**Teaching English for Economic Competitiveness:
Emerging Issues and Challenges in English Education in China
Enseignement de l'anglais, une question de compétitivité économique:
problèmes émergents et défis pour l'enseignement de l'anglais en Chine**

Yan Guo, University of Calgary

Abstract

Under China's market economy, English language learning has been adopted as a strategy to promote the nation's economic competitiveness in a global economy. This development reflects a discourse of linguistic instrumentalism. Based upon individual interviews of 24 English teachers in Zhejiang Province, China, the study reveals that teachers question the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism, the gatekeeper role of English, the impact of the increasing dominance of English on Chinese language, and their students' internalization of the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture. In addition, the study suggests that as a result of globalization, the delivery of English education in China has experienced unprecedented marketization and privatization. Despite increases in their salaries, teachers still live in poor conditions. Under the fee-paying principle, parents expect teachers to provide the best service to their children, and as such the relations between teachers and students have become like those between businesses and clients. It seems evident that teaching has been devalued and commodified in the age of the market economy.

Résumé

Depuis que la Chine est entrée dans l'économie de marché, l'anglais est devenue stratégique afin de promouvoir la compétitivité économique de la nation au niveau international. Ce développement est le reflet d'un discours d'instrumentalisme linguistique. Les entrevues de 24 professeurs d'anglais de la province de Zhejiang révèlent pourtant que les professeurs questionnent cette notion d'instrumentalisme linguistique, le rôle de gardien de la langue anglaise, l'impact de la dominance de l'anglais sur le chinois ainsi que la croyance en la supériorité de la culture anglophone de la part de leurs étudiants. De plus, cette étude montre que suite à la globalisation, l'apprentissage de l'anglais a été privatisé et commercialisé. Bien que les salaires des professeurs d'anglais aient augmenté, ils vivent toujours dans des conditions précaires. Les parents payent des frais de scolarité et s'attendent donc à recevoir les meilleurs services possibles pour leurs enfants. Les relations entre professeurs et apprenants deviennent de ce fait de plus en plus commerciales. Il est clair qu'en Chine, depuis l'instauration de l'économie de marché, l'enseignement a été dévalué et mercantilisé.

Introduction: English Education in Today's Market Economy Society

With the open-door policy in 1978, China initiated a transformation from planned economy to market economy, a transition in which English has become an essential requirement. In 1998, the Ministry of Education official in charge of foreign language education, Cen Jianjun, stated that the goal for English

education in China was not an educational issue per se, but one of particular relevance to China's economy:

If a nation's foreign language proficiency is raised, it will be able to obtain information of science and technology from abroad and translate it into the native language. Ultimately this will be turned into production force. (Cen, 1998, cited in Cai, 2006, p. 3)

Put simply, the Chinese government sees English language learning as paramount to the nation's economic competitiveness in the global market. Such an assumption constitutes the discourse of linguistic instrumentalism, which emphasizes utilitarianism of learning English for sustaining economic development as a society and for social mobility as individuals (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2008). This discourse pervades language education policies, the increasing emphasis of English Language Teaching (ELT), and English curricular reforms in China. In large cities such as Shanghai, the economic capital of 'foreign language' is highlighted: "To develop world-class foreign language teaching programs in Shanghai is a prerequisite for turning the municipality into a world-class international metropolis" (Shanghai Curricular and Teaching Material Reform Commission, 1999, p. 3). China's admission into the World Trade Organization in 2001, Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai's hosting of the 2010 World Expo have been foregrounded by a major acceleration of provisions and planning on behalf of English throughout Chinese education. Over the past 30 years the spread of English in China has accelerated, affecting education at all levels. In January 2001, China decided to make English compulsory in elementary schools from Grade 3 (age 8) upwards. English education is, prompted by market forces, expanding to lower levels (i.e., below Grade 3) despite being non-compulsory. In 1999, cities such as Beijing and Shanghai introduced English at Grade 1 (age 6) level. These schools are aiming to improve the skills of students entering the mandatory phase of English learning. English is a compulsory subject in university entrance examinations, and university students with non-English majors who fail College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) do not receive their university diplomas. CET-4 is also a prerequisite for admission to graduate schools. English majors are required to pass the Test for English Majors 4 (TEM-4), a more difficult test than the CET, in order to graduate. Non-English majors and English majors are encouraged to take CET-6 and TEM-8 respectively, in order to improve their employment prospects (Cheng, 2008). Recently China has even issued a policy calling for the use of English as the medium of instruction in many universities for certain subjects such as information technology, biotechnology, new material technology, finance, economics, and law (Feng, 2011).

English has become a requirement for those seeking decent employment, social status, and financial security. This reflects the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism by individuals. College graduates with competence in their own discipline plus good English skills are more likely to find employment in foreign enterprises, joint ventures and cooperatively run enterprises than those who lack such skills, and are, therefore, positioned to demand the highest starting salaries (Gao, 2009; Yang, 2006). As such, students are motivated to learn English. As one administrative assistant in a technology company in Beijing stated, English ability enables social mobility: “those with a good command of English usually have more choices and chances...to be promoted to an upper level of the society” (Li, 2009, p. 214). In present-day China, English is the language of symbolic capital, socioeconomic value, and power (Bourdieu, 1991), an instrument to success.

Market Economy and English Curricular Reforms

Because of the superior social and economic prestige that proficiency in English has accrued, English language teaching has been intensely promoted by the government. Much of the impetus for English curricular reforms in China has come from forces of economic globalization, as the nation attempts to shape its education systems to provide the skills needed to participate and compete in the growing global economy. In January 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued a document entitled “Guidelines for Promoting English Teaching in Elementary Schools” (Ministry of Education, 2001). It replaced the focus of the 1999 curricular on receptive skills such as reading, with a new emphasis on productive skills for interpersonal communication (Ministry of Education, 2001). Similarly, a new English language curriculum for senior secondary schools was published in 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2003) and is notable for including both ‘humanistic’ and ‘instrumental’ aims for English education (Wang, 2006). The humanistic goals focus on developing students’ cross-cultural awareness and positive values and attitudes such as confidence and cooperative spirit (Cheng, 2011). The new curriculum places less stress on grammar, reading, and writing, and more on listening and speaking. More emphasis is placed on developing students’ practical communication skills, particularly oral skills. The purpose of this top-down movement to reform ELT in China is to develop the communicative skills of Chinese English learners, preparing both individuals and the nation for competition in the global economy.

This paper explores current issues for English education under the market economy in China. Although these issues are getting increasingly serious and deserve attention from both within and outside China, they have not been

widely reported in the literature (see Oplatka, 2007). Teachers' voice and their perceptions of their work and career issues in developed countries are well studied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Day & Leitch, 2001). It is important to explore the teacher's perceptions in developing countries that differ from the developed world in terms of social, economic, cultural, and educational structures. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What is the impact of the market economy on English education?
2. How do English teachers respond to the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism embedded in language policies?
3. How do the working and living conditions and status of English teachers change under China's market economy?

This study explores the impact of the market economy on English education and on English teachers based on data collected from schools in two representative Chinese cities in Zhejiang Province.

Research Site and Method

Located in Eastern China, Zhejiang Province is one of the most economically advanced provinces. Two cities were chosen: Hangzhou and Wenzhou. The largest city and the capital of Zhejiang, Hangzhou is also one of the Yangtze River Delta's major cities, sitting only 180 kilometers southwest of Shanghai. Hangzhou's economy has rapidly developed since its opening up in 1992. In 2009, its GDP reached 5098.66 billion yuan, ranking the second among all provincial capitals after Guangzhou (Hangzhou Municipal Government Work Report, 2010). Hangzhou was also chosen because of its renowned education system, which produced numerous famous writers, scientists and scholars in the last century.

Wenzhou is a prefecture-level city in southeastern Zhejiang. A leading player in the economic reform, in 1978 Wenzhou became the first city to allow individual and private enterprises. Residents' per capita disposable income has exploded under the market economy, from 422.6 yuan (approximately \$67 CAD) in 1981 to 28,021 yuan (approximately \$4,445 CAD) in 2009, ranking them third highest among China's urban dwellers (Wenzhou Statistics Bureau, 2009). In 1993, Wenzhou was the spearhead of marketization and privatization of education, permitting *minban*¹ schools to collect tuition, allowing parents to pay school choice fees, and letting *minban* schools hire their own teachers and set up their own standards for teacher salaries (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010). As a result, *minban* schools have mushroomed, reaching 1,748 in 2009, with 413, 000 (27.3%) students registered (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010).

With the permission of the local education authority, I visited four schools in Hangzhou (see Table 1). Founded in 1904, School A is one of the key senior high schools in Zhejiang Province. Almost all its graduates are successfully admitted into university, 60% of whom go to top universities such as Beijing University and Qinghua University. Their students won gold medals in the International Olympic Competition of Biology in 2003 and in 2007, the gold medal of the International Olympic Competition of Informatics in 2004, and the first prize in English speech competitions in Zhejiang Province in 2009. School B in Hangzhou is a public junior high school. The school is known for its small English class sizes, about 30 students in each class, compared to groupings of over 50 students in other schools in the city. The school is a sister school to a junior high school in Indiana in the United States.

Table 1: Selection of Hangzhou and Wenzhou Schools

Name	Location	Grade	Year of Est.	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School A	Hangzhou Urban	Senior High (Grade 10-12)	1994	2,028	145	Public	Free
School B	Hangzhou Old downtown	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1904	600	73	Public	Free
School C	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1995	1,020	95	State-owned <i>minban</i>	12,000 yuan (\$1,903 CAD) per year
School D	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1984	1,700	161	Public	Free
School E	Wenzhou Urban	Combined Junior and Senior High (Grade 7-12)	1971	2,800	241	Public	Free (one program charged 60,000 yuan, \$9,517 CAD per year)
School F	Wenzhou Suburb	Combined Elementary and Junior High (K-9)	2008	720: elementary; 360: junior high	80	Private <i>minban</i>	Elementary: 42,000 yuan (\$6,660 CAD) per year Junior High: 48,000 yuan (\$7,612 CAD) per year

In 2010, the school selected 4 to 6 English teachers to go for training in the United States. School C is a state-owned *minban* school well known for the high performance of its students in English reading. From July 2002, School C was officially placed under the jurisdiction of Hangzhou Education Bureau. School D

is known for its small class sizes of 34. Twenty-eight percent of its graduates go to key senior high schools and more than 50% to reputable senior high schools. It is thought of as one of the top three public junior high schools in Hangzhou.

I visited two schools in Wenzhou (see Table 1). School E is known for its Sino-Australia High School Course Joint Programme, a partnership with a college in Victoria, Australia. In the program local (Chinese) teachers teach Victoria curricula in English. The program admits students from all over the city by examinations that take place before the city-wide senior high school entrance examinations. Admission is based on written scores in four subjects, Chinese, English, science and mathematics, and on performance in an oral interview that tests English proficiency. If students successfully pass all courses, they are simultaneously awarded a Victorian Certificate of Education in Australia and a Senior High School Certificate in China. School F is a *minban* foreign language boarding school in Wenzhou. The school was invested by an entrepreneur and is collaboratively managed by the entrepreneur and educational professionals under the jurisdiction of Wenzhou Education Bureau. The entrepreneur hired the principal who in turn hired teachers. The employment of teachers and the choice of textbooks are approved by the Bureau. The school is located in a well-known “overseas Chinese town” in Zhejiang Province. In that town, most residents have migrated to countries such as France and Italy to do business and have sent their children back to live with their grandparents. Students typically live in school residences from Monday to Friday beginning in Grade 1. Each dormitory room houses 4 students and includes a washroom, closet space, an air-conditioner, and a balcony. For each class of about 20 students, there are two staff members who assist in the students’ daily lives. The school is known for its high quality English education. Students have 5 classes in English each week starting in Grade 1. Regular schools begin English lessons in Grade 3. They also have one English class per week taught by a native-English speaker. Each year students go to a summer camp in either the UK or Australia.

Data for the study were collected through document analysis, questionnaires, and individual interviews. I collected schools’ mission statement documents and information brochures. The questionnaire collected demographic information (see Table 2) regarding teachers’ age, gender, educational background, the context of teaching, class size, and grade level, as well as information on teachers’ daily activities, workload, and pay.

Table 2: Teacher Participants' Information

School	Teacher	Gender	Age	Education	Years of Teaching	City	Location	School	Grade
A	A 001	F	41-54	Bachelor	11	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	A 002	M	41-45	Bachelor	23	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
B	B003	M	41-54	Master	25	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B004	F	36-40	Bachelor	11	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B005	F	25-40	Bachelor	4	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B006	M	41-54	Bachelor	23	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
C	C007	M	> 55	Bachelor	46	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C008	F	41-54	Bachelor	24	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C009	F	25-30	Bachelor	5	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C010	F	36-40	Bachelor	13	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C011	F	36-40	Bachelor	10	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
D	D012	M	36-40	Bachelor	18	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	D013	F	36-40	Bachelor	15	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
E	E014	F	> 55	Bachelor	30	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E015	M	31-35	Master	9	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E016	F	31-35	Master	10	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E017	F	41-54	Bachelor	23	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E018	F	31-35	Bachelor	10	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
F	F019	F	26-30	Bachelor	6	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	1-6
	F020	F	31-35	Bachelor	11	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	1-6
	F021	M	41-45	Bachelor	20	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F022	M	> 55	Bachelor	32	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F023	F	26-30	Master	1	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F024	M	> 55	Bachelor	33	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9

Interviews focused on teachers' lived experience of teaching English under China's market economy, including challenges and opportunities, teaching and living conditions, and political and social status. Data from the questionnaires and interviews complemented one another in significant ways, enriching our understanding of the experiences of Chinese teachers. In addition, site visits and class observation helped us interpret the information collected on questionnaires and in interviews. For triangulation, multiple research methods were adopted.

In sum, I visited four schools in Hangzhou in May 2010 and administered 15 questionnaires and interviewed 13 respondents. In December 2010, I visited two schools in Wenzhou, administering 13 questionnaires and conducting 11 interviews. In total, I collected 28 questionnaires and conducted 24 interviews for the study. Each interview lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. The focus of the study is mainly on the impact of the market economy on English education and on English teachers.

Influence of the Market Economy on English Education

Minban Schooling

Participants reported that a crucial change in education under the market economy has been the establishment of *minban* ("people-managed") schools. One principal explained that in Zhejiang there are two types of *minban* schools: private *minban* and state-owned *minban*. Private *minban* schools are invested and managed by individual entrepreneurs. State-owned *minban* schools are invested and managed by state-owned enterprises. On the one hand, this principal feels that return on investment was not a major concern because his school was a state-owned *minban*. He explained that the local government supports state-owned *minban* schools because the government uses these *minban* schools to attract successful corporations to invest in local areas, thus increasing local GDP. On the other hand, he says that because he is concerned that his school might close down at anytime, he spends much of his time recruiting the city's best students: "I don't get paid if I don't have enough students" (C007²). For him, competitive student recruitment is one of the more significant effects of China's market economy, an observation consistent with those of other studies (Chan & Mok, 2001).

As a *minban* school, School C is allowed to collect tuition. Each student pays about 12,000 yuan (approximately \$1,903 CAD) per year. In 2010, it enrolled about 1,200 students. The administrative structure of *minban* schools requires that they be run like a profit generating enterprise. As a result, the principal commented: "In Hangzhou it is a trend that wealthy families send their children to *minban* schools whereas poor families send their children to public

schools. This widens the gap between the rich and the poor. It also leads to increasing disparity in the allocation of educational resources between schools” (C007). This claim was echoed by other participants. As one teacher said, “Education equity is yet to be realized in China. For example, in our district the education quality in public schools is not so good, so some parents send their children to our *minban* school. Public schools are free, but we charge 12,000 yuan (approximately \$1,903 CAD) per year” (C010). The link between *minban* schools and educational quality was explained by one respondent, who reported that that *minban* schools use high salaries to attract high-quality teachers and recruit good students, activities that disadvantage public schools:

It is now a war of student recruitment. Every school wants to recruit good students. I have a colleague who is also an educational researcher and his daughter is going to Grade 9 this year. I told him, ‘you can send her to our school for free. If she goes to a *minban* school, the tuition will be ten or twenty thousand yuan [approximately \$1,586 CAD or \$3,172 CAD] per year.’ (B003)

Attracted by high educational quality of *minban* schools, this educational researcher sent his daughter to a *minban* school in Wenzhou, despite its high tuition fee.

Education Inequity

Many participants identified tremendous inequities in the current education system. Most students in China progress through elementary, junior, and senior high schools entirely within their areas of residence. Wealthy students’ parents, however, can afford to pay the admission and other fees of better senior high schools outside of these areas. Usually these schools charge a school choice fee (择校费). One teacher commented:

School choice fee reflects education inequity. Rich people can send their children to good schools whereas children from poor families can only stay in poor rural schools. That’s inequity. School choice is not based on students’ merit but on money. (D013)

In addition to school choice, participants commented on the unequal allocation of education resources. Another teacher stated:

I think it is impossible to achieve education equity because there is an unequal allocation of education resources, such as teachers and school facilities. There is a huge disparity between rural and urban areas. There is also a disparity among different schools. It is impossible to achieve absolute equity. We can only achieve relative equity. (E017)

This teacher maintained key middle and secondary schools in urban areas have better resources and the most qualified teachers, those with Bachelors’ or Masters’ degrees with English majors. High school fees also mean that these schools can afford to hire native English speakers as teachers. Many of these

teachers have no training in teaching English or education. For example, the principal in School A in Hangzhou proudly introduced: “We have 20 English teachers, including two foreign teachers, for 36 classes in total. It’s about one English teacher for two classes.” In contrast, in some rural areas, many schools can afford only one English teacher. One teacher said:

Some villages employ a ‘travelling teacher’ (走教老师). That means one English teacher is employed by a school in a village, but she is responsible to teach different English classes in several villages because there are not enough English teachers in rural areas. (F021)

The transfer of qualified English teachers from rural to urban schools increased rural-urban disparity. For example, one teacher taught high school English in a small county in Zhejiang Province for twenty-two years. She began her career having obtained a college diploma in English. Then, after teaching for twelve years, she managed to complete a Bachelor’s degree in English from Zhejiang Normal University. She was recognized as one of the best English teachers in the county. In 2002 she saw a nationwide recruitment notice for high level English teachers in Wenzhou City and applied for the position. She was hired immediately. The teacher said that there were two reasons for her move to Wenzhou:

My mother, who comes from Wenzhou, wants to return to Wenzhou after her retirement. If I move to Wenzhou, she can go to live with me. Another reason is the high salary. I used to earn about two thousand yuan [approximately \$317 CAD] a month. Now I can earn four thousand five hundred yuan [approximately \$714 CAD] a month. (E014)

The teacher added that there were fourteen other teachers who were recruited at the same time as her. Most of these teachers came from rural areas in Inner Mongolia, Jiangsu Province, and Hubei Province. As one of China’s most economically advanced cities, Wenzhou, with “double the average” salary, has attracted many talented English teachers from the rural areas of different parts of the country. This has disadvantaged rural schools. While the market economy has brought increased mobility to an elite group of teachers, it has widened the disparity between rural and urban schools.

Importance of English

The market economy has heightened the role and status of the English language in China. One teacher said:

Since the economic reform and China’s opening-up, the whole society, including ordinary people, the government and professionals in English teaching, have regarded English as a very important tool. (B003)

On the one hand, this teacher recognizes the significant role of English in China, which has been well documented (Feng, 2011; Gil & Adamson, 2011; Jiang, 2003). His view of English as “a very important tool” reflects the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2008). On the other hand, participants questioned the role of English as a gatekeeper. One teacher said: “English ability is a requirement to apply for graduate schools. You can’t get in if you don’t do well in English exams. I don’t agree with that” (B003). He explained that competence in English should not be used to judge a person’s talent and value. This is consistent with a growing resistance among Chinese people:

At present, people who cannot speak English are considered second-class talents; people who cannot write in English are third-class talents; and those who know nothing about English are not talents at all. (*People’s Daily Online*, 2003)

As a result, this teacher proposed that English as a prerequisite for admission to graduate schools be removed. He went further to question the global hegemony of English (Guo & Beckett, 2007). He stated:

I also think in another way. When foreigners come to China, why should we speak English to them? Why can’t we just speak Chinese to them? I used to walk on the streets in the United States and people didn’t speak Chinese to me. Instead, I had to speak English to them. (B003)

This participant raised a critical question about the coercive power relationship between English language and Chinese language. He asked why English-speaking people assume they can travel and expect others to communicate in English, thus questioning the global dominance of English (Phillipson, 2008).

Some participants expressed concern that the value placed on English under the market economy is leading to the neglect of Chinese language. A teacher reported that he noticed many junior high school students write inaccurate Chinese characters in their essays and that some students’ English is better than their Chinese. He explained that parents send their children to English classes after school hours, take them to “English corners” (designated areas in parks and city squares where one can go to practice speaking English), pay for trips to participate in English speech contests, or employ tutors to help with English, but not with Chinese (E016).

Other participants feel that English is not only a tool for communication but also a vehicle to transmit Anglo culture. For example, a teacher said:

I let my students in Grade 7 watch *The Simpsons*, which I have downloaded from the Internet. I use that to replace a reading period in the library because they rarely read English books in the library, so it is a waste of time. I think it is better for them to watch *The Simpsons* in the classroom. Secondly, our reading lesson only has 40 minutes, and one episode in *Simpson* is 20 minutes, so the length is good. (F023)

The teacher chose *The Simpsons* for the sake of convenience. After one semester's practice, she felt that her students had learned a lot about American popular culture through *The Simpsons*. In our conversations, students proudly shared their knowledge of American celebrities such as Tiger Woods and Shirley Temple. When asked where they learned about these people, they showed us specific lessons from their textbook *Go for it!* (People's Education Press, 2005). We observed students who happily chanted Christmas carols in English surrounded by beautiful Christmas decorations, but were unable to tell us anything about the history of the Silk Road. Some students proudly told us they preferred MacDonald hamburgers and KFC chicken to Chinese food and their parents often rewarded them with these Western meals if they did well in their exams. Participants were concerned that the spread of English would lead to loss of their own culture as their students came to value Western culture over Chinese culture, one of the dangers of globalization. The great danger, said participants, would be the decline of the social status of the teaching profession constructed primarily within the language of the market.

Impact of the Market Economy on English Teachers ***Teachers' Working, Living Conditions, and Salaries***

All participants reported that the market economy has improved their working conditions. In all six schools I noticed that each classroom is equipped with a multimedia projector. All of the English teachers use these projectors to show PowerPoint slides or movies. They also use the multimedia projectors to show students' exam papers along with corrections. They have access to the Internet in their classrooms or in their offices. Most of the teachers in our study were provided with a desktop or laptop computer. They share offices with six to ten people. Each teacher has his/her own desk and sometimes they have two desks facing each other. Students' assignments or textbooks were piled high on most of the desks, along with resource books, old English novels and reading materials.

In contrast to these well-equipped computer classrooms, many participants could not afford housing, so they rented small apartments. A teacher reported:

It is very difficult for teachers to live a decent life with regular salary in Wenzhou because of the market economy. Wenzhou's housing price is 30,000 yuan [approximately \$4,758 CAD] per square meter. If I want to buy an apartment of 100 square meters, which is not very big, including two bedrooms, one kitchen, and one sitting room, it will cost me over three million yuan [approximately \$475,821 CAD]. In other words, if I save every penny of my salary, it will take me almost 30 years to buy such an apartment. (E016)

Some *minban* teachers live in apartments provided by their schools. For example, another participant reported:

My wife and I are living in the school. The school gives us two separate rooms. The rooms are designed for students, so there is no kitchen. The washroom is big, so we cook in the washroom. (F024)

Other participants' living conditions are even worse. One teacher rents an apartment of less than 40 square meters in Hangzhou. She shares a bathroom and kitchen with six other families on the same floor. She pays 1,700 yuan (approximately \$270 CAD) for rent, almost half of her 4,000 yuan (approximately \$634 CAD) salary (C009). Another teacher, on the other hand, is lucky enough to own her own apartment in Hangzhou, but it is very small:

I have three people in my family. We live in an apartment of about 60 square meters. We have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and one bathroom. Each room is small. (C010)

When asked about the impact of market economy on teachers, another teacher responded that her salary has increased: "Since 2010, my salary has increased from 2,000 yuan (approximately \$317 CAD) to about 3,000 yuan (approximately \$476 CAD) per month. It is enough for my ordinary living" (B004). Teachers' salaries vary according to the number of years of teaching experience and promotions. Another teacher, who has been teaching for more than 30 years said: "My salary is 4,500 yuan (approximately \$714 CAD) per month. I don't feel I have a lot of money, but generally speaking, I feel pretty good" (E014). Teachers' salaries are also influenced by educational background. For example, a teacher who obtained a Master's degree from the UK said, "My salary is about 7,000 yuan (approximately \$1,110 CAD) per month. The housing price in Wenzhou is so high that I cannot buy a house" (E015).

Since *minban* schools set their own standards for teachers' salaries, some in Wenzhou pay high salaries in order to attract the best teachers. For example, a teacher in School F who graduated from Shanghai International Studies University (considered the second best foreign language studies university after Beijing International Studies University) reported a salary of about 9,000 yuan (approximately \$1,428 CAD) per month, a salary level partially attributable to her holding a Master's degree from a famous university (F023). In the same school, another teacher said:

My salary is 15,000 yuan (approximately \$2,379 CAD) per month plus a few thousand yuan at the end of each semester and a bonus at the end of the year. In China salary like this is at a middle-upper level. I feel pretty good about it. (F024)

This teacher continued that because he was a “master teacher” (特级教师) at the national level and a vice-dean of the Teaching and Research Department in an Education Bureau in one of the counties in Zhejiang, he was hired by School F to lead professional development for all the teachers in his school. For most teachers, however, despite an increase in their salaries, their quality of life has worsened because of the high costs of housing and living.

Teaching under the Pressure of Exams

Most participants in the study reported that they feel extreme pressure from administrators and parents. One factor behind this pressure is the need to prepare students for exams. A teacher reported that “Scores have become the focus. Teachers begin to prepare students for exams, rather than fostering their communication skills. Students in Grade 7 start to do exercises to prepare for the exams in Grade 9” (B006). The exams at the end of Grade 9, known as *zhongkao* (中考), determined whether a student goes to a key senior high school, which in turn determines whether a student could go to a university. Another teacher called *zhongkao* “a traffic wand” (指挥棒):

I would like to teach English in my own way, but I can’t because my teaching is evaluated by *zhongkao*, a traffic wand. I hope I could teach less grammar in class, creating a comfortable environment in the class, so my students would be more interested in learning English. If I focus on conversations, they cannot pass the exams; if I teach them grammar, they might pass the exams. I feel that my teaching is constrained. (C009)

Similarly, teachers in senior high schools start to prepare their students for university entrance exams in Grade 10, as illustrated in the following comments:

In Grade 10, we gave students many exercises to do in order to prepare them for the exams at the end of Grade 12. If they don’t practice from Grade 10, they won’t have enough time to do that in Grade 12. They need to practice how to write exams. (E017)

Another teacher explained that the number of students admitted to Qinghua University or Beijing University is used by upper levels of government as important indicators in assessments of local officials’ administrative performance. This driver of competition for positions in the top universities in the country penetrates even junior high schools:

There is an annual task on how many students must go to Qinghua University and Beijing University. If you fail to accomplish the task, then everyone is criticized, from the major figures responsible for education, to the director of the education bureau, to principals, to teachers, and to students. That’s how the pressure passes to us. (C008)

This teacher questioned common sense attitudes toward the central role of exams in both teachers’ and students’ experiences of education. The teacher argued that

systemic change is needed: “I think the whole society and the education system need to change” (C008).

Participants reported that parental pressure is another factor. One teacher said all her students’ parents push her students to get into key senior high schools—*i.e.*, into one of the top three key schools—in order to increase the odds of getting into a top university, regardless of whether their child demonstrates the requisite ability to do so. She continued:

Some parents think their children are here (at her school) for the top three key secondary schools. If their children end up in vocational schools, it would be unacceptable to them...The parents, the whole society, all care so much about a person’s position in the society. It’s all about status, and that causes the problem. (C008)

The teacher attributed parental pressure on children to go to university to the knowledge economy, the employment market as a whole, and the norm of using educational qualifications to judge the value of people, a phenomena Kipnis discussed as “educational desire” (Kipnis, 2011). She said, “for example, if you go to the job market, the employers want to know what degree you have and from which university you graduate. That’s the cause of what’s happening now” (C008). She explained that “this kind of direct and indirect pressure is placed on the teachers. If you don’t teach well, you let the students and their parents down” (C008).

Change of Teachers’ Status

Many participants reflected on the decline in the status of the teaching profession. As one teacher put it,

Teachers used to be at the sacred social status in the Chinese society and were highly respected by the parents, but now some parents in *minban* would think ‘I pay you, you have to serve me’. (C008)

This participant was concerned that while a teacher was once considered to be an “engineer of the human soul”, he/she is now seen to have such low social status in part because parents believe that they can purchase the teacher’s services. To reinforce parents’ such belief, many English teachers offer tutorials to make money outside of the school:

Teachers are no longer highly respected by parents because many English teachers provide paid tutoring services to students after school hours. Sometimes the money they make from tutoring is more than their salary. (D012)

With formal teaching jobs offering such poor economic returns, many of the teachers in this study provide private tutoring for supplementary incomes.

Some participants reported that they find their work unsatisfying due to the low status of teachers, tremendous pressure from exams and standardization of teaching methods. One participant reflected that she used to enjoy teaching at the earlier stage of her career, *i.e.*, before the 1990s, because there was no exam score competition between schools. She said: “I taught not because I had to prepare my students for the exams, but because I had a passion for teaching...Now I feel teaching is becoming more and more mechanical...Now if I could choose again, I would not choose to become a teacher. I feel this is very different from my ideal of teaching” (C008).

Discussion

Commercialization of Education

As a result of globalization, English teaching in China has experienced unprecedented marketization, privatization, and commodification (Mok, 2005). Commercialization of education in China is a result of the educational reforms of the last two decades, which brought about the mushrooming of private schools at different levels. The study presented two types of private schools: state-owned *minban* and private *minban* schools. China now requires compulsory education of 9 years, which is free to all the students. However, School C, a state-owned *minban* junior high school (grades 7-9) in Hangzhou, charges each student about 12,000 yuan (approximately \$1,903 CAD) per year. This amounts to more than one third of the annual per capita disposable income of Hangzhou urban residents, which was 30,035 yuan (approximately \$4,764 CAD) in 2010 (Hangzhou Statistics Bureau, 2011). In that same year, the school generated over one million yuan (approximately \$158,582 CAD). Even though the principal stated that he was not expected to provide a return on investment because the school was invested and managed by a state-owned enterprise, the school was profit-driven. Unlike the principal in School C, the leader of School F, a private *minban* foreign language school, proudly stated that among the 1,700 *minban* schools in Wenzhou, this was one of the best. Annual tuition for an elementary student is about 42,000 yuan (approximately \$6,659 CAD) and for junior high students about 48,000 yuan (approximately \$7,612 CAD). This is more than the annual per capita disposable income of Wenzhou urban residents, which was 31,201 yuan (approximately \$4,948 CAD) in 2010 (Wenzhou Statistics Bureau, 2011). The fee includes tuition, uniforms, lodging, meals, and upkeep. Despite the high annual fee, the school has grown quickly. In 2008 when the school was first established, it recruited about 40 students. Enrollment increased to 300 students in 2009 and to 1,080 (720 elementary and 360 junior high) in 2010. In total, the school generated about 47 million yuan (approximately \$7,453,337

CAD) in 2010. Each year the students in the school go to a summer camp in either the UK or Australia. Nongovernmental educational institutions in China were required to observe the following provision of the 1995 Law on Education: “Any organization or individual may not establish schools or other educational institutions for the purpose of making profit” (Art. 25). The findings of the study, however, clearly show that in Wenzhou the private *minban* foreign language school, like the state-owned *minban* school in Hangzhou, is profit-driven and serves an elite (Borevskaya, 2003).

The Impact of the Increasing Dominance of English on Chinese

Participants acknowledged the importance of English to increasing China’s global competitiveness, but they questioned the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism, namely, utilitarianism of learning English for sustaining economic development as a society and for social mobility as individuals (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2008). They also questioned the gatekeeper role of English, and the impact of the increasing dominance of English on Chinese language. In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson asserts that “globally, what we are experiencing is that English is both replacing other languages and displacing them” (1992, p. 27). Phillipson’s insights are particularly relevant to China, where the increasing predominance of English works to devalue Chinese languages. Xu Jialu, a well-known Chinese linguist, notices that the learning of English is valued more in China than Mandarin Chinese, mostly because English skills are better appreciated in the job market (Xu, 2007). The higher market value placed on English is leading to the neglect of Chinese languages, and a research report by the General Administration of Press and Publications shows proof of this. According to Xu, mistakes can be found in nearly all the Chinese dictionaries on the market, not to mention other books. He states that nowadays, even most well-educated Chinese cannot write or speak the Chinese language correctly³. The excessive zeal for English negatively impacts students’ Chinese language development. To address this concern, Xu calls for the general public’s attention to Chinese language learning as the Chinese language and characters are the hallmarks of the Chinese people (Xu, 2007).

Cultural Imperialism

As part of globalization, the global dominance of the English language has been exploited as a tool of colonisation (Pennycook, 1998) and neocolonialism. The hegemony of English as a global language is evidently a paradigm creating a misconception that English is superior language and that English is better taught by native speakers of English (Kubota, 1998). In this study, both teachers and

students perceive native speakers as more valuable as Chinese English teachers, even if native speakers have not been trained to be teachers. Both School A, a public school in Hangzhou and School F, a private *minban* school in Wenzhou use native English speakers as part of their recruitment strategies to attract top students. Furthermore, the central premise of linguistic imperialism is that the spread of English represents a culturally imperialistic project, which necessarily imparts English language culture to its second or foreign language learners (Melchers & Shaw, 2003). Currently, most English textbooks and readings in China, from kindergarten to university, approved by the national textbook censorship committee, either originate in the Anglo countries or represent Anglocentric culture in the name of authenticity. As a result, many Chinese students know more about the Anglo culture than Chinese culture. In the example of watching *The Simpsons*⁴, both the teacher and her students uncritically accepted American popular culture. The students were familiar with American celebrities such as Tiger Woods, Shirley Temple, and American lifestyles from their textbook *Go for it!*, compiled by the People's Education Press and Thompson Learning. Some young Chinese students seem to internalize the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture and the inferiority of their own culture (Orton, 2009; Xu, 2004). As Xu (2004, p. 87) suggests,

Chinese students already have no problems tolerating and accepting Western cultures in terms of language expression, clothing, concepts and customs. In contrast, it is Chinese culture that is being unprecedentedly ignored, leading to the degradation of Chinese language, culture, and ethnic values among some students.

The idealized West in authentic English reading materials needs to be challenged. There is a need to develop English reading materials that reflect Chinese culture. It is therefore important to produce localized curricula (Canagarajah, 2005).

Tensions in English Education Reforms

As mentioned above, English curriculum reforms have focused on developing students' oral language. The implementation of these reforms contradicts the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism, and this creates tensions for English teachers. One of the tensions is whether teachers should teach English for the exam or teach for the purpose of interpersonal communication. As described above, English is a prerequisite for university entrance. Recently, a passing grade in English exams was made a prerequisite for secondary school entrance, and admission to a good secondary school almost guarantees an admission to a good university. The format of these English exams is predominantly multiple choice and has been found to constrain language teaching in a negative way. These exams require students to retain large amounts of vocabulary, grammar skills and

reading comprehension skills. Many teachers focus on these skills in their teaching and ignore students' communicative competence as required under the new English curriculum. Students' scores on the exams influence teachers' evaluations and salaries. The impact of the tests on the secondary education system is heightened by the fact that the "mean scores of students are employed widely to evaluate teaching, schools, and even education departments on various levels" (Cheng & Qi, 2006, p. 63). Teachers tend to work overtime to prepare their students for the exams. Furthermore, classes are relatively large (more than 50 students) so students seldom have a chance to speak, leaving schools to graduate students with the capacity to pass grammar and multiple choice oriented English exams but little ability to actually do what they passed the exams to do, *i.e.*, communicate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that when many of these graduates go abroad they continue to take English language courses for years. This makes it difficult to implement the curricular demand to stress oral English (Orton, 2009).

Another tension in Chinese English education reform and development is educational inequity (China Daily, 2009). The participants in the study reported increasing disparity in the allocation of educational resources including public investment, qualified teachers, and adequate school facilities. For example, in School F, teachers are offered salaries of 108,000 yuan (approximately \$17,127 CAD) to 250,000 yuan (approximately \$39,645 CAD) per year, much higher than other schools in Wenzhou. As a result, the school attracts the best teachers, those who have obtained Masters' degrees in English from prestigious universities. The school recruits top students from the whole city of Wenzhou. Many of these students pay a school choice fee of about 25,000 yuan (approximately \$3,965 CAD) as part of the requirements for admission. The school choice fee allows wealthy students to go to high quality schools outside their residence areas. The school choice fee is one manifestation of education inequity. In other schools, particularly in rural areas, there are few English books and materials and a severe shortage of qualified English teachers. For example, one English teacher participant is called a 'travelling teacher' (走教老师). She is employed by a school in a village, but is responsible for teaching different English classes in several villages. Some teachers have had little formal training in the teaching of English and many have learned oral English on their own. There is evidence that China is experiencing a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" (Davis & Wang, 2009; Han & Whyte, 2009).

Working and Living Conditions, and the Change in Teachers' Status

The teachers in the six schools I visited in Hangzhou and Wenzhou reported that they are satisfied with their working conditions. In contrast to their working conditions, most participants reported that they cannot afford to purchase a home because of soaring prices, particularly in Wenzhou. In 2010, Wenzhou's housing prices were among the highest in the country, ranging from 30,000 yuan (\$4,758 CAD) to 50,000 yuan (\$7,931 CAD) per square meter. One teacher in a *minban* foreign language school in Wenzhou reported that he lived in two separate rooms designed for students and cooked in the washroom because there was no kitchen. Compared with teachers in advanced market economy societies, the teachers in our study in Hangzhou and Wenzhou lived in poor conditions.

The teachers in the study expressed concern that teachers' status has declined considerably in the last decade. Once conceived of as the most glorious of professions, teaching is now constructed as a commodity (Kutoba, 2011) under the market economy in China. Parents, who have the ability to pay, expect teachers to provide the best service to their children. Teachers are complicit in the erosion of their social position. Many English teachers now earn extra income from private tutoring of students after school hours. As one participant noted, sometimes the extra income even exceeds the teacher's salary. The private activities of these teachers reinforce the notion of teaching as a commodity (Kubota, 2011). In other words, the roles of teachers and students have morphed to become like those between businesses and clients. The social status of teachers has decreased from saints to civil servants. This is consistent with studies by Guo and Pungur (2008) and Zhou (2002), who found that the social status of teachers, members of a profession once so highly thought of and respected, needs to be reclaimed through renewed professionalism.

Concluding Remarks

It is evident from the above discussion that there is a pressing need to develop a strong critical perspective on the impact of English as a global language. That is, future policy should call for the reclamation of local languages and knowledge through critical multilingualism. Critical multilingualism draws our attention to how the spread of English is 'linguistic imperialism' which can impoverish indigenous languages and cultures (Phillipson, 1992), privileging certain groups of people while harming others (Pennycook, 1998). As such, it calls for a critical treatment of the dominance of the English language, the development of critical consciousness (Fairclough, 1995), and the reclamation of the local in this global phenomenon (Canagarajah, 2005). We urge policy-makers, researchers, and

educators to question the gatekeeper role of English in education, employment, promotion, social status, and financial security in China.

There is a dire need for the Chinese government to take active measures to reduce social injustice and inequity. To achieve this goal, it is important that equal access to educational opportunities be guaranteed. The Chinese government needs to raise awareness among the public about the important role that teachers play in a knowledge-based society; introduce legislative efforts to improve teachers' wellbeing, and teaching and living conditions; and social, economic, and political status.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Borevskaya, N. (2003). The private sector in the Chinese educational system: Problems and prospects. *Far Eastern Affairs*, 4, 89-107.
- Cai, J. (2006). *ELT at tertiary level in China: Review, reflection and research*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2005). Introduction. In A. S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in the language policy and practice* (pp. xiii-xxx). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Chan, D., & Mok, K. H. (2001). Educational reforms and coping strategies under the tidal wave of marketization: a comparative study of Hong Kong and the mainland China. *Comparative Education*, 37(1), 21-41.
- Cheng, L. (2008). The key to success: English language testing in China. *Language Testing*, 25(1), 15-37.
- Cheng, X. (2011). The 'English Curriculum Standards' in China: Rationales and issues. In A. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across greater China* (pp. 133-150). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Cheng, L., & Qi, L. (2006). Description and examination of the national matriculation English test. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 3(1), 53-70.
- China Daily. (July 22, 2009). Bringing equal education to the west. Retrieved from http://www.china.org.cn/government/central_government/2009-07/22/content_18180712.htm
- Connelly, F.M., & Clandinin, D.J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of education practice*. London: Althouse Press.
- Davis, D., & Wang, F. (2009). Poverty and wealth in postsocialist China: An overview. In D. Davis & W. Feng (Eds.), *Creating wealth and poverty in postsocialist China* (pp. 3-19). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Day, C., & Leitch, R. (2001). Teachers' and teacher educators' lives: The role of emotion. *Teacher and Teaching Education*, 17, 403-415.
- Education Law of the People's Republic of China. (1995). Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/education/184669.htm>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London and New York: Pearson Education.
- Feng, A. (2011). Introduction: The apex of 'the third wave'- English language across greater China. In A. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across greater China* (pp. 1-20). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

- Gao, Y. (2009). Sociocultural contexts and English in China: Retaining and reforming the cultural habitus. In J. L. Bianco, J. Orton, & Y. Gao (Eds.), *China and English: Globalization and the dilemmas of identity* (pp. 56-78). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Gil, J., & Adamson, B. (2011). The English language in mainland China: A sociolinguistic profile. In A. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across greater China* (pp. 23-45). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Guo, S., & Pungur L. (2008). Exploring teacher education in the context of Canada and China: A cross-cultural dialogue. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 3(2), 246-269.
- Guo, Y., & Beckett, G. (2007). The hegemony of English as a global language: Reclaiming local knowledge and culture in China. *Convergence*, 40(1-2), 117-132.
- Han, C., & White M.K. (2009). The social contours of distributive justice feelings in contemporary China. In D. Davis & W. Feng (Eds.), *Creating wealth and poverty in postsocialist China* (pp.193-212). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hangzhou Municipal Government (2010). Hangzhou municipal government work report (in Chinese). Retrieved from <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3256234.html>
- Hangzhou Statistics Bureau. (2011). Hangzhou 2010 economic and social development report. Retrieved on December 10, 2011 from <http://www.hzstats.gov.cn/web/ShowNews.aspx?id=DwGeRFDvIVg=#>
- Jiang, Y. (2003). English as a Chinese language. *English Today*, 19(2), 3-8.
- Kipnis, A. (2011). *Governing educational desire: Culture, politics, and schooling in China*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kubota, R. (1998). Ideologies on English in Japan. *World Englishes*, 17, 295-306.
- Kubota, R. (2011). Questioning linguistic instrumentalism: English, neoliberalism, and language tests in Japan. *Linguistics and Education*, 22, 248-260.
- Kwong, J. (1997). The reemergence of private schools in Socialist China. *Comparative Education Review*, 41(3), 244-259.
- Li, J. (2009). Motivational force and imagined community in 'Crazy English'. In J. L. Bianco, J. Orton, & Y. Gao (Eds.), *China and English: Globalization and the dilemmas of identity* (pp. 211-223). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Melchers, G., & Shaw, P. (2003). *World Englishes*. London: Arnold.
- Ministry of Education. (2001). Standard of English courses for 9-year compulsory education and general senior high schools (for experiment). Retrieved from <http://www.tefl-china.net/2003/ca13821.htm>
- Ministry of Education. (2003). Standard of English courses for general senior high schools (for experiment). Beijing: People's Education Press. Retrieved from <http://www.sxbjy.com/upload/200741317124048074.doc>
- Mok, K.H. (2005). Riding over socialism and global capitalism: Changing education governance and social policy paradigms in post-Mao China. *Comparative Education*, 41(2), 217-242.
- Oplatka, I. (2007). The context and profile of teachers in developing countries in the last decade. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(6), 476-490.
- Orton, J. (2009). East goes west. In J. L. Bianco, J. Orton, & Y. Gao (Eds.), *China and English: Globalization and the dilemmas of identity* (pp. 271-293). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- People' Daily Online (2003). Is English invading Chinese culture? Retrieved from <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn>

- People's Education Press. (2005). *Go for it*. Students' Book 1 for Grade 8. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (2008). The linguistic imperialism of neoliberal empire. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 5, 1-43.
- Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Material Reform Commission. (1999). *Facing the 21st century: Research report on principles for action in Shanghai primary and senior high school foreign language education reform*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press.
- Wang, C. (2002). Minban education: the planned elimination of the "people-managed" teachers in reforming China. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22, 109 – 129.
- Wang, E. (2006). Teacher beliefs and practice in the implementation of a new English language curriculum in China. In J. Huang, M. Gu & P.K.E. Cheung (Eds.), *Research studies in education* (pp. 198-208). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.
- Wee, L. (2008). Linguistic instrumentalism in Singapore. In P.K.W. Tan, & R. Rubdy (Eds.), *Language as commodity: Global structures, local market places* (pp. 31-43). London: Continuum.
- Wenzhou Education Bureau (2010). *The development of Wenzhou minban education* (in Chinese). Wenzhou Education Bureau: Wenzhou.
- Wenzhou Statistics Bureau. (2009). Wenzhou 2010 economic and social development report. Retrieved from <http://www.wzstats.gov.cn/infoshow.asp?id=8836>
- Wenzhou Statistics Bureau. (2011). Wenzhou 2010 economic and social development report. Retrieved from <http://www.wzstats.gov.cn/infoshow.asp?id=9303>
- Xu, Jialu. (2007). Overemphasizing English learning haunts China. *People's Daily* (overseas version), 1 February, A2.
- Xu, K. Q. (2004). The loss of Chinese culture in bilingual education. *Foreign Language Education*, 25(3), 86-89.
- Yang, D. (Ed.), (2006). *The development report of China's education*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Zhou, Z. (2002). The teaching profession: To be or to do? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 28(3), 211-215.

Yan Guo is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. Her research interests include critical English teaching in China, teaching English as an Additional Language in Canada, immigrant parent knowledge, intercultural communication, language and identity, and language policy. Her recent works appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Education*, *Language and Education*, *Multicultural Education*, *TESL Canada*, and *Intercultural Education*.

¹ *Minban* (people-run) schooling in this study refers to private schooling for wealthy families who are able to pay high tuition in the new market economy. It differs from schools which emerged in the 50s and 60s to meet the needs of communities in rural areas in China (see Kwong, 1997; Wang, 2002). *Minban* schools are discussed in further detail later in the article.

² C007 represents School C, participant 7.

³ The predominance of English might not be the only reason why Chinese people cannot write nor speak Chinese correctly.

⁴ *The Simpsons* can also be perceived as a critique of American popular culture.