcelain is not limited to individuals but expanded to minor communities worldwide.

## 2.4. Porcelain as an Essential Theme in Teaching English and English Culture

It is a prerequisite to note that teaching language should go in line with teaching culture as language and culture are organically intertwined (Brown, 2001) [17]. An example taken for further explanation is Vietnamese. Vietnamese people have different versions to connote the word “rice”. It is “*thóc*” for when the rice is in the raw state before its husk is being removed. After that, it is called “*gạo*” as it has been taken out from its husk but still uncooked. In this state, if it is broken into even smaller grains, it is called “*tám*”. But when being well-cooked, it turns to be “*com*” or “*cháo*”. This linguistic diversity reflects a close relationship between Vietnamese people and their main provisions. Rice is considered to be a staple food in the country of Vietnam (as cited in <https://www.unileverfoodsolutions.us/chef-inspiration/world-cuisines/vietnamese-cuisine/rice-in-vietnamese-cuisine.html>) [18], so people refer to it with different names depending on its physical conditions and nutritional values. Meanwhile, in English, there are many sayings that imply the English culture. For example, “*if you are cold, tea will warm you. If you are too heated, it will cool you. If you are depressed, it will cheer you. If you are excited, it will calm you*” (William Ewart Gladstone). This quotation indirectly describes the English climate. It is fairly cool even in the summer (as shared by a foreigner once living in England, cited in <https://www.o-cha.net/english/teacha/culture/blacktea2.html>) [19] so maybe both hot and cold teas are served to moderate people’s moods. Jane Austen once said that “*but indeed I would rather have nothing, but tea*”, or Alice Walker believed “*tea to the English is really a picnic indoors*”. From their words, it is obvious that drinking tea is a typical living style of the English. They are believed the tea-lover nation in the world, they drink about 165 million cups of tea each day in estimation (Rizzo, 2017) [20]. Also, Douglas Adams revealed “*a cup of tea would restore my normality*”. It shows English character, English people are viewed as reserved, they tend to keep their performance under control or “normality” (Still, 2018) [21].

Regarding teaching culture, English culture is definitely being taught to a large extent as English is being taught worldwide. British Council, taken for granted, teaches English face-to-face in 60 countries around the world and offers LearnEnglish websites for both adult and young learners to hundreds of millions with wind-up MP3 players in Africa and via radio and with the BBC world service. It supports the governments and states, especially in the third world to improve English in state education. British Council is present in Western Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa to develop scale and excellence in a large-scale teaching operation. Its presence is even in conflict zones like South Sudan, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, or in the vital world institutions around the world within English teaching projects. British Council’s “Project English” in India benefited 27 million young learners and brought opportunities for professional development to 650,000 teachers. Working in association with technological corporations like Intel and Nokia, British Council has brought LearnEnglish content in classrooms and at homes and English language services to 100 countries and nine million mobile users worldwide, respectively. Besides, it also sets up a large number of training courses for English teachers around the world (as cited in <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/english-effect-report-v2.pdf>) [22].

That English classes are given across the world means English culture is introduced accordingly. There is a question for concern which English culture should be taught? According to McKay (2004) [23], it is necessary to introduce a variety of English cultures to enable students to have a good sense of practices and then develop their intercultural communication skills. Thereby, a variety of significant English cultures have been introduced through English classes such as English as a global language, music, countryside and literature in the course of exploring English: Language and Culture Expert Track provided by British Council (as cited in <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/explore-english-language-culture>) [24]. It is clearly seen that in the above list, English porcelain as a significant feature of English culture is missing. Even among 34 things that people may not know about English culture, mostly all significant topics of English culture are included with charity, advertising, geography, holidays, life events, big brother/nanny state, hobbies, foods and drinks and cultural life (as cited in <https://www.engvid.com/34-things-you-dont-know-about-english-culture/>) [25]. However, English porcelain, again, is excluded in this list of English culture.

From all of the above references, it can be noted that there should be a gap in teaching English culture if the topic of English porcelain is not included. It is crucial, again, to mention the appraisal that its fans worldwide set for English porcelain. It is “a very British thumbs-up” as shared by a blogger from <https://www.rosielovestea.com/blog/2019/9/17/bone-china-a-very-british-thumbs-up> [26]. English porcelain, understood as bone china, undeniably occupies a noticeable part in English culture, as it was invented by the English, leaving behind its counterparts, and gaining admiration around the world. For all these reasons, a key point in the curriculum of teaching English and English culture should be favorably saved for English porcelain. And it is a teacher’s own choice on how to deliver his classes on this feature of English culture. Alongside English literature and music, the Royal Family, or the Premier League, etc., English porcelain, like an unsplit piece, will make a complete jigsaw puzzle of English culture.

### **3. Conclusion**

With its long-lasting history of development, English porcelain has probably been proven to be a winner in the race though joining it later. Being sought after around the world by the collectors, being craved for by numbers of people, and even being obsessed by the porcelain adorers, English porcelain has embodied as an English pride alongside literature, music, football, industrialization or education. However, English porcelain with its record price is not only an art form but also a medium for people who love it to identify their own status in society or to distinguish them from others. It has been also a source of super sensitiveness inside a person that cannot be explained by words when being in his hands. Porcelain is a bridge to bring people from anywhere in the vast world together to form a minor community. Regardless of the size, this community appears to be remarkable with its commercial activities, knowledge exchange and endless love for English porcelain. Seemingly, with such a role played in people’s life, English porcelain has not been included in training courses of English language and English culture to the best of the available evidence. Therefore, a suggestion is given to bring English porcelain, based on the teacher’s own delivery, into the language and culture classes of English with

other familiar topics. It is not only an introduction of culture but also an efficient approach to enable students' communication skills as the inspiration generated by English porcelain has been extended much further outside the UK borders.

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