# The Ecology of English and Chinese in the English Language Policies and Practices of A Chinese University

Hongmei Xu
*Xi'an International Studies University. China*

## Abstract

There has been a widespread concern in China about language education that while much emphasis has been put on English and English education, Chinese language and culture seem to have been neglected. Debates have arisen over what role English should play in China's education, as well as how the role of English is related to Chinese language and culture. Taking ecological language planning and policy as its conceptual orientation and following an embedded single-case study design, this study explores the role of English and its relationship with Chinese in the English language policies and practices of a Chinese university. Data drawn upon mainly include documents, in-depth interviews, and observational field notes. In addition, questionnaires were administered to document circulating beliefs among teachers and students at this higher education institution. Analysis indicates that English is most valued by its utilitarian value, in particular, the competitive advantage it brings to different stakeholders. Analysis also highlights the dynamic relationship between English and Chinese in the language ecology of this university.

**Keywords:** language ecology, English language policy, Chinese language and culture, bilingual instruction, case study

## Introduction

China's recent national policy has unprecedentedly emphasized the teaching of Chinese in higher education institutions. In September 2006 the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council of China jointly issued "the Outline of Cultural Development during the National Eleventh Five-Year Plan Period." In this outline, as a means to carry on Chinese traditional culture, higher education institutions are urged to provide Chinese course to all their students (The General Office of the CCCPC & The General Office of the State Council of China, 2006).

Such an effort on the part of China's central government reflects the widespread concern in China about language education that while much emphasis has been put on English and English education, Chinese language and culture seems to have been neglected (F. Li, 2004; Y. Li, 2004; Peng, 2005; Tong, 2010; Wu, 2006; Zhang, 2007).

Concerns have arisen over what role English should play in China's education, as well as how the role of English is related to Chinese language and culture (Feng, 2007; Gu, 2006). Some researchers take a utilitarian perspective, arguing that English mainly plays the role of a skill or a language tool in China's economic development and international communication (Chang, 2006; Fong, 2009); however, some consider culture an integral element of language education, and are concerned that English education in China's higher education institutions have emphasized English culture while at the same time neglected Chinese culture (Shi, 2010; L. Xiao, D. Xiao, L. Li, & Song, 2010; Zhou, 2010). Still others are interested in exploring this issue from the perspective of the paradoxical Chinese learning principle of *ti* and *yong*, "Chinese

learning for essence (*ti*); Western learning for utility (*yong*)" (Gao, 2009, p. 60). Norton, Ramanathan, and Pennycook (2009) put forward that "on the one hand, the notion of *ti* [sic] seems to suggest that it is possible to learn a language as a neutral set of structures, leaving cultural identity intact; on the other hand, the notion of *yong* [sic] suggests that any learning … is integral to cultural identity" (p. xi).

However, despite the critical importance of these issues, debates are mostly based on opinions, and few empirical studies have been conducted to investigate these issues. Reagan and Schreffler (2005) point out that of all the educational levels "nowhere is the juxtaposition of English and national languages clearer or more significant than at the tertiary level" (p. 122). The present study explores the role of English in the English language policies and practices of a Chinese university. By doing so, the present study attempts to provide empirical evidence for the accommodation of the issues concerning the role of English as well as its relationship with Chinese in China's higher education institutions.

**Language ecology as conceptual orientation**

The ecology of language policy provides the present study with significant insights. Haugen (1972) defines language ecology as "the study of interactions between any given language and its environment" (p. 325). In this definition the environment is used in its broad sense beyond the linguistic context and refers to the society where the language is used, together with other languages. In this view, Haugen argues that there are two fundamental features that characterize language ecology, i.e., as "language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to the nature, i.e. their social and natural environment," language ecology is psychological as well as sociological. In other words, according to Hult (2009, p. 89), this view of the ecology of language suggests "a two-fold focus on individual and societal dimensions of multilingualism: How do languages interact in the minds of speakers? How do languages interact in the societies where they are used?"

Researchers who embrace the ecology of language approach to language planning and policy (LPP) especially emphasize the underpinning of multilingualism suggested in the metaphor of ecology (Hornberger, 2002; Mühlhäusler, 1997). In particular, this model essentially sees any language as existing in relation to other languages, as well as its environments, and stresses the significance of environmental support to its sustainability (Hornberger, 2002; Mühlhäusler, 1997). Therefore, highlighted in this model is the importance of sustaining the diversity of languages, which reflects a multilingual rather than a monolingual perspective on language planning (Hornberger, 2002; Mühlhäusler, 1997).

Another major reason that the ecology of language is acclaimed by LPP researchers is its holistic nature in that it suggests the multi-dimensional language practices be linked all together in LPP research. Specifically, it emphasizes relationships between languages, language users, and their social contexts (Hornberger & Hult, 2008; Hult, 2010).

The perspective of the ecology of language is especially instrumental in language policy research concerning the global spread of English. Tsuda (1997) proposes that the issues on the global spread of English can be approached by two alternative paradigms, the "diffusion of English paradigm" (Tsuda, 1994, as cited in Tsuda, 1997, p. 26), or "hegemony of English paradigm," and the "ecology of language paradigm." The hegemony of English paradigm suggests uncritical acceptance of the dominance of English over other languages in intercultural communication, which has detri-

mental impact on other languages and non-English speakers in multiple aspects (Tsuda, 1997). On the contrary, proposed to act against the hegemony of English paradigm, the ecology of language paradigm emphasizes the perspectives such as equality between languages and their speakers in intercultural communication, language rights and maintenance, and multilingualism (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Tsuda, 1997). According to Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996), the two paradigms provide a framework to look at language policy issues; in particular, if the hegemony of English paradigm and the ecology of language paradigm represent the "endpoints on a continuum," "language policy initiatives can thus be seen as attempt to shift the political or educational ground toward one end … or the other" (p. 436). And to facilitate multilingualism and language rights, it is the ecology of language paradigm that language policy efforts should be directed towards (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996).

The ecology of language is not without criticism. One of the sharpest criticisms is made by Pennycook (2004). Pennycook (2004) urges caution on "the political consequences of biomorphic metaphors" associated with the ecological view of language (p. 213). According to Pennycook (2004), the risk with the metaphor of ecology of language mainly lies in that it tends to naturalize the unequal power relations; "language ecology, whether seen as a metaphor or as a relationship between languages and the natural environment, is inevitably tied to this cultural climate to negate the social, cultural and political" (Pennycook, 2004, p. 220). However, in terms of the implications of the ecology of language for LPP, as is suggested by Hult (2007), "we should not dismiss it out of hand but focus on the useful analytical orientations it permits us to take as researchers of multilingual language education policy" (pp. 76-77).

## Research Design

The present study follows an embedded single-case study design (Yin, 2009) and was conducted at West University (pseudonym, hereafter WU), with a particular focus on its two schools, i.e., School of English Studies and Business School.

As one of the earliest higher education institutions in China established specifically for foreign language education after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, WU has always been a major site for the instruction of English and other foreign languages, and has played a unique role in foreign language education in China, particularly in the western part of China. Therefore it is a useful illustrative setting for exploring the focal issues of the present study. It is thus considered as information-rich, and an "atypical but theoretically interesting" case for the present study (Duff, 2008, p. 45).

School of English Studies (hereafter SES) is developed from the Department of English, which was founded in the late 1950s. SES has a faculty of about 75 in nine teaching and research divisions. More than 2,000 full-time undergraduate students are registered in the major program of English Language. Business School (hereafter BS) was established in 2002. There are 85 faculty members in eight teaching and research divisions. Of all BS faculty members, 35 are teachers of English, and 50 are teachers of specialized areas. Altogether there are over 2,500 undergraduate students registered in eight programs.

Data were collected between December 2010 and July 2011 and include mainly documents, interviews, observational field notes, artifacts, and questionnaires. Documents were mainly obtained directly in hard copies from individual administrators

and teachers of WU. In addition, the websites of WU, SES, and BS were also accessed for documents published online.

To collect data on the circulating beliefs at the institutional level and to help triangulate against the other data collected, I developed and administered two questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for students, which in qualitative studies may be used as a complementary data collection method (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Altogether 222 students from BS and 152 students from SES were sampled, following cluster random sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), to participate in the questionnaire for students, and 18 teachers of BS and 20 teachers of SES were sampled through convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2003) to participate in the questionnaire for teachers.

Based on questionnaire analysis, I selected individual teachers of English and individual teachers of English-Chinese bilingual instruction for one-on-one interviewing, following purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008). Specifically, I interviewed Hua and Yun, teachers of English from SES, Song and Yi, teachers of English from BS, and Jie and Min, teachers of bilingual instruction from BS. In addition, I also had one-on-one interviews with three administrators, who are Qin, President of WU, Chen, Associate Dean of SES, and Lin, Dean of BS. Pseudonyms are used for all teacher participants.

I developed different interview protocols for the university administrator, school administrators, teachers of English, and teachers of bilingual instruction, all with open-ended questions, in order that "participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). Each of the interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes.

I observed three classrooms of the teachers interviewed. These include two English classrooms, one in SES, "A General Introduction to Britain and the United States," and the other in BS, "Intensive English Reading;" and one bilingual instruction classroom in BS, "Economics." Each class at WU consisted of two 50-minute sessions. I visited and observed these classes for three to four weeks, and took field notes of all my observations. I also collected artifacts, such as lesson plans and classroom handouts.

The analysis of all textual data of the present study, including documents, interview transcripts, observational field notes, and responses to open-ended questions of the questionnaires, was approached by qualitative content analysis as described in Dörnyei (2007). Responses to the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires were approached mainly through counting, and then presented in percentages.

**Role of English at West University**

Questionnaire responses indicate that in the perceptions of students and teachers, English enjoys a high status in China's higher education. Specifically, 87.7% of student respondents and 84.2% of teacher respondents believe that "English is currently being given high priority in China's higher education." In addition, to students and teachers English is a tool of communication associated with advanced science and technology, modernization, and intercultural communication. Overall 97.9% of student respondents and 97.4% of teacher respondents agree that "English is a tool of communication;" 85.8% of student respondents and 78.9% of teacher respondents consent that "English is associated with modern science and technology;" and almost all student and teacher respondents support the statement that "English plays a critical role in China's modernization and global communication."

In accordance to its high status in the perceptions of student and teacher respondents, English occupies a very important place in Curriculum of Undergraduate Programs of WU (hereafter WU Curriculum) for all major programs, in particular non-foreign language major programs. This is reflected not only in the goal statement of WU Curriculum, but also in its allocation of credit hours to various types of courses across different major programs.

WU Curriculum describes the goal of all major programs as to "cultivate outstanding multi-competent talents with strong foundation, a broad range of specialized knowledge, great foreign language proficiency, superior essential qualities, and a spirit of innovation and practical abilities." As is shown, this goal description identifies five essential qualities that characterize "multi-competent talents," and "great foreign language proficiency" is one of them. In a later section WU Curriculum makes it explicit that to non-foreign language majors, the required foreign language is English. This indicates that English proficiency is seen as one of the essential qualities of all non-foreign language majors of WU.

The privileged status of English is consolidated by the credit hours allocated to it as stated in WU Curriculum. According to WU Curriculum, the curriculum of each major program consists of six components. For foreign language major programs, including English major programs, the component that obtains the most credit hours is major-specific required courses, which take up nearly three fifths of the total credit hours. For non-foreign language major programs, major-specific required courses also receive the most credit hours, but overall they take up only less than two fifths of the total; in comparison, required foreign language courses, which in this case refer to English courses, account for nearly one third of the total credit hours, second to major-specific required courses. So in terms of the allocation of credit hours, concerning non-foreign language majors, English courses are the second most important courses, more important than major-specific elective courses, which reinforces the role of English in the essential qualities of non-foreign language majors of WU.

**English and competitive advantage**

Analysis indicates that the most important role of English at WU lies in the competitive advantage it brings to various stakeholders of WU. Specifically, to BS and SES English represents their competitiveness; to teachers English may help secure their teaching positions, and to students English means better job opportunities.

**English: competitiveness.** To BS, the competitive advantage that English brings is mainly achieved through bilingual instruction and TEM-4 and TEM-8 (Test for English Majors Band-4 and Band-8). According to Lin, Dean of BS, also Director of the Department of Teaching Affairs of WU, since 2002 BS has taken various measures to encourage bilingual instruction. These measures include bringing in qualified bilingual teachers and original English textbooks, and setting up incentive system for bilingual instruction. As of summer 2011 BS had had more bilingual teachers than any other schools of WU. Overall bilingual teachers take up over one third of the faculty of BS. In addition, courses of bilingual instruction take up a high percentage of the total courses for various major programs of BS; for example, courses of bilingual instruction for the program of International Economics and Business take up 50% of all its content courses. In each semester there are more than 15 courses of bilingual instruction provided (Interview, June 10, 2011).

To BS, bilingual instruction represents the features of its non-English major programs that distinguish them from those of other schools and universities. When

asked whether or not more courses should be taught bilingually in English and Chinese, Lin says, "Definitely, there is no doubt about this [...] the construction of all major programs has to succeed by its distinguishing feature, and our resource is the foreign language" (Interview, June 10, 2011). According to what Lin says, with bilingual instruction BS gains an advantage in its competition with other schools or universities. Interestingly, while bilingual instruction represents strength to BS, it means weakness to SES. Chen, Associate Dean of SES, says the following:

Bilingual instruction perhaps is, teachers of some schools and departments are not for the moment able to teach in English monolingually, or students are not ready for monolingual English classes, perhaps is transitional [stress original]. But School of English Studies, [students are] all English majors, and then teachers are all required to teach in English, teach in English monolingually; this is the most basic requirement. So this means that there is no way we can carry out bilingual instruction. So sometimes some teachers joke around, saying that the courses that rank last in our school are perhaps the courses of bilingual instruction. (Interview, May 13, 2011)

Chen's words clearly indicate that bilingual instruction is actually not desired at SES. It is a temporary solution to teachers or students' lack of English proficiency for monolingual instruction. To teachers and students of SES the amount of English used in class is an indicator of the quality of a course; less English used in class, less desirable the course.

TEM-4 and TEM-8 also provide BS with competitive advantage. In China's higher education, CET-4 and CET-6 (College English Test Band-4 and Band 6) are English tests intended for non-English majors, and TEM-4 and TEM-8 are English tests intended for English majors. However, all students of WU, regardless of their major programs, are encouraged to take TEM-4 and TEM-8, including non-English majors of BS. Lin explains that this is because "now more and more employers … have found that students who have passed TEM-4 and TEM-8 do have very good English proficiency" (Interview, June 10, 2011). Here the national language policies are negotiated as an effort to better prepare students for job market, given that TEM-4 and TEM-8 are widely recognized in job market as better representative of high level of English proficiency than CET-4 and CET-6.

**English: teacher's job security.** To some teachers, English help secure their jobs. Min makes the following comments in the interview:

If I teach in Chinese […] I taught in Chinese at the beginning, and if someone comes and he can teach management and he may teach it. All [teachers of] courses in Chinese can be replaced. He can replace [me] and teach organizational behavior and human resources management […] making some preparations, anyone can come and teach. But if you teach in both English and Chinese, it's very hard to find someone to replace [you]. (Interview, May 24, 2011)

With bilingual instruction Min is able to ensure that he will not be easily replaced by other teachers who can only teach in Chinese; if Min teaches in Chinese, it is likely that he loses some of his teaching positions.

**English: students' employment opportunities.** The view that English enhances students' job opportunities is shared among all the administrators and teachers interviewed. As for English majors, Chen comments that to students of SES "English is their major, and their future employment depends on it" (Interview, May 13, 2011). Lin makes a similar comment in the interview concerning the importance of English to non-English majors:

The major programs in our school [BS] are all on economics, management, and law. These programs, as they cultivate internationalized talents, that is, talents that can adapt to international competition, his English should be very good in the first place. Our goal of cultivation is for the students to have an international vision, and then have intercultural communicative ability, and then be able to work in foreign corporations, organizations and institutions. (Interview, June 10, 2011)

According to Lin, students of BS are expected to be "internationalized talents" working in international workplace, and to achieve this, English proficiency is the most important precondition. In addition to Chen and Lin, teachers also perceive employment opportunities as a very important objective of students' English learning. For example, when talking about the benefits of English learning to students, Song says,

[The benefit of] English to them is obvious, because in addition to their knowledge on their specialized areas, the employers also evaluate their competence in English speaking and listening […] practical objectives, what else do you think it would be? (Interview, May 23, 2011)

As is shown, English is seen as highly instrumental in bringing students competitive advantage in job market. This view is also widely shared among students, as indicated by questionnaire responses.

**English and Western Culture**

To students and teachers of SES and BS, learning English also means learning culture, especially American culture. Analysis of questionnaire responses shows that the vast majority of student and teacher respondents agree that "learning English is to learn about Western culture too" and that "English is associated with American culture." When asked whether he thinks that English can be learned as a culture-free tool, Song says "absolutely not." He then further explains that "culture is inseparable from language; otherwise, language is water without source" (Interview, May 23, 2011). In fact, according to Hua, learning culture is encouraged by teachers of English because "to have a better grasp of this language you should not only learn the language but also learn about this country and its culture as well" (Interview, May 30, 2011).

Students and teachers also show a preference for Western culture, particularly American culture. Concerning her students' attitudes towards American culture, Hua says the following:

> I have found that there is a phenomenon with English majors, that is … they have a kind of, especially popular culture of the United States, sometimes I feel that, they have a blind admiration without screening or judgment, for example, American soap operas, many students in my class, when we have presentations in class, are talking about American soap operas, are talking about American Hollywood movies, running after them. (Interview, May 30, 2011)

Here Hua expresses her concern that students have a blind admiration for American culture. In addition to students, teachers also prefer Western culture. When asked what culture is usually focused on in his class, Song says, "[I] suggest students to read some classics, such as the Bible, Greek and Roman mythology, to understand Western culture" (Interview, May 23, 2011). Similarly, when asked the same question, Yun says, "A lot, British culture and American culture, such as the Bible, Greek and Ro-

man mythology, their local traditions and customs, and religions, and so forth" (Interview, May 26, 2011)

What Yi says in the interview provides a possible explanation as to why Western culture, especially American culture, is preferred in teaching. To Yi, the course book used for his intensive reading course has placed great emphasis on the United States. Commenting on the course book, he says, "I think the biggest problem [with the course book] is the narrow scope of the readings it has included […] almost ninety percent of the readings are about the United States. So I deliberately skipped some readings" (Interview, May 24, 2011).

Yi resists the excessive focus on the United States by skipping readings that he thinks are redundant. Shohamy (2006) remarks that "policies often take the form of specific curricula that ensure that the policy is implemented; it is then translated into textbooks and other types of materials" (p. 79). Based on what Yi says, and given that the coursebook Yi uses is from a key series for English education in China's higher education institutions, it can be reasonably inferred that China's national language policy concerning English education in higher education institutions has emphasized Western culture, in particular American culture, which is then translated into course materials.

**Relationship between English and Chinese in circulating beliefs**

Questionnaire results show that students and teachers at WU are highly positive about the relationship between English and Chinese. Most student and teacher respondents perceive that Chinese is especially important for foreign language majors, and that learning English positively affects Chinese and Chinese culture. In particular, 83.7% of student respondents and 83.3% of teacher respondents agree that "all Chinese university students should be required to take Chinese classes," and at the same time, 71.8% of student respondents and 71.5% of teacher respondents believe that "Chinese classes are more important to students that are majoring in foreign languages than students that are not majoring in foreign languages." In addition, 85.2% of student respondents and 94.5% of teacher respondents disagree that "English learning has negative impact on Chinese language and culture." At the same time, 76.9% of student respondents and 75% of teacher respondents agree that "English learning has positive impact on Chinese and Chinese culture."

**A mutually facilitative relationship**

The view that Chinese lays the foundation for foreign language learning is widely held among the teachers interviewed. Saying that "how can you improve your English if your Chinese is not good," Yi believes that students' proficiency in Chinese sets a limit on their proficiency in English (Interview, May 24, 2011). According to Hua and Chen, Chinese helps develop students' thoughts and critical thinking, which facilitates their English learning (Interview, May 30, 2011; Interview, May 13, 2011).

In Song's point of view, English learning also facilitates Chinese learning; for example, to translate a Chinese prose into English, students need to have a very good understanding of the original Chinese prose in the first place (Interview, May 23, 2011). In this point of view, English learning is not at the cost of Chinese learning, or vice versa; instead they facilitate each other.

**Positive impact of English learning on Chinese culture**

Different teachers interviewed talk about the different aspects of the positive influence of English learning on Chinese culture. Qin believes that a culture that is vigorous is a culture that opens to innovation and change, and the more open a culture, the stronger its vitality (Interview, May 20, 2011). Min holds a similar viewpoint that Chinese civilization was fully developed in ancient times, and in modern time Western civilization has developed faster; therefore it is good for Chinese culture to absorb the positive side of Western civilization (Interview, May 24, 2011). To Yi and Yun, more knowledge about Western culture facilitates deeper understanding of it, which provides students with a critical perspective to examine it, and further, the comparison between Western culture and Chinese culture helps students better understand Chinese culture (Interviews, May 24, May 26, 2011).

In addition, it is also held that students' attitudes towards Chinese culture are not necessarily associated with the influence of Western culture. To Jie, it is students' own attitudes towards Chinese culture that matter:

> If you really identify with your national culture, you won't be disturbed by foreign culture in your process of learning foreign languages. But if [you] don't identify, even if there is no disturbance of foreign culture, you are not going to identify with your national culture, and you become someone that has no culture and no belief, and this is it. (Interview, May 24, 2011)

To Jie if Western culture has influence on someone, it has less to do with learning English than with his or her own belief in Chinese culture.

These perceptions point to the possible functional links between English and Chinese. Not only Chinese has a role in the learning of English, but also English has a role in the learning of Chinese. In addition, Western culture is perceived as having multiple positive influences on Chinese culture. Mühlhäusler (1997) remarks that the functional links between languages construct "a mutually supportive system" (p. 5) in the ecology of language. These perceived links between English and Chinese should therefore be instrumental to a linguistic ecosystem that supports both languages.

**Relationship between English and Chinese in classrooms**

Evidence has been found that in both bilingual instruction and English classrooms, where more English use is always preferred, Chinese plays roles that seem irreplaceable.

**English and Chinese in bilingual instruction classrooms**

To both Min and Jie, the use of English as the medium of instruction should not be at the cost of students' comprehension of content knowledge, and Chinese plays an important role in their instruction (Interviews, May 24, 2011). My observation of Jie's classes illustrates how English and Chinese interact in Jie's bilingual instruction.

> During the class the teacher uses Chinese for all explanations and English for key terms and definitions. Occasionally the teacher gives instruction to students in English as well. When talking about monopolistic competition, the teacher says, "shuode haoting dian, jiao hezuo; shuode nanting dian, jiao gou-

> jie [to say it nicely it is cooperation; to say it bluntly it is collusion]. […] guatou longduan de goujie jiao rongyi, liru OPEC, danshi yehui 'hejiu bifen fenjiu bihe,' goujie yiduan shijian hou youren dapo, ranhou you yishidao goujie de haochu, youzai goujie [Oligopolistic collusion is easier, for example OPEC. But 'separation after long combination and combination after long separation,' they collude for a while and then someone breaks the collusion, and then the benefit of collusion is recognized, and so they collude again]." The students burst into laughter. Later in class when talking about an example, the teacher uses a Chinese traditional idiomatic expression "maidu huanzhu [purchasing the casket and returning the jewels in it] to help with students' comprehension." (Field notes, May 25, 2011)

As is shown in the above excerpt, Chinese is very important in Jie's class; Chinese is the language that is used for all the explanations of the content. In addition, the use of "hejiu bifen fenjiu bihe [separation after long combination and combination after long separation]," and "maidu huanzhu [purchasing the casket and returning the jewels in it]," which are traditional Chinese idioms, and "goujie", which, in addition to being an economic terminology, is also used in plain Chinese and has negative connotation meaning collaboration for wrongful acts, not only facilitates students' comprehension but also entertains students; the role of Chinese in this case may not be replaced by English.

**English and Chinese in English classrooms**

Code switching (Sridhar, 1996, p. 56) is a salient characteristic of Yi and Hua's English classes. Hua and Yi, and their students often switch codes from English to Chinese, and they code switch for different purposes.

**For clarification.** Chinese is often used for clarification of understanding in English classrooms. For example, after she introduces "Henry VIII," *Hua* repeats the name of the king in Chinese by saying "hengli bashi" (Field notes, May 23, 2011). Another example is with one of *Yi*'s classes. The following is an excerpt of my observational field notes of one of *Yi*'s classes where after several unsuccessful attempts of using English to ask *Yi* a question, the student switches to Chinese.

> A student asks Yi a question in English. She repeats her question several times, but it still does not make sense to Yi. Then Yi asks the student in English to repeat her question in Chinese, but the student does not hear Yi clearly, and then almost the whole class join Yi and tell the student in Chinese in chorus,"zhongwen, zhongwen [Chinese, Chinese]." The student then understands, and repeats her question in Chinese. (Field notes, May 23, 2011)

Apparently the student who asks the question has some difficulty communicating with *Yi* in English, and code switching to Chinese here serves as a "strategic competence" strategy "to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30).

**For ease of communication.** Sometimes Chinese is used for ease of communication. Once when explaining a quote of John F. Kennedy, "For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed," Yi says to the class that he happened to have read a Chinese quote days

ago that is analogous, and he tells the class the Chinese quote in Chinese, which is, "yi ge ren didiao de yuanyin shi ta you shili keyi suishi gaodiao [the reason why someone keeps a low profile is that he has the power to become high profile at any time he wants] ." With the help of the Chinese quote students make sense of Kennedy's quote easily (Field notes, May 18, 2011). In another hour, Yi asks the students to summarize the characteristics of the Americans. A boy student sitting in the back row says out loudly to the class and Yi, "American culture is zhimin wenhua [colonial culture]." Another girl student says, "Americans are baofahu [nouveau riche]," and the whole class burst into laughter (Field notes, June 1, 2011). In these two instances of code mixing (Sridhar, 1996, p. 57), the students switch to Chinese probably because they do not know the English phrases.

**For important topics.** Chinese is used by both Hua and Yi when the topic is important to students. For example, when introducing question types of the final exam, Hua uses Chinese, and students take notes of what she says (Field notes, June 13, 2011). In Yi's classes, when making important explanations about translating techniques, Yi uses Chinese.

**Other purposes.** Hua and Yi also switch to Chinese to make announcements or to give comments and suggestions. For example, at the end of a class, Hua announces to the class in Chinese, "zuo presentation de tongxue qing dao wo zheli lai yixia [those who are going to present please come to me]" (Field notes, May 23, 2011).

In the English classes, Chinese does not play a prominent role in teaching as it does in the class of bilingual instruction; however, as is shown in the instances of code switching, teachers as well as students employ Chinese for various communicative purposes, some of which may not be achieved as successfully if English is employed instead. In addition, as code switching and code mixing also serve the function of "identity marking" (Sridhar, 1996, p. 58), Chinese may have been used by the students and teachers as an index of their Chinese identity in both *Hua*'s and *Yi*'s classes.

As is shown in the above analysis, in the English classes and the class of bi- lingual instruction I observed, there is space for both English and Chinese in instruction, and each has roles that may not be replaceable. This suggests that in the ecology of these classrooms English and Chinese may be functionally "structured" (Mühlhäusler, 1997, p. 4).

## Conclusion

Analysis indicates that West University highlights the utilitarian value of English, in particular, the competitive advantage English brings to different stakeholders. The "supporting habitat" (Mühlhäusler, 1997, p. 5) of English includes, for example, its privileged status reflected in the curriculum, and its perceived association with Western culture, in particular American culture.Concerning how English is related to Chinese, in the perceptions of students and teachers and classroom practices at West University, English and Chinese are functionally linked in multiple ways. Not only Chinese learning and English learning are perceived as mutually facilitative, but also English and Western culture are seen as having positive impact on Chinese culture. English and Chinese are also functionally linked in classroom practices. In both English classes and the class of bilingual instruction, English and Chinese each plays roles that may not be replaced by each other. This illustrates the "structured" functions (Mühlhäusler, 1997, p. 4) of English and Chinese in the ecosystem. The rela-

tionship between English and Chinese represented in the policies and practices of West University is also characterized by a hierarchy where English is positioned over Chinese. The superiority of English is constructed by the perceived association between English and the highly valued domains of use (Sridhar, 1996, p. 53), i.e., access to advanced science and technology, modernization, international communication, competitive advantage, and Western culture, and is further reinforced by the factors that have contributed to its habitat.

Evidence is also found that at West University national language policies are carried out, and yet at the same time are negotiated or resisted. Examples include non-English majors being encouraged to take TEM-4 and TEM-8, and the teacher of English avoiding excessive attention to American culture by bypassing certain contents in the course book, which illustrate that there is often disparity between language policy and its implementation (Hornberger, 1998), and that at different educational levels, language policies could be "interpreted, negotiated, and ultimately (re)constructed in the process of implementation" (Menken & Garcia, 2010, p. 1).Mühlhäusler (1997) suggests that a functional and sustainable ecosystem where new species are introduced means on the one hand "the disempowerment … of killer plants … in creating a situation … that will weaken their spread," and on the other hand "increasing links between different species" (p. 13). As far as English and Chinese in higher education are concerned, for China's educational language planning and policy to protect the language ecology, issues need to be addressed concerning the hegemony of English, and the functional links between English and Chinese.

Inequalities in relation to the dominance of English exist not only between societies but also within societies (Tollefson, 1991). The fact that English is seen by students and teachers of West University as a linguistic instrument indispensable to China's economic development in the era of globalization implies the impact of global dominance of English on China's educational language planning and policy concerning English education in higher education institutions. In addition, According to Tsuda (1997, p. 23), behind the hegemonic power of English is "the reality of unequal power relations existing in the world." At West University, behind the competitive advantage English provides to different stakeholders is a socially stratifying function of English, producing inequalities among universities and their schools, as well as teachers and students. Based on Mühlhäusler's (1997), apart from addressing issues concerning the hegemony of English, for the linguistic ecosystem to sustain, efforts are also required to establish and facilitate functional links between English and Chinese. In addition, Mühlhäusler (2000) remarks that the linguistic ecosystem is "layered" (p. 341) in terms of the use of languages for intragroup or intercultural communication, and that "it is layered functionality complementary ecology that provides these functional links and keeps the ecology balanced" (p. 342). As is already pointed out in the analysis, possible evidences of such links are found in the practices at West University. At this point I suggest that more efforts be taken to research in this direction.

## References

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*(1), 1-47.

Chang, J. (2006). Globalization and English in Chinese higher education. *World Englishes, 25*(3/4), 513-525.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Quesionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duff, P. A. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Feng, A. (2007). Intercultural space for bilingual education. In A. Feng (Ed.), *Bilingual education in China: Practices, policies and concepts* (pp. 259-286). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Fong, E. T. Y. (2009). English in China: Some thoughts after the Beijing Olympics. *English Today, 25*(1), 44-49.

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: Globalisation and the dilemmas of identity* (pp. 56-78). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Gu, P. Y. (2006). Towards a coherent foreign language policy in China: Lessons from Hong Kong. *Asian Journal of English language teaching, 16*, 67-87.

Haugen, E. (1972). The ecology of language. In A. Dil (Ed.), *The ecology of language: Essays by Einar Haugen* (pp. 325-339). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hornberger, N. H. (1998). Language policy, language education, language rights: Indigenous, immigrant, and international perspectives. *Language in Society, 27*(4), 439-458.

Hornberger, N. H. (2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy, 1*(1), 27-51.

Hornberger, N. H., & Hult, F. M. (2008). Ecological language education policy. In B. Spolsky & F. M. Hult (Eds.), *The handbook of educational linguistics* (pp. 280-296). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hult, F. M. (2007). Multilingual language policy and English language teaching in Sweden. *Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 68*(05), 1778.

Hult, F. M. (2009). Language ecology and linguistic landscape analysis. In E. G. Shohamy & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Linguistic landscape: Expanding the scenery* (pp. 88-103). New York: Routledge.

Hult, F. M. (2010). Analysis of language policy discourses across the scales of space and time. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* 202, 7-24.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Li, F. (2004). Yingyu rechao xia dui hanyu de leng sikao [Reflections on the status of Chinese in the English craze]. *Wuhan University Journal (Humanity Science), 57*(4), 499-502.

Li, Y. (2004). *Dangqian yuyan shenghuo de wenti jiqi duice [Problems in current language situation and the solutions]*. Paper presented at the The Fourth National Academic Seminar on Social Linguistics, Beijing.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Menken, K., & Garcia, O. (2010). Introduction. In K. Menken & O. Garcia (Eds.), *Negotiating language policies in schools: Educators as policymakers* (pp. 1-10). New York: Routledge.

Mühlhäusler, P. (1997). Language ecology - contact without conflict. In M. Pütz (Ed.), *Language choices: Conditions, constraints, and consequences* (pp. 3-15). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Mühlhäusler, P. (2000). Language planning and language ecology. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 1*(3), 306-367.

Norton, B., Ramanathan, V., & Pennycook, A. (2009). Preface. In J. L. Bianco, J. Orton & Y. Gao (Eds.), *China and English: Globalisation and the dilemmas of identity* (pp. ix-xiii). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Peng, Z. (2005). "Yinghan shuangyu jiaoxue" gen "guojia hanyu zhanlue" maodun: Yuyan xuejia nankai daxue boshisheng daoshi Ma Qingzhu jiaoshou fangtan lu [The conflict between English-Chinese bilingual instruction and national strategy of Chinese: An interview with the linguist Ma Qingzhu]. *Journal of Beihua University (Social Sciences), 6*(2), 24-27.

Pennycook, A. (2004). Language policy and the ecological turn. *Language Policy 3*(3), 213 - 239.

Phillipson, R., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1996). English only worldwide or language ecology? *TESOL Quarterly, 30*(3), 429-452.

Reagan, T., & Schreffler, S. (2005). Higher education language policy and the challenge of linguistic imperialism: A Turkish case study. In A. M. Lin & P. W. Martin (Eds.), *Decolonisation, globalization: Language-in education policy and practice* (pp. 115-130). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Shi, L. (2010). Qianyi daxue yingyu jiaoxue zhong zhongguo wenhua jiaoxue de queshi [On the lack of Chinese culture in English teaching in higher education institutions]. *Huazhang, 19.*

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. New York: Routledge.

Sridhar, K. K. (1996). Societal multilingualism. In S. L. McKay & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp. 47-70). New York: Cambridge University Press.

The General Office of the CCCPC, & The General Office of the State Council of China. (2006). *Guojia "shiyi wu" shiqi wenhua fazhan guihua gangyao. [The outline of cultural development during the national eleventh five-year plan period]*. Beijing, China: People's Publishing House. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2006-09/13/content_388046.htm

Tollefson, J. W. (1991). *Planning language, planning inequality: Language policy in the community*. London: Longman.

Tong, X. (2010, May 12). Quanqiuhua xia de waiyu jiaoyu zhengce [Foreign language policy under globalization]. *Guangming Daily*. Retrieved from http://edu.gmw.cn/2010-05/12/content_1118820.htm

Tsuda, Y. (1997). Hegemony of English vs. ecology of language: Building equality in international communication. In L. E. Smith & M. L. Forman (Eds.), *World Englishes 2000* (pp. 21-31). Honolulu: College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, University of Hawai‘i and the East-West Center.

Wu, L. (2006, October 30). Muyu wenhua "shiyu" xianxiang fansi [Reflections on the phenomenon of "Chinese culture aphasia"]. *Guangming Daily*. Retrieved from http://www.gmw.cn/content/2006-10/30/content_495452.htm

Xiao, L., Xiao, D., Li, L., & Song, Y. (2010). Gaoxiao yingyu jiaoyu zhong de "zhongguo wenhua shiyu" xianzhuang yanjiu [A study on the "Chinese culture aphasia" in the English education in higher education institutions]. *Foreign Language Teaching, 1*.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zhang, W. (2007, September 3). Yingyu re zhong hanyu de diwei ruhe baochi [How to maintain the status of Chinese in the English craze]. *Guangming Daily*. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/theory/2007-09/03/content_6652769.htm

Zhou, X. (2010). Daxue yingyu jiaoxue zhong zhongguo wenhua shiyu xianxiang de yanjiu [A study on "Chinese culture aphasia" in university English education]. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies,* 5, 152-159.

**Note on Contributor**

Hongmei XU is a lecturer at Xi'an International Studies University. She holds a Ph.D. degree in Culture, Literacy and Language from the University of Texas. Her major research interest is educational language planning and policy with a focus on issues concerning English and Chinese education in China's higher education institutions. Email: xuhongmei@xisu.edu.cn