

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AT GUANGXI
UNIVERSITY, CHINA: CHALLENGES, RESPONSES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in the University of Hull

by

Wendy Yanhua Liang, MA

Faculty of Education

July 2011

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AT GUANGXI UNIVERSITY, CHINA: CHALLENGES, RESPONSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**BY
WENDY YANHUA LIANG**

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the growing expectation of the quality of English language education in China's universities under the pressure of globalization as well as a developing Chinese society. Since the 1980s, four national curricula for English language education at universities have been introduced by the Chinese Ministry of Education, causing an unprecedented "English craze" in China's higher education and other areas of its society. However, despite the heavy investment in terms of capital and facilities, the quality of English language education has become a pressing problem in higher education as well as in Chinese society.

The aim of the research is to explore what the challenges and resolutions are in improving English language education at Guangxi University, China. The research project draws insight from a mixed methods approach underpinned by interpretivism and the research design is a case study. The data were collected through interviews with the university administrative staff, teaching staff and students, questionnaires with teachers and students, and documentary reading.

The study found that administrative staff, teaching staff, and students at Guangxi University are currently confronted by wide variety of challenges as a result of the pressures coming from three hierarchical levels, namely, the global, national and institutional levels. The findings suggest that among the various challenges the most prominent ones involve teachers' lack of career development training, lack of information on ongoing reform, different priorities by stakeholders in College English evaluation and students' desires being mostly overlooked. Based on the research data, the study indicates remedial strategies in four domains: administration, course design, teacher career development and learning support.

With regard to its contribution to the literature, by providing an illuminative case study within a global context, the research describes various responsive strategies taken at national and institutional levels, contributing to the developing body of theory on globalization in China's higher education. The study offers diverse and different views

and experiences about English language education at the university level, which also contributes to the research tradition of language teaching in higher education. In this sense, the study has implications for theory, practice and future research in language teaching under a global context in higher education.

Key words: English language education; interpretivism; a mixed methods approach; challenges; responses

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Mike Bottery, for his kind and meticulous instruction. To be honest, I couldn't have expected a better supervisor than him, who gave me so much thoughtful advice—always balanced, always kind, and encouraging. In a constructive way, he helped to make my long and arduous journey shorter and easier every day. I was also deeply impressed by the depth of his critical thoughts as well as his passion and zeal revealed in his creative and inspiring instruction. When I look back on the path I took, I am confident in saying that he has opened a new window for me, helping me to perceive the world in a different way as well as setting a fine role model for me to follow in my future career.

I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to my second supervisor, David Plowright, who taught me research methodology and inspired me by involving me in very constructive discussions.

My thanks also go to the well-stocked University library where I have roamed the realms of academia and had my thirst for knowledge fully quenched over the past two years.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Ms Yafei Song, the dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Guangxi University for her full support of my career development and the research project.

To all the participants taking part in the interviews and questionnaires, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks. Without their kindness and enthusiasm, the research project would have been impossible.

I am also very grateful to my previous supervisor, Xulun Tan, who kept strengthening and buoying me up all the time and providing useful comments on my work.

Finally, I want to thank my husband and my 12-year-old daughter who have backed me up and given me all their love over the past years. I would also like to express my gratitude to my parents, who, since my childhood, have encouraged me to plan a race with the full intention of winning even in the most challenging and difficult times.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
Abstract	II
Acknowledgements	IV
Table of contents	V
Abbreviations	IX
List of tables	X
List of figures	XII
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the research problem	1
1.2 Research aims and purposes	2
1.3 Research questions	3
1.4 Significance of the study	4
1.5 Background to the study	7
1.6 The structure of the thesis	8
Chapter 2 Literature Review (I)	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Globalization	12
2.3 Globalization and higher education	19
2.4 Globalization and English language education	27
2.5 Globalization and China	31
2.6 Globalization and Chinese higher education	35

2.7 Globalization and English language education in China	39
2.8 Summary of the chapter	53
Chapter 3 Literature Review (II)	54
3.1 Introduction	54
3.2 Provincial context	55
3.3 Guangxi University and its English language education	57
3.4 Responsive strategies towards English language education at Guangxi University	60
3.5 Summary of the chapter	72
Chapter 4 Research Methodology	74
4.1 Introduction	74
4.2 Philosophical issues	75
4.3 Research design— case study	84
4.4 Sampling methods and sample selection	86
4.5 Access to participants	92
4.6 The protocol of interviews and questionnaires	94
4.7 Data collection methods	99
4.8 Data analysis and data presentation	104
4.9 Ethical considerations	110
4.10 Validity and reliability	110
4.11 Generalisability	111
4.12 Triangulation	112
4.13 The position of the researcher	113
4.14 Summary of the chapter	114

Chapter 5 Findings (I)—Perceptions and Experiences of Stakeholders of English Language Education at Guangxi University (Interview-Based)	116
5.1 Introduction	116
5.2 General information on interview participants	118
5.3 Perceptions and experiences of administrative staff	119
5.4 Perceptions and experiences of teaching staff	130
5.5 Perceptions and experiences of students	139
5.6 Summary and discussion of the interview data	149
Chapter 6 Findings (II)—Perceptions and Experiences of Stakeholders of English Language Education at Guangxi University (Questionnaire-Based)	153
6.1 Introduction	153
6.2 Teachers’ perceptions and experiences of English language education at Guangxi University	154
6.3 Students’ perceptions and experiences of English language education at Guangxi University	177
6.4 Discussion of the results	190
Chapter 7 Conclusion	194
7.1 Introduction	194
7.2 Summary of the research project	194
7.3 Contribution, generalisability and limitations of the research project	209
7.4 Implications for policy and practice	212

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CAEXPO	China-ASEAN Expo
CET 4	College English Test Band 4
CET 6	College English Test Band 6
CJFD	Chinese Journal Full-text Database
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIL	English as an International Language
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

LIST OF TABLES

CONTENTS	PAGE	
Table 2.1	Some of the principal changes in the operating environments of higher educations in the UK: 1985-1995	24
Table 2.2	Some of the principal changes affecting university “professionals”:1985-1995	24
Table 2.3	Expansion of higher education in China	36
Table 2.4	Roles of English in China	41
Table 2.5	Four national syllabi for English course in China’s HEIs since 1985	49
Table 3.1	Quantitative requirements for English language education at Guangxi University	67
Table 4.1	Details of individual interviews conducted in the research	88
Table 4.2	Details of focus group interviews conducted in the research	90
Table 4.3	Individual interview schedule	95
Table 4.4	Focus group interview schedule	97
Table 4.5	Basic format of teacher-based questionnaire	98
Table 4.6	Basic format of student-based questionnaire	99
Table 4.7	Profile of individual interview participants	101
Table 4.8	Profile of focus group 1 (Level 1)	102

Table 4.9	Profile of focus group 2 (Level 2)	103
Table 4.10	Profile of focus group 3 (Level 3)	103
Table 4.11	Example of open coding of individual interview with I-TS1	106
Table 4.12	Example of codes and categories of individual interview with I-TS1	107
Table 4.13	Example of theme identification based on codes and categories	108
Table 6.1	Three top factors considered by various stakeholders in evaluation of English language education at Guangxi University	168

LIST OF FIGURES

CONTENTS	PAGE
Figure 2.1	KOF index of world globalization 17
Figure 2.2	Growth in internationalization of tertiary education (1975-2004) 26
Figure 2.3	Concentric circles of English 28
Figure 2.4	The number of academic articles on globalization published in China between 1990-2010 31
Figure 3.1	Hierarchical administrative structure of English language education at Guangxi University 63
Figure 3.2	Hierarchical administrative status of staff in English language education at Guangxi University 64
Figure 3.3	Responsibilities of heads at different levels of administration regarding English language education at Guangxi University 64
Figure 3.4	Strategies for quality assurance of English language education at Guangxi University 71
Figure 4.1	A schematic representation of deductive reasoning 76
Figure 4.2	A schematic representation of inductive reasoning 78
Figure 4.3	The essence of mixed methods research diagram 80
Figure 4.4	Philosophical stance underpinning the current research project 84
Figure 4.5	Strategies for data analysis 105
Figure 4.6	Triangulation in the research study 112
Figure 6.1	Gender of participants 154

Figure 6.2	Age of participants	155
Figure 6.3	Highest level of general education completed	155
Figure 6.4	Highest level of English qualification received	156
Figure 6.5	Professional status of participants	156
Figure 6.6	Length of time working at the University	157
Figure 6.7	Average teaching hours per week	157
Figure 6.8	Time spent teaching at the University	158
Figure 6.9	Time spent teaching in training classes run by the Faculty	158
Figure 6.10	Time spent preparing for lessons	159
Figure 6.11	Time spent attending meetings	160
Figure 6.12	Time spent observing classes	160
Figure 6.13	Time spent conducting research project tasks	160
Figure 6.14	Time spent on administrative duties	161
Figure 6.15	Perceptions of being a teacher of English at Guangxi University	162
Figure 6.16	Perceptions of the quality of English language education at Guangxi University (I)	164
Figure 6.17	Perceptions of the quality of English language education at Guangxi University (II)	165
Figure 6.18	Challenges encountered as teachers of English at Guangxi University	169
Figure 6.19	Perceptions of refresher courses to improve teaching of English	171
Figure 6.20	Perceptions of relationship between teaching and research	172
Figure 6.21	Perceptions of institutional management	173

Figure 6.22	Effectiveness of strategies taken to improve the teaching of English at Guangxi University	174
Figure 6.23	Demographic information on student participants	177
Figure 6.24	Reasons for learning English	178
Figure 6.25	Average time spent on English per week	179
Figure 6.26	Expectation of English course and what participants really learned	180
Figure 6.27	The preferred teaching mode in English course	181
Figure 6.28	The favourite part of the English course	182
Figure 6.29	The least enjoyed part of the English course	183
Figure 6.30	Perceptions of learning support at Guangxi University	184
Figure 6.31	Perceptions of evaluation of English course at Guangxi University	185
Figure 6.32	Perceptions of policies to improve English learning at Guangxi University	186
Figure 6.33	Issues to ensure the quality of English learning at Guangxi University	188
Figure 7.1	Challenges of different stakeholders in terms of English language education	205
Figure 7.2	Solutions proposed by stakeholders for improvement of English language education at Guangxi University	208

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the research problem

This thesis is concerned with the growing expectation of the quality of English language education in China's higher education under the pressure of globalization as well as a developing Chinese society.

In China's higher education, as well as in other areas of education, English language education has long enjoyed an unparalleled status. Since the early 1980s, English has become the only compulsory course marked in the national curriculum applied to all China's higher educational institutions, which makes it of supreme importance to students, universities and the society. As a consequence, in today's China, only a fairly satisfactory achievement on an English course can help undergraduates access further development in their academic career. Without a pass on an English course, they would run the risk of being rejected for graduate study at master and doctoral levels no matter how great their academic achievements might be. Following the implementation of the English national curriculum, in 1987, the National English Testing System, which has been known as College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (shortened as CET 4 and CET 6), was designed and established to be applied to all students in higher education. All undergraduates are required to pass CET 4 and graduates CET 6 as a requirement for award of the corresponding degrees. In 2002, the Chinese Ministry of Education proposed that universities be required to offer 10% of their courses in English and over 10 million university students were to use textbooks written in English by the end of 2005. From 1990 to 2007, the Chinese Ministry of Education carried out the reform of English language education on a national scale and a heavy investment in terms of capital and facilities as well as manpower has been implemented.

Indeed, it should not be too surprising that such national initiatives have not occurred within a vacuum. It is apparent that this necessity of nation-wide enthusiasm for English has largely coincided not only with China's entry into a highly competitive

world, but also with dramatic changes of Chinese economic growth and Chinese society, showing the strong desire of the Chinese government to actively reintegrate into the global community after many decades of shutting the door on a rapidly changing world.

However, despite the huge amount of effort, two decades after the start of the reform the prospect of English education in higher education is far from optimistic; according to the statement of China's former Vice Premier Li Lanqing, there has been "a high investment resulting in a low outcome" (Li, 1997:53). "The economic efficiency of state educational expenditures is lower than expected" (Wang, 2003:70). In other words, the outcome meets neither the needs of society and students nor the expectation of the government and universities. Hence, the nature of quality in higher education and the quality assurance of English language education in China's universities have currently become imperative issues among Chinese scholars in higher education as well as pressing problems in Chinese society.

1.2 Research aims and purposes

The aim of the research project is to explore the challenges which English language education at Guangxi University, China is currently faced with and to suggest solutions by which English language education at Guangxi University can be improved. To be specific, the research intends first to make a contribution which helps elaborate why English teaching and learning is to a great degree taken seriously at Guangxi University and why there are challenges to English Language education at the university; second, the study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of undergraduates and the university staff in terms of English language education at Guangxi University. Third, the research seeks to investigate the responsive strategies taken by Guangxi University as it adjusts to this global, national and institutional context; and finally, the research aims to propose some potential remedies with regard to the improvement of quality of English language education at Guangxi University.

This study is mainly based on the perspectives and opinions of students and staff themselves. These objectives give rise to the following research questions.

1.3 Research questions

There is **one** Research Question (RQ), which is divided into **four** Specific Research Questions (SRQs):

(RQ) What are the challenges, responses and recommendations in improving English language education at Guangxi University, China?

The four Specific Research Questions provide the framework for the research project. To give a satisfying answer to the Research Question, the following four Specific Research Questions are needed:

SRQ 1 What are the current global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?

SRQ 2 What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?

SRQ 3 What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?

SRQ 4 What possible strategies can be adopted to improve English language education at Guangxi University?

To answer Specific Research Question 1 (SRQ1), the issues of English language education at both global and national levels will be investigated. At the global level, how globalization, particularly economic and cultural globalization affects English language education worldwide is reviewed; at the national level, the study looks at why and how the Chinese government emphasizes English language education in universities in response to the pressure of globalization as well as the public's expectations.

Specific Research Question 2 (SRQ2) will be answered by reflecting upon my own experience as a senior manager and academic in the faculty, and by examining a selection of internal teaching documents. The strengths and weaknesses of English language education at Guangxi University will be examined, in particular what achievements and changes have been made, and whether the teaching of English has failed to meet the students' and public's expectation.

Specific Research Question 3 (SRQ3) will be answered through interviews with selected participants (including teaching staff, students, etc.) and questionnaires for teaching staff and students. Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of different stakeholders about the teaching of English at Guangxi University are investigated.

Specific Research Question 4 (SRQ4) will be answered from the above discussion and data analysis. Some possible recommendations for the teaching of English in Guangxi University are put forward.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study addresses the research issues by stating that the forces of economic globalization and cultural globalization as well as the major changes in Chinese society set the context for China's English language education policies for universities, which, to a great degree, helps to identify the way Guangxi University responds to the increasing need for English under the great globalization pressure. The study also looks at different levels of adjustments made by the university, and how teachers meet the challenges of the continually increasing pressure for better quality at the institutional level.

This is undoubtedly an important area of research. The significance of the study can be conceptualized in at least four aspects: the first is the growing concern with English language education in Chinese society, from the government to individuals; the second is the huge impact of English language education upon students; the third is the increasing challenges faced by the institutions and teaching staff; and finally—the lack of sufficient previous research on English language education in China in the context of globalization.

At the National Science and Technology Congress held in 1995, the Chinese government proposed the implementation of technology and education, pointing out that to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the 21st century, a new development strategy which highlighted the roles of science and technology must be carried out. One of the direct impacts of such a demand upon education was greater emphasis on English language education in China's higher education. Subsequently a series of national curricula for English teaching was introduced. In 2007, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the policy that the efficiency of English teaching would become part of the assessment of the educational administrative departments at all levels as well as in all institutions of higher education. Thanks to this, there has been an English "fever" among college students as well as the Chinese society. In a sense, China has become one of the few countries in the world where English as a foreign language has even gained prestige over its mother tongue, Mandarin Chinese. Nevertheless, such a huge amount of money investment and effort has not generated the desired consequences. English language education in Chinese universities does not meet the need of the students, nor does it live up to the increasing expectations of the public and the government. It is, therefore, not surprising that English teaching and learning has become such a hotly-debated topic that it continues to preoccupy the Chinese scholars in higher education as well as an increasingly great number of people in Chinese society. Hence, it is worth reviewing the policy and the practice of English teaching in higher education from a global level and exploring the problems existing in English language education in universities.

A second aspect is that the quality of English teaching has a huge impact on a great number of students enrolled in China's universities. As is well known, China is the most densely populated country in the world, and in 2009, the enrollment number for China's universities continued its upward climb and reached 29 million, ranking the top in the world. As all college students are required to take an English course for at least one year, the quality of English language education in universities is crucial to education achievement. To be specific, the study of English language education in universities will help contribute to the successful completion of English course studies of students. In particular, the result of this study will help explain the problems in

English language education and provide information to improve the quality of English teaching, of which the chief beneficiaries are undergraduates.

Thirdly, the increasingly wider access to higher education and growing practice of accountability and competition at the institutional level has presented greater challenges to the teaching staff. How professionals respond to the current context and adjust themselves to the pressure will be key determinants of good quality in English language education in the years to come.

Finally, it has been established that there are some researchers contributing to the English language education in China's universities in the context of a rapidly changing world. For instance, Huang (2006) explores the relationship between regional economic development and English language education in China's higher education. From the perspective of economic and cultural changes, Xu (2006) looked at what impact such changes have exerted upon teachers of English in China in terms of teaching, research and morale. However, within the existing literature, there has not been sufficient research which investigates how China's universities respond to the increasing pressure caused by globalization from an integrated perspective, that is, at the global, national and institutional levels. This is perhaps understandable. Due to political and cultural factors, on the one hand, full awareness has not been given to the research of the policy and practice of English language education in China's universities during the past two decades; and on the other hand, the existing prevailing research mostly either focuses on the English language education just in a national context, or centres on the concrete practice of teaching procedures like teaching methods, textbook, and so on. With English language education in China's universities being seen as just the product of Chinese culture rather than a policy driven both by forces of economic and cultural globalization and the response to the global pressure at national and institutional levels, little research so far has taken into consideration the three levels, namely, global, national and institutional levels.

In a word, the findings in this study will contribute to understanding and improving the current state of English language education in Guangxi University, China. By identifying the problems that exist in English language education and proposing the potential remedies to improve its quality in Guangxi University, China, the findings

will also help other China's higher education institutions (HEIs) understand the context of their daily practice and positively respond to the great pressure caused by the changing global world in order to provide a better service to Chinese society.

1.5 Background to the study

This research is motivated by a number of reasons. One stimulus for it arises out of my personal career and experience. Having been working as a teacher at Guangxi University for over 15 years, I have delivered English lectures to Chinese students as well as Chinese courses to foreign students, which helps me understand deeply the nature and process of language teaching and learning. Another important factor that has prompted this research is my long-standing interest in the quality of English language education in higher education as well as how teaching staff can be helped to gain better achievements. The third reason stems from a concern about the reason why English teaching and learning is a pressing social problem currently in Chinese society. Last but not least, is that my growing understanding of policies and values in Western education has stimulated the development of my critical perspective of the English education at China's universities in ways that would not have been possible if I had never left China. This study, therefore, can be viewed as a detailed description of my meditation journey, in which my insider-outside position has helped to produce a comparatively distinctive picture. To sum up, as a major foreign language in China's universities, English has been given huge importance by the Chinese government as well as Chinese society. Therefore, to figure out the problems existing in English language education and to explore the possible solutions can be of great importance both theoretically and practically.

There are four reasons why I am qualified to conduct such a research. The first stems from the fact that besides my years of teaching experience, from 1996 onwards, I have been head of the teaching and research section, which is responsible for the routine practice of English teaching. From 2007 to 2009, as one of the two Responsible Professors at the College English Department consisting of 98 English teachers I was in charge of English courses offered for all non-English majors at Guangxi University.

Hence, in terms of English teaching at the university level, I am acquainted with all the teaching procedures as well as departmental management. I began teaching in 1993, which means that I have gone through all the major college English reforms in China's higher education. The second reason lies in the fact that due to my 15-year working experience and good professional reputation, I have built up and maintained good relationships with my colleagues, which helps in gaining access to the targets of investigation. A third reason for my qualification for doing the research is that currently, because of the undesirable performance of teaching practice, both leadership and teaching staff are calling for a change; therefore leadership support can be guaranteed. Last, to conduct such a research successfully, one should be qualified both methodologically and practically. And my being abroad as a research student also provides some assistance in the conduct of the research project.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into eight chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introductory part of the thesis. It outlines the research statement, research questions, and the significance of the research project. It also provides background of the research project and the researcher's qualification for conducting the research project.

Chapter 2 is the first of the two chapters providing a literature review for the thesis. In this chapter, the issues of English language education at both global and national levels are reviewed. At the global level, it examines how globalization, particularly economic and cultural globalization, exerts a profound influence upon English language education worldwide; at the national level, it investigates why and how the Chinese government emphasizes English education in universities in response to the pressure of globalization as well as the public's expectations. This chapter is designed to address Specific Research Question 1 (SRQ 1).

Chapter 3 is the second part of literature review of the thesis with the aim of targeting Specific Research Question 2 (SRQ 2). Based on documentary reading, it considers the strengths and weaknesses of English language education at Guangxi University. In

other words, it looks at what adaptive strategies have been made, and whether English language education has failed to live up to the students' and the public's expectations.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the rationale of the research methodology employed in the research project. To be specific, the coverage of this chapter includes the philosophical assumptions of the research, a case study research design, ethical issues and sampling. It also contains sections about data collection methods and reliability and validity of the research design. The last sections in this chapter look at triangulation and the position of the researcher.

Chapter 5 provides the qualitative findings of the research project derived from semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews. It first presents administrative staff's perceptions and opinions of English language education at Guangxi University. Then it moves on to the teaching staff's perceptions and opinions of English language education at Guangxi University. Finally, it focuses on the students' perceptions and experiences of English language education at the university. It is designed to address Specific Research Question 3 (SRQ 3) and Specific Research Question 4 (SRQ 4).

Chapter 6 presents the quantitative findings of the research project based on both the teaching staff's questionnaire and the students' questionnaire. It outlines teaching staff's perceptions and experiences of English language education on a variety of issues, including teaching practices, career development and organizational management. It presents teaching staff's understanding and feelings about ideal English language education. It also describes the findings coming from student-based questionnaires, including participants' basic information and issues of learning experience, learning evaluation, strategies to improve English learning as well as what ideal learning and teaching of English is. Like Chapter 5, this chapter is also concerned with Specific Research Question 3 (SRQ 3) and Specific Research Question 4 (SRQ 4).

Chapter 7 is the conclusion of the research project in which the main Research Question (RQ) and Specific Research Questions (SRQs) are fully addressed. It also presents the limitations of the research project. Suggestions for future study are included in the final section of the chapter.

Chapter 8 contains the recommendations to improve the quality of English language

education at Guangxi University. It entails reflections on the research project as a whole and the researcher's personal reflections.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW (I)

2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of the literature review is twofold. First, it aims to set the scene within which the subject of the current research project exists. Second, it seeks to make its own contribution to the relevant research field. To be specific, in this thesis, it is designed to explore the key findings and issues related to the subject presented by previous researchers in the field, particularly aiming to address the first two specific research questions mentioned at the beginning of the thesis:

SRQ 1 What are the global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?

SRQ 2 What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?

The literature review part of this thesis comprises two chapters, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, with the former addressing SRQ1 and the latter dealing with SRQ2. In this chapter, the key findings in the existing literature will be investigated related to SRQ1, which establish the global and national contexts of English language education at Guangxi University. More specifically, it entails eight sections.

Section 2.2 is concerned with global level and looks at the conceptions of globalization and its development in the past three decades. It discusses the definitions and the characteristics of globalization and what the implications and consequences of globalization are.

Section 2.3 explores the relationship between globalization and higher education. It presents the key findings in the research field on why and how global trends have exerted great influence upon thoughts and practice in higher education as well as how

higher education responds to these in terms of policy issues. It is linked with the global perspective in SRQ1.

Section 2.4 examines English language education in the context of a globalizing world and is also tied with the global aspect. It covers issues such as English as a global language and new values of English such as “linguistic capital”.

Section 2.5 is concerned with how globalization is understood in China, which is related to the national level in SRQ1. It presents a range of arguments on the relationship between globalization and China as well as how the Chinese view globalization economically, culturally and politically.

Section 2.6 deals with the effect of globalization on China’s higher education. It provides key findings in the academic field on how globalization is transformed into higher education and what implication it brings to higher education practitioners. It is linked with the national perspective in SRQ1.

Section 2.7 centres on how globalization impacts on English language education in China’s HEIs (Higher Education Institutions), with the aim of addressing related issues at national level in SRQ1. The relevant findings from various ranges of national policies and documents as well as academic papers are presented.

Section 2.8 is the summary of the chapter.

2.2 Globalization

2.2.1 Definition of globalization

The most remarkable but highly unpredictable change in the world, over the last 30 years, has almost certainly been a sudden recognition that globalization has heavily penetrated into all walks of life (Bello, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Scholte, 2000; Giddens, 2002; Osterhammel and Peterson, 2005; Hopper, 2006; Held, 2007). Although it remains unknown what the ultimate implications of globalization are for human beings, the fact that it has been widely written about and heavily contested among policy-makers, academics and economists provides powerful confirmation of its existence. To understand the present scenario of globalization, therefore, it is perhaps best to first attend to the term itself. In actual fact, among the perennially addressed

questions about globalization in many academic books the prominent one is “what is globalization?” Simple as it might at first appear, the academic reality, however, suggests a strikingly confusing and vague situation in which a variety of meanings of “globalization” have been suggested.

Waters’ (1995:3) answer to this question is, in a sense, at a social and cognitive level:

A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.

At first glance, this seems a reasonable argument for the nature of globalization, for it highlights both the weakening of the notion of geography in terms of social and cultural practice as well as people’s consciousness of such change in their daily life. Nevertheless, that being the case, then how globalization is perceived via cognitive perspective is really arguable, as people from different social backgrounds may probably show cognitive distinctiveness. This is particularly true with regard to the astounding diversity of cultures and religions among human beings. For instance, one can ask whether people in Indonesian culture could become equally aware of the recession as those living in modern cities in the U.S. Therefore, several issues remain unsolved in this definition.

It then comes as no surprise that *Globalization* can be taken at other levels to mean something different, as Bisley (2007:30) puts it:

Globalization refers to the aggregate social consequences that derive from the dramatic increase in both the rate and speed with which people, goods and services, capital and knowledge are able to move around the globe.

Bisley goes on to argue that in a sense globalization is a political trend which exerts profound influence on the agenda of nation states. However, it does not change the basic social structure or cultural behaviour. Whilst such a proposed definition may be persuasive, one of its drawbacks is that it oversimplifies the process of social changes, failing to provide the answer to the issues such as the different forces which separately or jointly drive the increasing rate and speed of such interaction globally.

It is at this point that Scholte's notion of globalization can be introduced as an attempt to present a powerful argument on globalization in which a number of factors are taken into account. Significantly, Scholte (2000:15-16) suggests that there are five definitions of *globalization* as follows:

- Globalization as *internalization*, which refers to a growth of international exchange and interdependence across the borders;
- Globalization as *liberalization*, which means a process of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries so as to create an open, borderless world economy;
- Globalization as *universalization*, which indicates a process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the earth;
- Globalization as *westernization* or *modernization*, which refers to a dynamic social structures of modernity (capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, bureaucratism, etc.) spreading the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures;
- Globalization as *deterritorialization*, which means a reconfiguration of geography so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.

From a unique lens, Scholte claims that only the last conception of globalization suggests profound change of space. To put it another way, *globalization* in the fifth definition destroys the traditional concept of geography and in a real sense transcends the geographical border between nation-states and among peoples physically, culturally and emotionally. It seems to be reasonably self-evident that much of Scholte's notion is predicated on the assumption that globalization is indeed a multifaceted process producing an increasingly complex world for those living in the new century. However, two things must be said here. First of all, such a notion gives the impression that globalization is apparently viewed as an all-embracing and cover term which seems to be able to encompass any connotations in related fields. Furthermore, it is difficult not to ask how many definitions are sufficient to offer a clear and concise interpretation of globalization. Hence, the list of deep doubts thus seems never-ending.

To sum up, then, as the academia persistently attempts to present various definitions of globalization, scholars increasingly see themselves end up at very undesirable destinations as each of the definitions in its own way is deficient. However, whilst little

consensus has been reached with regard to what globalization is and what prospect it will place before the world population, it is not for one moment to deny that globalization is highly significant in the history of human kind. For many in the 21st century it is not unusual to link the drastic changes in their life with the trend of globalization that generates these changes. Hence, there seems to be little doubt that “globalization has become the most pressing issue of our time” (Stiglitz, 2002:4).

2.2.2 Characteristics of globalization

Just as there is no consensus on its definition, the characteristics of globalization are also in contention. The reasons for such continued lack of consensus stem from a number of sources. First, it is now clear that globalization is facilitated by an unforeseen confluence of different and unrestricted forces in the past decades, some historical, some political, some economic, and some cultural. Second, rather than acting alone, such forces are heavily interwoven, thus creating a complex and multifaceted reality. Finally, as Harris *et al.* (2002:31) point out, “globalization is an ongoing rather than completed process”, which suggests that globalization is a highly dynamic process, which promises an uncertain and confusing future. It is argued in the thesis that none of the forms of globalization should be ignored and they all jointly set the context for discourse of all arenas in the society. Nevertheless, three major forms of them are described here for the purpose of discussion.

Economic globalization

Bhagwati (2004:3) argues that although there are a number of various senses related with globalization, the dominant motif is economic globalization, which is greatly marked by “integration” and “flows”:

Economic globalization constitutes integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short-term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity generally, and flows of technology.....

Such global forces transcend the borders between territories and accelerate the flows of

goods and capital and human resources, creating an increasingly interdependent world. This viewpoint is echoed when Cronin (2003) highlights the fact that due to the emergence of giant global networks, the whole business process in the current global market is managed more efficiently and effectively than decades ago.

Cultural globalization

Besides the economic perspective, for many, globalization also extends into the cultural domain and manifests its presence in different dimensions. Driven by economic forces, for example, the whole world has been turned into a global village featuring homogenization and consumerism (Cavanagh and Mander, 2002). Such an assumption indicates that globalization is not only changing individual conventional perceptions of space and time, but also promoting the communication between various cultures and different ethnic groups. In a similar sense, Friedman (1999:87) argues with humour that globalization, is “a golden straightjacket”, and “once your country puts on the golden straightjacket, its political choices get reduced to Pepsi or Coke”. MacDonald develops this further when he claims that globalization is simply “the West” or “capitalism” (MacDonald, 2006:5). For Hopper (2007), the discussion of globalization needs to specifically address four distinct forms termed as Americanization, McDonaldization, Westernization and Capitalism. The underlying point is that globalization has a profound effect upon people’s daily lives and the trend of culture homogenization seems to be inevitable. That is why some comment that cultural products can be globally available as “they can extend anywhere in the world at the same time and can unite locations anywhere in effectively no time” (Scholte, 2000:48). Hence, in a cultural sense, globalization is enormously highlighted by a shared Western lifestyle together with the prevailing idea of Western capitalism and consumerism.

Political globalization

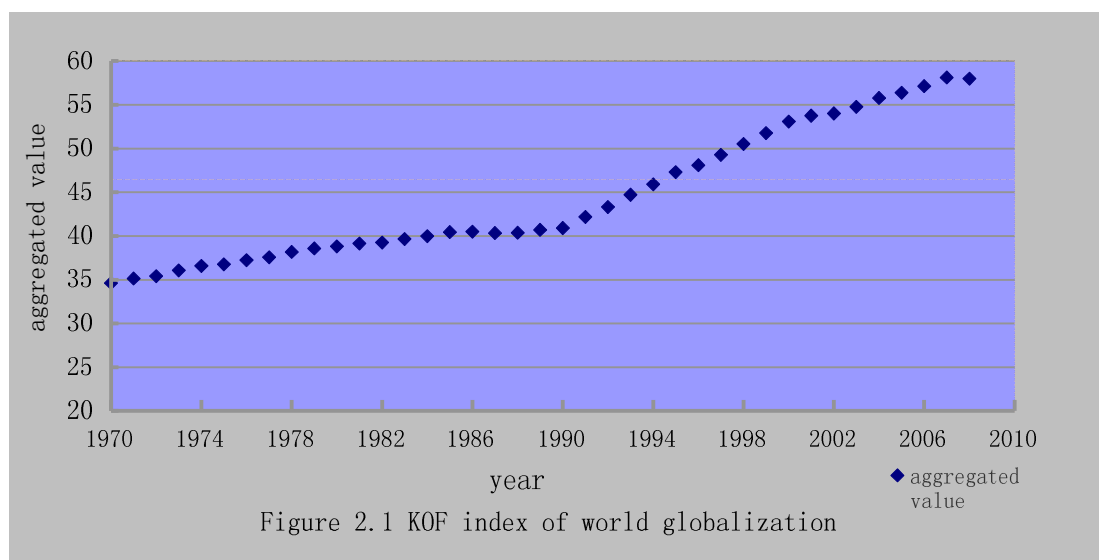
The characteristics of globalization in politics may be described as the gradual weakening of power by nation-states and more dependence on supra-national organizations (Bottery, 2006). On the one hand, in an age of continual change, nation states are in a difficult situation as they feel less and less powerful to tackle the challenges such as economic depression, terrorism and climate changes which are

caused by global forces. On the other hand, the global economy driven by transnational corporations threatens the legitimacy of nation states. This explains why nation states have become aware of the importance and urgency of being a member state of various international or regional organizations. Thus even Giddens (2002:8) argues, “Nations have lost most of the sovereignty they once had, and politicians have lost most of their capability to influence events.....The era of the nation-state is over.”

In brief, generated by capitalism, transnational corporations and information technology, globalization has taken a variety of forms, making the current world extremely difficult to comprehend. Hence, it is significant to investigate what implications various forms of globalization have brought about for human beings.

2.2.3 Implications of globalization

As one of the emblematic features of our epoch, the powerful force of globalization has no equal in human history. Over the past four decades, there is mounting evidence that it has been drastically accelerated in terms of both speed and range (see Figure 2.1).



(Note: The KOF Index of Globalization measures the three main dimensions of globalization: economic, social and political. Overall index of globalization and sub-indices referring to actual economic flows, economic restrictions, data on information flows, data on personal contact and data on cultural proximity are calculated. Data are available on a yearly basis for 208 countries over the period 1970 – 2008)

(Source: KOF data of index of globalization– world from <http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/aggregation/display>)

As the irresistible movement speeds up, a growing number of concerns are raised about the consequences it brings about. Firstly, international literature has suggested that globalization can promote global prosperity. Stiglitz (2002:4) puts it:

....Exported growth was the centerpiece of the industrial policy that enriched much of Asia and left millions of people there far better off. Because of globalization many people in the world now live longer than before and their standard of living is far better.

Optimistically, Stiglitz (2002) further remarks that globalization has also made a tremendous contribution to the decrease of the sense of isolation perceived in many developing lands as well as made the knowledge needed for this new changing era accessible. Secondly, strong anti-globalization sentiment could also be first felt and then visible, as in the protests taking place at Seattle in 1999. As such, globalization is viewed much less benignly. In terms of economic aspects of globalization, for instance, Rodrik (1997:2) contends that globalization has its downside as “ the most serious challenge for the world economy in the years ahead lies in making globalization compatible with domestic social and political stability.” To writers like Giddens (2002), the downside of global forces is very largely due to the greater and unprecedented risks such as climate changes, ecological problems, terrorism and diseases caused by globalization in recent decades. Finally, there has also been literature suggesting the limited nature of globalization (Gilpin, 2000; Dunning, 2003). The strongest example of such a neutral approach is probably that of Moynagh and Worsley (2008:236), who state that globalization “offers choices about how to make the most of its benefits and reduce its disadvantages.” In a similar vein, Roddick paints a highly enigmatic picture of globalization as “a massive jumble of contradictory trends, of the hopeful and the hopeless, the humane and the barbarous”; thus the new age is depicted as “the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*, the best of times and the worst of times ”(Roddick, 2003:6). Is globalization a blessing or a curse for human beings? The current literature does not provide a definitive answer to this question. However, there is one thing that few people will dispute: we are now in a world of global change and there seems “hardly a sphere of social life which globalization has left untouched” (Bisley, 2007: ix).

So far, it has been argued that a number of powerful forces have occurred at the global level in the past decades, which then induce unprecedented paradoxes as well as profound changes in the twenty-first century. Hence, it is now time to look at what effects globalization has upon one of the spheres of society— higher education— and how profoundly it impinges upon the work and values of those who have to live within it.

2.3 Globalization and higher education

2.3.1 The nature of higher education

Over centuries, higher education (HE), as the term itself implies, has been regarded as a field which has conventionally and historically contributed to the common good of individuals and nations. In a broad sense, the nature of higher education can be conceptualized in two different yet closely linked aspects. The first is concerned with the very material upon which HE operates— knowledge. Indeed, a glimpse at the history of HE might afford us a serene picture of universities until five decades ago: “a world of relative leisure” (Rothblatt, 2000:4), a world of a lifetime joyfully spent in roaming about the realm of knowledge. Then what peculiarity has HE as a sector to entitle itself to a high reputation in a secular world? The answer presented by Clark (1983:276) is as follows:

For as long as higher education has been formally organized, it has been a social structure for the control of advanced knowledge and technique. Its basic materials or substances are the bodies of advanced ideas and related skills that comprise much of the more esoteric culture of nations.

Different from general knowledge disseminated in primary or secondary school, there is good evidence demonstrating the power of such “advanced knowledge” or “advanced ideas” in shaping an individual’s future. Reeves (1988:36-43) acknowledges five aspects with regard to the value of knowledge in the growth and development of persons.

- Knowledge is for achieving competence in doing;
- Knowledge is for human understanding;
- Knowledge is for sustaining the experience of ‘difference’ in the search of truth;
- Knowledge is for enjoyment;
- Knowledge is for contemplation.

In a social sense, metaphorically, as we may have seen, knowledge serves as a bridge to power. Thus the practically weighty value of knowledge lies in the very fact that everyone needs “power to live their lives with power” (Reeves, 1988:35).

Another notable feature of higher education is its autonomous operation, which is intimately connected to the characteristic of knowledge. Clark (1983) summarizes the four characteristics of knowledge: specialties, autonomy, open-ended task and weighty legacies; thus he argues that it is discrete and imperfect. The dynamic and changing state of knowledge, combined with the traditional trust by the general public, foster for higher education a particular environment characterized by autonomy. Hence, down through the ages higher education institutions have performed their social role in a comparatively autonomous way.

In brief, the control over knowledge and its autonomous operations define HE as a sector distinguishing it from the other organizations, which for centuries has enjoyed prestige and great academic independence.

2.3.2 The goals of higher education

As a knowledge-based social structure, HE historically has its own specific goals, which, in a strict sense, are non-monetary. Although the goals might have been formulated centuries ago, many of them remain alive today. According to Barnett (1990:8-9), higher education is said to meet the following objectives:

- (1) the pursuit of truth and objective knowledge
- (2) Research
- (3) Liberal education
- (4) Institutional autonomy

- (5) Academic freedom
- (6) A neutral and open forum for debate
- (7) Rationality
- (8) The development of the students' critical abilities
- (9) The development of the student's autonomy
- (10) The student's character formation
- (11) Providing a critical centre within society
- (12) Preserving society's intellectual culture

(Cited in Duke, 1992:28-29)

Such a list of goals is common belief traditionally valued by higher education institutions as well as the general population, which greatly emphasises the cultivation of inward character or reasoning ability of students as individuals. Likewise, Hayton and Paczuska (2002) observe that higher education in its early stage kept striving to attain its objectives, which included: equal opportunities, empowerment, access to professional knowledge and pleasure in learning.

Yet time changes. Since the mid-1980s, there has been a wide recognition of changes in the goals of higher education. Two dimensions will be noticed here. The first is that besides the traditional conceptions of higher education long held in society, a consensus view to be found in the Western societies is that economic prosperity can be promised through the development of higher education. Never before has the world witnessed a firmer belief in the power of higher education to enhance economic competitiveness at both national and individual levels since the early 1990s. Hence, it is unsurprising when Lauder *et al.* (2006:1) state:

We live in an age where there is great optimism about the power of education to influence the well-being of individuals and nations. Parents and caregivers see education as a way for their children to improve on their own lives by building and understanding of their place in the world. It is also the principle means by which young people, by passing exams and gaining credentials, can gain an advantage in the labour market.

Such an account apparently suggests that a variety of values has been tied to higher education in this complex global world.

Second, it is important to point out that higher education in the new century shares massive missions, which in turn, causes great pressures in its practice. As has been

noted earlier, the prevailing capitalism significantly demonstrates the unprecedented zeal the globalizing world has for marketization as well as how the various social organizations have been passively impelled to action. Higher education is not immune to this trend and consequently has to redefine its goals and seek for an appropriate position within the society. Such awareness has been globally acknowledged and been manifested in policies at the national or supra-national level in the 21st century. For instance, as noted in the Secretary-General's Report to Ministers by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2010,

Skills and knowledge as catalysts for a new economy

Value chains are globalizing and changing at a rapid pace, with increased emphasis on knowledge as a driver of value and competitiveness. New skills, competencies and qualifications will be needed, generating enormous adjustment pressures as regards labour markets. We already observe an important change in policy focus from “life-long employment” to “life-long employability”. To make this happen, “life-long learning” will be one of the most important features in the successful economies of the future.

(Source: OECD, 2010, Secretary-General's report to ministers, page 18)

Realizing that we are now in a time of a new knowledge-based economy, the OECD spares no effort to urge its member countries to recognize the new demands and pressure on higher education. To put it another way, higher education is “increasingly expected to satisfy the economy and society, meet requirements for accountability, and build closer link with a variety of stakeholders” (OECD, 2008:45). Whilst there are clearly other implications drawn from such remarks, what is particularly worth mentioning is the coined term “life-long employability” in the OECD's report. Emphasizing the individual's ability to access employment in a life time, the term thus sends a clear message, presenting a highly demanding task for current higher education. In a similar fashion, Neave (2002) convincingly argues that in a globalizing society higher education is multi-purpose. In other words, it has to serve the society politically, economically and morally. Therefore, it is argued in the thesis that sticking to any one of such goals alone higher education will almost certainly fail to meet the aspirations of society and government generated by rapidly globalizing processes in this dynamic

and complex world. And it is at this point that the impact of globalization on higher education needs to be fully analysed.

2.3.3 The impact of globalization on higher education

The enormous impact of globalization upon higher education can be better understood in at least three aspects, namely, changing assumptions towards HE, managerialism in HE and the trend of internalization of HE.

1) Changing assumptions towards HE

Cavanagh and Mander (2002) note that globalization has a specific goal, that is, to give priority to corporate value and to promote it world-wide. Indeed, in parallel with the powerful economic force are three dominant ideologies or values derived from profit-centered private sectors. The first is capitalism. As a primary driver for global forces, capitalism facilitates the powerful and unforeseen movement of finance, turning the whole world into a global system of free markets. Consequently, it enhances the expansion of private sector values, such as efficiency, effectiveness and economy, in the public sector. The second is the dominance of consumerism. “Consumerism is a mobilizing force at the heart of twentieth-century social and political history” (Hilton, 2003:1). In other words, as Cross (2000:1) puts it, “consumerism was the ‘ism’ that won.” The third is called McDonaldization, which has achieved great success in the business world because it offers consumers, workers and manager efficiency, calculability, predictability and control (Ritzer, 1993). Hence, it is argued that ideologies and assumptions such as capitalism, consumerism and MacDonalidization have widely infiltrated into higher education, eventually suggesting a dominant conception of higher education: universities as corporations.

2) Managerialism in HE

The prevailing conception of education as business presents further immediate effects on higher education: managerialism. Such managerialism in higher education can be observed in two co-existing forms. On the one hand, the past two decades have seen a surge in new conceptions introduced into most areas of higher education. Duke (1992) proclaims that in the 1980s higher education in Britain borrowed a lot of managerial

vocabulary from the commercial world. Naidoo (2005:29) expands this scenario and points out that in a global context higher education is strikingly “reconceptualized as a commercial transaction.” On the other hand, the worldwide forces driven by economic globalization promote the ideology of managerialism in higher education, which suggests that “the quality of education can be guaranteed, or assured, through accountability mechanisms”(Ashcroft, 1995:50). To put it another way, higher education institutions have been reshaped to be like business firms. The focus of higher education is increasingly on consumers’ needs rather than “the quality or robustness of knowledge itself” (Naidoo, 2005:30). In general, Middlehurst and Kennie’s (1997:57-58) summary of changes in the public sector might be helpful in identifying how such transformation has been taking place (see Table 2.1 and Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 Some of the principal changes in the operating environments of higher education institutions in the UK: 1985-1995

<i>From</i>	<i>TO</i>
1 Limited access to HE	1 Wider access/increased availability of HE
2 Broadly homogeneous providers	2 Heterogeneous providers
3 Limited delivery modes	3 Variety of delivery modes
4 Academic autonomy	4 Accountability to stakeholders
5 Limited competition	5 Heightened competition and increased resource pressures

Table 2.2 Some of the principal changes affecting university ‘professionals’: 1985-1995

<i>From</i>	<i>TO</i>
1 Security of tenure	1 Fixed and short-term contracts
2 Emphasis on technical/professional skills	2 Emphasis on professional and management skills
3 Self-monitoring	3 External performance evaluation
4 Limited training and career development	4 Professional development emerging

Understandably, in the changed environment, particularly under the pressure of globalization, universities are frequently viewed as inefficient institutions that need to be managed in a better way. Thus the common sense solution is that “their efficiency will be improved by a series of external interventions, implemented largely top-down, and drawn in the main from the management practices and reward systems of other kinds of organization” (Duke, 1992:12). Hence, “vice-chancellors become CEOs of a

firm; the administration, top heavy with managers, dictates policy and such matters as what courses are to be taught and what are to be cut”(Biggs and Tang, 2007:3). As the world continues to be driven by market-based globalization, the assumption that higher education should act in the way business firms run has never wavered during the past decades. Rather, it is strengthened and highlighted.

3) The trend of internationalization of HE

Between 24 and 26 March 2010, Going Global 4, an international education conference, was held in London, attracting 1200 delegates from 80 countries. Indeed, such efforts to enhance global presence can be observed almost everywhere in the field of higher education. Take, for example, the lines of advertisements by two universities in *Times Higher Education Supplement* (8 October 2009:xiii, xv):

Monash University

Australian origins
Global future

Climate change, war, disease—in turbulent time global solutions can only be delivered by harnessing knowledge and perspectives from a number of nations.

Singapore’s Science and Technology University (NTU)

Top-ranked university
Globally-relevant

Cosmopolitan campus for 30,000 students and 5,000 faculty and staff from more than 50 countries.

Rapid changes in the world, undoubtedly, have altered the way universities package themselves in order to meet the demands of a global market. With a focus on a global solution to the crisis in the current “turbulent” world, Monash University highlights the conception and assumption of global regionalism which is unambiguously expressed in “Australian origin” and “global future”. Providing detailed figures of the staff and international students with diversified cultural backgrounds, the advertisement of NTU in Singapore conveys a strikingly similar message: the NTU is going global. In fact, the list of such examples can be expanded. All indications are that the global changes

in the field of economy and culture have been unpredictably radical and the desire of universities to integrate into the global world has been more than enthusiastic.

Of the various forms of globalization of higher education, global student mobility is probably the most prominent. With a global flow of ideas, knowledge and information, which is driven by economic and cultural globalization, the number of international students in higher education has risen sharply in the past decades (Bruch and Barty, 1998; Sadlak, 1998; Gibbons, 1998). OECD statistics show that in the past three decades the number of foreign enrollment worldwide has increased dramatically from 0.6 millions in 1975 to 2.7 millions in 2004 (OECD, 2006:287) (see Figure 2.2). In some popular destinations for international students such as the UK, international students have even become financially important supporters of higher education (Bruch and Barty, 1998). In Australia, international students greatly increase the export income (Sidhu, 2006). In the European Union (EU), efforts have been made to enhance student mobility in order to promote internationalization of higher education (Teichler, 1998).

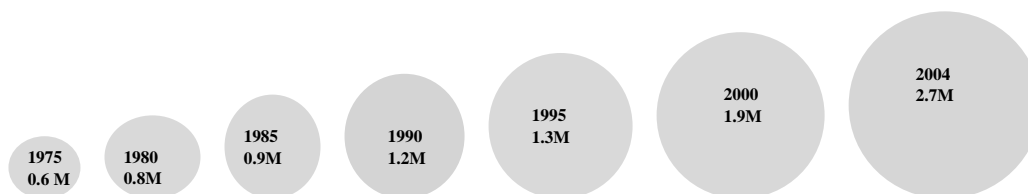


Figure 2.2 Growth in internationalization of tertiary education (1975-2004)

(Source: OECD, 2006:287)

Meanwhile, the growing demand for high-quality and globally comparative knowledge invites more higher education institutions to promote internationalization and standardization of curricula to meet the needs of students at home and abroad. This could be further elaborated in two aspects. On the one hand, universities tend to increase their international attraction by delivering knowledge through the medium of English language. On the other hand, more standardized curricula or modules have been developed with more focus on instilling awareness of global citizenship and cross-cultural communication.

Last but not least, the last decade has also seen a rising tide of exchange of research and academics in higher education on a global scale. Sidhu (2006) argues that in the context of globalization only competitive universities can attract more enrolment and funding. To achieve such an aim, universities have to act positively to adapt to the new challenges. Many exchange schemes or funds have been established, such as the Fulbright programme in the USA and educational programmes in the EU to enhance research exchanges and cooperation between universities. In addition, the strong desire to acquire a world-class reputation promotes keen competition among universities, which can be clearly illustrated in yearly-published league tables of world-class universities and various performance indicators. Universities are all seeking to hold a better place in the international or national league tables, which undoubtedly suggests a higher reputation and more economic benefits for the universities in the near future. Hence, globalization has undoubtedly exerted profound impact upon higher education, which tremendously changes the nature and the mission of higher education as well as the way higher education restructures itself to adapt to the changing context. In the next section, an attempt will be made to picture a sub-sphere of higher education, namely, English language education, and investigate how global forces have affected it in terms of policy and practice.

2.4 Globalization and English language education

2.4.1 English—the global language

In a figurative way, language has long been likened to a “key” with which new doors will be opened and great opportunities be followed. This analogy finds fulfilment in the 21st century when global forces have generated unprecedented linguistic trends, among which English as a global language is the most prominent. In general, two aspects are said to account for the wide spread of English, the first being migration of people from the United Kingdom to America, Australia and New Zealand in the sixteenth century, the second being England’s colonization of Asia and Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Jenkins, 2003). According to Crystal (1997),

English is now widely spoken in about seventy-five lands either as ENL (English as a Native Language) or ESL (English as a Second Language). In the rest of the world population there are increasing speakers of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or EIL (English as an International Language) whose number is currently estimated between 500 million to 1,000 million. Kachru (1988:5) proposes a model of three concentric circles to illustrate the spreading of English as a global language in the world (cited in Crystal, 2003:31) (see Figure 2.3).

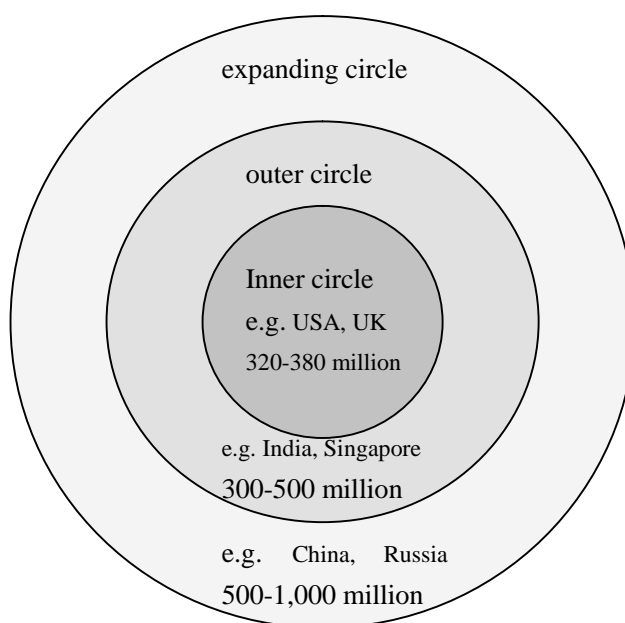


Figure 2.3 Concentric circles of English
Source: Kachru (1988:5)

From the chart, we clearly find English today enjoyed by human beings as a whole and there is every sign that this forward momentum continues. A language becomes a global language “when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” (Crystal, 2003:3). Then what goes on behind the scenes to help English to maintain global dominant status? From a broad perspective, Crystal(1997) argues that six major factors account for the global dominance of English, namely, historical reasons, internal political reasons, external economic reasons, practical reasons, intellectual reasons and entertainment reasons. Jenkins (2003) further elaborates Crystal’s comments and suggests personal prestige to be added as the seventh reason. Still, factors available to contribute to the global status of English are not limited to those

mentioned above. For instance, “Global citizenship” is promised for people through English learning. Therefore, “the Lisbon Council conclusion signaled foreign language as one of the ‘new basic skills’ (with IT entrepreneurship and social skills) for the citizen as a future worker” (Lisbon European Council, 2000, cited in Footitt, 2003:76).

2.4.2 English as linguistic capital

Although “people have always learned languages for economic reasons” (Block and Cameron, 2002:5), this has never been better illustrated than in this global knowledge-based world. Like everything else in the competitive global market, languages, primarily just emblems of traditional cultures or national identity, are strikingly being viewed as consumer goods. Or in a vivid term by Bourdieu (1991:66), in the new knowledge economy, foreign languages are seen as valuable “linguistic capital”. Truchot (1997:76) insightfully identifies four factors in relation to why English is favoured in the global “linguistic market”.

Very few languages share the market of international linguistic exchanges. To get a fair share of that market it is necessary for a language to fulfil a number of conditions, that is, an important demographic weight, strong economic support, a previously established international spread, and a high level of modernization. Only English fulfils all these conditions.....most languages are more or less excluded from the “linguistic market”.

English thus serves as access to knowledge and information and is directly linked to high reward, well-paid jobs as well as positions of prestige in a society. In other words, English is viewed as a reliable “linguistic refuge” which can offer people adequate shelter in this unpredictably changing world culturally, socially and most important, economically. Therefore it is reasonable to argue that English language education serves to promote engagement into a global world at both national and individual levels.

2.4.3 The impact of globalization on English language education

The dominant global status of English, coupled with the commodification of English undoubtedly has far-reaching effect on English language education. To begin with, the complexity of translation does not lie only in the process of translating the message but in the political policy and government agenda concerning English language education from compulsory education to higher education. “Realizing that English is the medium of a great deal of the world’s knowledge more and more governments world-wide have recently made English either an official language or their chief foreign language in educational agenda”(Crystal, 2003:110). Consequently, governments’ intervention into English language education has become frequent and language education policy has been decided in a more responsive way (Kubota, 2002; Block and Cameron, 2002).

Second, with the changes of people’s attitudes and expectations in the society for English proficiency, language education is forced to be reformed to meet the higher demands of the international and national economic development, which involves the change of teaching ideology, new techniques in teaching and teaching methods and course design.

Third, as English is being marketized, English education in many countries has become a new industry generating great profit, which eventually puts English language teaching, whether in primary schools or higher education, under great pressure.

Finally, in a linguistic sense, as English has gone through drastic changes with so many varieties, concerns are raised about which English is standard and which should be inculcated in classrooms (Quirk, 1990; Kachru, 1997).

To sum up, it is clear that much the same kinds of challenges and pressures generated by globalization have been seen in English language education worldwide. In other words, just as Block and Cameron (2002:2) say, “globalization changes the conditions in which language learning and language teaching take place.” It is therefore argued that educational practitioners in the field of English language education, too, in order to cope with the global movement to satisfy the need of individual and society, must change to fit into the dramatically changing world.

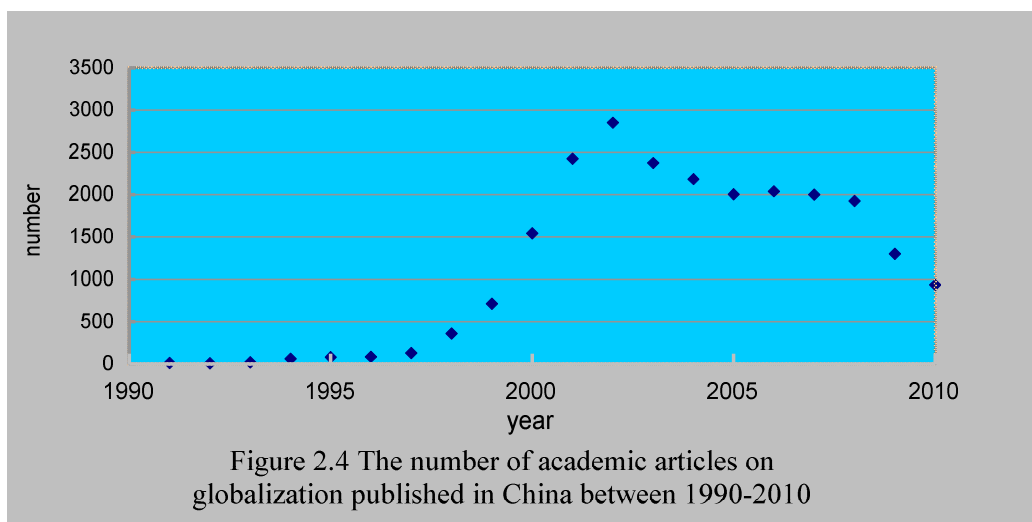
So far a point has been reached that catalyzed by rapid flow and interaction of capital,

information and people, globalization has generated a set of social changes which then result in great challenges in terms of economic, political and cultural structures at the global level. It is argued that this global movement has also profoundly infiltrated into individual nation states, which then is mediated by nation states in terms of their different political, economic and cultural conditions. Therefore, it is in this context that the next section will look at how this global trend makes its presence in China.

2.5 Globalization and China

2.5.1 *The study of globalization in China*

Unsurprisingly, globalization, which can be rightly described as the very giver of “challenges and pressure” to the world, presents itself as the most heated topic among Chinese academics since the 1990s and continues to remain the issue of most concern at the beginning of new millennium (Wu, 1989; Li, 1993; Sun, 1996; Cai, 1997; Yu, 1999; Long, 2000; Xiang, 2008; Zhang, 2009). According to Yu (1993), the study of globalization in China dates back to a lecture in 1993 by Arif Dirlik, an American historian, and the discussions on his lecture. CJFD (Chinese Journal Full-text Database) statistics indicate that the number of academic papers published in China related to globalization was only 19 before 1990. However, it rocketed to over 11,000 after entering the new century and had dropped only slightly by the end of 2010. Figure 2.4 shows the number of relevant academic papers published yearly between 1990 and 2010.



Source: CJFD (Chinese Journal Full-text Database), 2011

In general, literature available on globalization in China has shed light on the multifaceted presence of globalization in this Asian country as well as its unprecedented effects upon its society. There are three key themes shaping the existing relevant literature in China, that is, what globalization is, what challenges flow from globalization and how China becomes more responsive to globalization, which also serve as the basic concerns for the discussion in the thesis.

First of all, globalization is more viewed by Chinese scholars as a fact rather than illusion or fantasy. In other words, globalization is considered as an objective and complicated historical process after World War II and the major trend in a knowledge-based economy (Pang, 1994; Tang, 2000). Sun (1996:35), in particular, sees globalization as a two-way force, when he argues that globalization should be acknowledged in two different senses:

In a narrow sense, globalization refers to the process in which the isolated nations or regions integrate into the international world; in a broad sense, with the growing interconnectedness in the global economy and culture, the homogenization of human life in all nation-states will contribute to the popularization and standardization of common cultural patterns at the global scale.

In terms of the nature of globalization, the dominant view in the literature is presented by Yu (2002:30), a notable Chinese scholar on globalization, when he says, “Globalization is a reasonable paradox: it is the combination of generality and particularity; of internationalization and localization; as well as of centralization and decentralization”.

Besides, there has also been research on the challenges globalization has brought about to China. Chen (1995:66) suggests that besides the intensive competition in foreign investment, “issues with technology transfer, cultural differences and ideology collision have been emerging frequently”. Yu (2002) argues that globalization not only threatens the economic system of China but saps its state sovereignty as well. He then claims that globalization in China implies a process of modernization with Chinese characteristics. This point of view is echoed by other scholars who advocate a positive

attitude towards globalization as globalization affords a special and real opportunity for China to pursue prosperity in the new century (Xiong, 2003).

Finally, researchers have also placed emphasis on current governmental and institutional responses to globalization. Long (2000), for instance, has recognized the need for the Chinese government to more greatly appreciate the increasingly global context as well as improve citizens' awareness of observing international economic rules. This view is also shared by many other writers who argue that the question for China is not whether it should embrace globalization or not, but how to embrace it fully.

In conclusion, academic research in China shows that there has been a wide recognition of the new global age characterized by free-market and knowledge-based economy in China, which then profoundly affects Chinese politics, economy and culture. Therefore, in what follows the impact of globalization upon China will be examined in detail.

2.5.2 The impact of globalization on China

The past two decades unquestionably witnessed China having a share in the course of globalization. The first manifestation of the impact of globalization in China can be recognized as China's engagement with the global community in terms of economy. According to Cai (2008), the onward march of globalization in China is coupled with the reforming of China which started in the late 1970s. In a sense, China, by carrying out a reform policy and opening up to the outside world, showed that all its preparation was in place for embracing the global community. "In a symbolical sense, China's entry into the WTO on November 11, 2001 marked China's real reintegration into the global economy" (Long, 2000:2). Such economic reintegration can be best observed in the two forces of expansion. On the one hand, in the past two decades multinational companies have flocked into China, covering a wide variety of sectors, such as industry, electricity, banking, trade, etc. On the other hand, powerful domestic multinational corporations are expanding their operations across the world. These two-way forces of multinationals are inextricably intertwined in the economic

development of China, leading to China's constantly rapid economic growth. In 2010, FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in China had grown to \$ 105.74 billions (*The South China Morning Post*, 19/01/2011) and in the last quarter of 2010 China surpassed Japan as the second-biggest economy in the world. Driven by the powerful and sustainable global and local economy, during the past three decades, China's average quarterly GDP growth was nearly 10%, ranking the top in the world. With the biggest and the booming new market in the world, China is being recognized as the biggest beneficiary and active player in the trend of globalization (Wang, 2008).

Another manifestation of globalization in China is the popularity of Western ideologies and values, evidenced by the purchasing of standardized cultural goods and a craze for western lifestyles. In the field of cultural globalization, the most common theme occurring in China is the dispute over the relationship between the prevailing global culture and Chinese traditional culture. Lu (1997) states that globalization encourages the interaction between Chinese culture and foreign cultures, leading to a multi-cultural society, yet he also argues that such global forces almost inevitably erode the traditional Chinese culture, which is largely based on Confucianism. Du (2010) has recently examined how ancient Confucian morals are greatly challenged by the global Western values, suggesting that China needs to keep a balance between maintaining its traditional morals and borrowing ideas from Western democracy to build up a civil society.

A final manifestation of the profound influence of globalization, then, would be upon Chinese politics. Su (2008) points out that in parallel with the centrally planned economic system replaced by a more market-oriented system, its central government increasingly faces a dilemma. It confronts the pressure caused by decentralization; meanwhile, it is forced to distribute its power to international or regional organizations to deal with the increasingly thorny global problems.

In sum, all these studies suggest that there are different powerful global forces interacting in China and it is at times difficult to separate those forces, which in turn generates great pressures in the Chinese society. Given such a situation, failing to develop an appreciation of the complexity of the mediation of global forces will undoubtedly lead to poor competitiveness in a global market-oriented world at both

national and institutional levels.

Hence, with global forces continuing to expand in China, leading to tensions and challenges in society, it is sensible to argue that it has also infiltrated into Chinese education, in particular its higher education.

2.6 Globalization and Chinese higher education

In stark contrast with higher education in the Western world, there was a low rate of development of Chinese higher education decades ago. However, since the late 1990s, rapid global forces have transformed Chinese higher education from a sector with peripheral influence to one with central significance in Chinese society. The rise of higher education, of course, must be deeply understood first against a backdrop of globalization and then the social and economic contexts of China.

In a general sense, two domestic factors account for such drastic changes in China's higher education. The first is concerned with China's successful entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). As a direct result of enjoying membership of the WTO, China has to open up its domestic market which was long closed to the outside world, and be propelled to take part in global competition. Its higher education sector is of no exception. Li and Xing (2004:28) put it:

The influence of WTO educational service trade on higher education is both intensive and extensive. Internationalization of higher education will be the prevailing theme in the higher education reform. Chinese higher education will be forced to rationalize its structure, educational ideology, cultivation of talents, teaching content, curricula and educational fund raising.

The second factor is the crisis in consciousness of the Chinese government when facing the rapidly changing world as well as its ambitions to be an active player in the new global forces with its people equipped with international awareness and skills. Following such ideology, upon seeing the huge need for higher education, the Chinese government reshaped the higher education system in the late 1990s, allowing a large-scale expansion of colleges and universities. Between 1949 and 2009, the number

of Chinese institutions of higher education dramatically increased from 206 with an enrolment of 0.16 million to 2,300 with an enrolment of 29 million (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Expansion of higher education in China

Year	Students	Universities and colleges
1949	0.16 million	206
2009	29 million	2,300

Source: The Chinese Ministry of Education, 2009 (cited in *China Daily*, 22/07/2009, page 4)

Meanwhile, there seems no doubt of the Chinese government’s determination to enhance the quality in higher education so as to cultivate internationally competitive talents under global pressure. In November 1995, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the *Overall Construction Plan of 211 Project*, aiming to “build up 100 leading universities in China which are strongly backed up by state funding” (Wang and Liu, 2009:20). Three years later, in May 1998, the former President Jiang Zemin addressed the congratulation assembly of the 100th anniversary of Peking University, proposing that “for accomplishing modernizations, China shall own dozens of world-class universities” (Wang and Liu, 2009:24). In order to fulfil this expectation, in January 1999, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued *Facing 21st century: The Education Action Plan* supporting dozens of Chinese Universities to become top universities in the world in 10 to 20 years. What followed was the launch of a government key funding project, the “985 Project” (named to correspond with the time of Jiang’s speech). The preface of *The National Development Plan Outline for Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010—2020)* states clearly that higher education has a significant role to play in the Chinese context, which is now to be seen as a global one:

We are now living in a period of rapid development, great adjustment and dramatic transition. With the deepening of world diversity and economic globalization as well as the rapidly advancing of science and technology, the competition of international talents is becoming increasingly fierce. China is currently at a crucial stage for its reform and development.....we are under great pressure in terms of population, resources and environment. Our economic growth mode has changed rapidly. All these indicate an important

and urgent call for improving the quality of Chinese citizen and the cultivation of innovative talents. Education is basic to the training of talents for the rejuvenation and development of China in the future.

(Source: Ministry of Education, *The National Development Plan Outline for Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010—2020)*, 2010c)

In July 2010, the Chinese President, Hu Jintao, made a speech at the National Educational Work Conference, in which he emphasized that human capital has been seen as a necessary tool to facilitate China's economic, social and cultural development in this global world.

As science and technology is making progress with each passing day, knowledge has increasingly become a critical factor to promote overall national strength and international competitiveness. Human capital has become a strategic resource to promote social-economic development. Science and technology, education and the competition of international talents are playing a more and more important role in the competition of overall national strength. Hence, the competition of overall national strength in the global world today is actually a competition of quality of citizens. Education is the foundation for improving science and moral quality of Chinese citizens, developing science and technology and fostering talents.

(Source: Ministry of Education, Speech at the National Educational Work Conference by Hu Jintao, 2010b)

Thus, by carrying out an increasing number of national initiatives to expand the size and to reinforce the quality of higher education, Chinese government has made a commitment to create a globally competitive and flexible workforce to meet the new challenges in the globalizing age.

In a broad sense, globalization exerts both positive and negative impacts upon Chinese higher education. Yue (2004:208-210) summarizes six significant impacts globalization has upon Chinese higher education:

- 1) *Decentralization*— The government's role has been limited to macro-guidance, macro-coordination and macro-control supported by society;
- 2) *Depoliticization*— Universities began to study market needs and the curriculum is designed with a focus on applicability and practicality. The

relationship between the state and college students has been changed. Students pay for education and choose the subject they like;

- 3) *Diversification*—There are diversified ways of running education institutions as well as multi-channel fund-raising;
- 4) *Commercialization*—Education must meet societal and economic needs. Students are given opportunities to select what educational products they prefer to pay for;
- 5) *Competition*— Governments at both national and provincial levels support the leading universities, which generates keen competition among higher education institutions to strive for more funds;
- 6) *Co-operation*— Co-operation between universities and governments at different levels is growing. Meanwhile, universities and enterprises are encouraged to make joint efforts to promote social and economic benefits of research projects.

A similar emphasis is found in an examination of direct and indirect influences of the WTO on the Chinese education system. Ding *et al.* (2009) point out three major aspects profoundly affected by global forces, namely, the increase in the demand for education overseas and in the number of foreign students studying in China; the cooperation between China and educational institutions overseas as well as China's administrative and legal framework for education. Meanwhile, a few studies have also attempted to explore the reasons why the development of Chinese higher education fails to satisfy the need of China's fast economic growth. For instance, Sun (2002) provides an insightful analysis of the challenges which China's higher education faces, which involve the marketization of higher education, internalization of higher education and modernization of higher education. She subsequently remarks that whilst China will definitely have to make persistent effort to meet domestic market needs, its higher education institutions also need to accelerate their engagement with international communities to provide qualified talent to deal with both domestic and international affairs. After exploring how Chinese higher education responds to the financial pressure, Fan (2006) points out that the decrease in funds is the major reason which compels the education institutions to be marketized. Gao (2002) argues that with China's entering the WTO, the traditional Chinese educational system will be under

attack. Meanwhile, more and more advanced foreign courses and course books will be introduced, which will greatly challenge Chinese education market.

In general, the implications of such arguments are clear, that is, as a consequence of the irresistible market-oriented globalization higher education in China is bound to come under huge pressure.

2.7 Globalization and English language education in China

2.7.1 English language education in China—a brief survey

A starting point for understanding China's English language education is to review a little of the history of language education since the foundation of the People's Republic of China. Indeed, across much of the Chinese leadership, over the past half century, there has been a radical change concerning which foreign languages Chinese should learn due to the changing specific global economic and political context. As a result of the friend-like relationship between China and the former Soviet Union, Russian was once undisputedly selected by the government as the No.1 foreign language taught in schools. From the early 1960s and especially after China's regaining its position in the United Nations (UN) in 1971, English began to replace Russian and became the No.1 foreign language in school syllabuses.

English language education in China's higher education has passed through phases in which its aims and orientation have been changed. In terms of educational policies, Chen *et al.* (2009: 11-14) identifies four phases in the development of China's English language education in HE:

- 1) The initial phase (1949-1985) — In making the second five-year plan, the central government came to realize that emphasis on English education would help to assimilate and draw upon the advanced science and technology in developed countries. Consequently, English education was expanded following the first English teaching curriculum—the English Education Curriculum (draft edition) in 1962. But English education came to almost a complete stop during the 10-year so called “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’. After the campaign ended in 1976, English again became the imperative task for China's foreign

language education, leading to the subsequent official issuing of *College English Syllabus (for Science and engineering students)* in 1985 and *College English Syllabus (for arts students)* in 1986.

- 2) The formative phase (1986-1998) — Along with issuing of two syllabi was the implementation of the national English test termed *College English Test Band 4*(CET 4) in 1987. Subsequently, a series of nation-wide educational policies on the demand for English literacy was carried out. English became one of the compulsory subjects for the national entrance examination for college.
- 3) The adjustment and reform phase (1999-2002) — In 1999, the *College English Syllabus* (Modified) was introduced by the Ministry of Education, making the pass of the national College English Test Band 4(CET 4) one of the basic requirements for undergraduates to get a bachelor's degree. Later the same year saw the establishment of oral English test within CET system. Meanwhile, English became one of the subjects in primary schools in developed coastal cities.
- 4) The improving and deepening phase (2002 to the present) —In July 2007, the Ministry of Education revised and enacted a formal finalization of the *College English Curriculum Requirements* with a focus on improving students' listening and speaking ability of English. There was also a strong focus on building College English as a fine course in leading universities. Since 2003, a total amount of over twenty million *yuan* has been offered for 180 institutions in higher education to carry out college English reform.

As the above discussion shows, over decades, the Chinese government has relentlessly emphasized that English is of the utmost importance. Then what prompted that initiative? The answer seems to be a demand to make the nation return to the global track and stand firmly on the global stage.

2.7.2 The roles of English in China

In exploring the roles of English in both higher education and Chinese society, there are always mixed feelings involved. English has long remained a subject in Chinese classrooms, with its primarily educational role in schools and universities. With the approaching of a global world, however, an increasing number of new interpretations and values have been attached to “English”, including democracy, quality, imperialism,

liberation, prosperity, success, information, to mention just a few. Even in the 1999 *College English Syllabus* (Modified) it is clearly stated: “English is a course for integrative purposes” (Dong, 2000:4). Almost overnight, English has begun to fulfil multiple crucial roles in the government agenda and Chinese citizens’ lives (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Roles of English in China

<i>Perspective</i>	<i>Roles performed</i>
Diplomatic	Maintain productive relationship with Western countries
Political	Target the national agenda for prosperity in the 21 st century
Economic	Sustain the rapid growth of economy/create adaptable and global talents
Cultural	Access to Western values and lifestyles as well as pop culture
Individual	Access to better employment and prestige in society

A diplomatic and political perspective: The foreign language education policy in a nation is always associated with its diplomatic agenda, economic trade, and science and technology development (Hu, 2001). Early in the 1960s, the leadership had stressed the importance of English education in furthering and improving diplomatic relations with Western countries. Therefore English education has been greatly stressed in China’s curriculum as it supports “the national agenda of opening up to the West” (Fallahi *et al.*, 2010:48).

An economic perspective: China’s entry into WTO as well as its successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games and 2010 Shanghai World Expo suggests quite a change both in its domestic economic context and in the Chinese government’s requirements for its national workforces. In a speech delivered at the meeting on the *Pilot programme for College English Reform* in 2006, Wu Qidi, former Vice Minister of Education, pointed out that English would serve as a means to promote international competitive ability, and high-quality talents with international competitiveness should be cultivated to meet the need of social and economic development in China(Wu, 2006).

A cultural perspective: Uncontrollable globalization not only enormously highlights

the growing intimacy of the social-institutional relationship both temporally and spatially, but also stresses the homogenization of human life in all nation-states. Therefore, to embrace the new Western lifestyle and popular American culture, English becomes the best medium and provides the opportunity, particularly for the younger generation.

An individual perspective: Successful employment is heavily dependent on English proficiency in Chinese society (Shen, 2006). English has become one of the basic skills one should master if one wants to have an advantage in dealing with the new competitive global economy. Hence English means better employment and a door open to wealth and opportunities.

2.7.3 The impact of globalization on China's English language education

The general impact of globalization upon English language education in China takes various forms, some overt, some subtle. Three in particular seem to stand out. The first impact of globalization on China's English language education is the obsession with English in all walks of life. "English seems to turn up everywhere." (Pennycook, 1994:4) In China, "a man with inability to speak English is just like a man with a light purse" (Feng, 2003:2). The charm of English is almost certainly magnified a thousand-fold as the total amount of time spent for every student on English learning from primary school to college is as long as 12 years (Chen, 2000).

The second impact of globalization on English language education might be the booming of the English education market in China. Catalyzed by the increasing economic value of English in China, foreign education enterprises flock into China, generating fierce competition in terms of English training, course books and English learning software in China's domestic market. Statistics show that in the beginning of 2000, there were 4,000 English training companies in China, with more than 1,000 in Shanghai (Feng and Ke, 2003). Meanwhile, bilingual education is also in fresh demand. Myriad private bilingual kindergartens and primary schools and secondary schools have been established.

The ultimate impact is the remarkable movement towards the restructuring and reforming of English teaching in China's higher education (Cai, 2006; Li and Hao, 2009; Wu, 2002; Liu, 2002). Issues relating to standardized English and English localization have been given much consideration in the age of globalization (Zhou, 2006). Wang (2009) proposes that Chinese higher education should make efforts to redefine the goals of English education as well as teaching contents and methodologies in the globalizing world. Lu and Luo (2003) emphasize the role of market need in English teaching in higher education, and then conclude that more needs to be done in terms of curriculum reform, course design, learning environment and teaching staff training and assessment. The hallmark of contemporary English education in the world is the wide-spread use of the internet and technology. Therefore, wide access to multimedia technology in English education should be given priority (Luo *et al.*, 2003).

In brief, globalization has dramatically changed the way the Chinese government and Chinese people think and conceive of English as a language. In other words, in the context of globalization, in trying to mediate various pressures, the Chinese government increasingly sees English language education as one of the best investments it can make in facilitating domestic economic growth and training workforces with the desired linguistic skills to compete in the global market. Such belief was best illustrated in a speech on the implementation of College English reform by Zhang Yaoxue, the former director of Higher Education Division of the Chinese Ministry of Education, in 2008.

Our goal now is to train our students to be able to be fluent in international communication, so that in 10 years, or 20 years later they will serve as a state and society's elite as well as active high-quality personnel, making a difference in the international arena. To do so, there is little doubt that we have to learn foreign language (English). The issues remaining to deal with are "What should we learn about English?" and "How to learn English?" Besides, we should also consider setting attainable goals as well as other issues such as the internal and external conditions of foreign language teaching and appropriate teaching methodologies.

(Source: College English Teaching Reform Bulletin (13) (excerpt))

According to Zhang Xinsheng, the former Vice Minister of the Chinese Ministry of

Education, China needs tens of millions of highly competitive internationalized talents with global horizon and international communication ability to respond creatively to the global changes (Ministry of Education, 2004d).

After our entry into WTO, the competition of talents will be assessed in both number and quality. For instance, higher and higher demands are proposed on the performance of applicants for international organizations in terms of global horizon, foreign language proficiency, communication ability, knowledge structure as well as managerial skills.....

(Source: Ministry of Education, WTO and China Higher Education by Zhang Xinsheng, 2004d)

To achieve such aspiration, English proficiency then lies at the core of cultivation of internationalized talents with global horizons and international communication ability. Therefore, Zhang Yaoxue, the former director of the Higher Education Division of the Chinese Ministry of Education, points out that English competence serves as both a tool for international communication and a powerful weapon to succeed in international competition (Zhang, 2002).

Understandably, this reciprocally has enormous implications for English language education in China's HEIs in terms of the national policies, teaching goals and concerns, teachers' and students' attitudes towards English courses as well as the quality of English teaching.

2.7.4 The impact of globalization on English language education in China's HEIs

In the twenty-first century, with the rapid growth of China's economy, China has accelerated its engagement into globalization. Under such a backdrop, English has been closely tied to promoting China's international competitiveness, which was demonstrated in a speech made by Wu Qidi, the former Vice Minister of Chinese Ministry of Education at a video conference of College English Teaching Reform Pilot Work in 2004.

...As the world has entered the new century, especially after China's entering World Trade Organization and Beijing's successful bidding for 2008 Olympic

Games and Shanghai's bidding for the World Expo 2010, China has become more open and embraced more opportunities to make closer contact with the outside world. Under such historical and social context, English is not only a tool for communication and negotiation; it is also a means to promote our international competitiveness.....Armed with English as our "weapon", we can participate in international competition in a more effective and efficient way. To provide high quality talents with international competition ability to meet the needs in social, economic, technical and cultural fields, we must strengthen and improve our English language teaching in higher education.

(Source: Ministry of Education, The speech made at a video Conference of College English Teaching Reform Pilot Work by Wu Qidi, 2004c)

As a matter of fact, seeing English language education as a strategy to adapt to the trend of globalization and to train highly-skilled talents with ability for international communication as well as international cooperative awareness is a belief widespread in the Chinese government. In discussing the influence of China's entry into WTO upon education and its resolutions, Chen Zhili, one of the State Councilors, states:

In higher education priority should be given to improve the quality of talents. Reform should be carried out to promote quality education by redesigning the curriculum, course book, teaching methodology and assessment system in order to cultivate students' novelty and practical ability....Teaching our students to speak foreign language proficiently, particularly English, should be seen as a strategic job.

(Source: Ministry of Education, The Influence of China's Entry into WTO Upon Education and its Resolutions by Chen zhili, 2004b)

Therefore, since the late 1990s, with the profound changes in global and national context, the distinctive and significant role English plays in China's active participation in globalization has become a dominant issue in the agenda of China's higher education. In other words, English language education in higher education has been associated with China's competitiveness on the global stage and been designed to cater for the demands of China's development as a whole nation. This was clearly stressed in China's College English Teaching Reform Research Conference held by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2010.

As an important part of *HEIs' Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project*, College English Teaching Reform is a significant breakthrough in HEIs' talents cultivation and teaching reform as it is particularly crucial to the nurture of internationalized personnel as well as China's increasingly strengthened international competitiveness.

(Source: Ministry of Education, Memo of China's College English Teaching Reform Research Conference, 2010a)

Such statements echo Lingard's (2000) view that the recent restructuring of education systems can be viewed as a means of adapting to globalization.

In general, the impact of globalization on English language education in China's HEIs can be conceptualized in three specific areas: national English language education policies, teaching practice and quality of English language education.

In terms of national policies, with the aim of developing its workforce with globally marketable linguistic skill, the Chinese government kept reshaping the English course and reforming the English language teaching by successively issuing national syllabi and continuous investment at university level as follows:

(1) *College English Syllabus (for Science and Engineering students)* in 1985 and *College English Syllabus (for Arts students)* in 1986

In a strict sense, the official issuing of *College English Syllabus (for Science and Engineering students)* in 1985 (CSCE, 1985) and *College English Syllabus (for Arts students)* in 1986 (CSCE, 1986) marked the beginning of the reform of English teaching in China's universities. Along with these two syllabi was the implementation of the national English test termed College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) in 1987. As a consequence, English became one of the compulsory subjects for the national entrance examination for college, which to a great extent forced all would-be college students to struggle for English learning in order to access higher education. In these two syllabi, reading was considered as the primary objective of English language education in China's HEIs.

(2) *College English Syllabus (Modified)* in 1999

In 1999, the *College English Syllabus (Modified)* was released by the Ministry of Education. Compared to the former two editions of 1985 and 1986, with English still remaining compulsory for all undergraduates, this modified syllabus aimed at developing four basic English skills in students through:

- applying the unified syllabus for all undergraduates at colleges and universities throughout the county;
- highly focusing on “continuous English learning” during a four-year college study, that is, besides earning compulsory credits by attending the *College English* course in their first two years, all the undergraduates should take corresponding professional English courses in their third or fourth year during university study;
- making passing the national College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) one of the basic requirements for undergraduates to get a Bachelors’ degree;
- vigorously promoting the multi-media courseware in English teaching.

Compared to the previous syllabus, there was some quantitative modification in terms of four English skills for English course. However, the fundamentals of the *College English syllabus* in 1999 remained unchanged, with reading skills as its primary focus.

(3) *College English Curriculum Requirements* in 2007.

In July 2007, the Ministry of Education revised and enacted a formal finalization of the *College English Curriculum Requirements*, in which it is clearly stated that the goal of issuing the syllabus is to “develop students’ ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking...so as to meet the needs of China’s social development and international exchanges” (*College English Curriculum Requirements*, 2007:1). Specifically speaking, it aims to deepen *College English* reform all round in terms of teaching objectives, teaching requirements, course design, teaching model, assessment as well as teaching administration.

In this latest syllabus, a number of distinct beliefs and strategies are emerging, which are indicative of attempts and endeavors to redesign and redefine the English language education in HEIs. The new features include:

- The primary objective of *College English* is to develop students’ English

comprehension and communication competence, with focus on English listening and speaking skills;

- English course design is required to be more comprehensive and meet students' needs at different levels;
- The English course is to be delivered at three different levels: basic requirements, higher requirements and advanced requirements;
- Course requirements for each level are given in details qualitatively and quantitatively;
- The teaching model should be shifted from a teacher-centered pattern to a learner-centered pattern and combined with advanced information technology;
- The teaching should combine traditional face-to-face instruction with computer-based learning;
- Special attention should be given to develop students' independent learning ability;
- Cultural knowledge should be incorporated into the course to cultivate students' cultural awareness;
- The course assessment focuses on process rather than result, calling for a combination of formative assessment and summative assessment;
- The establishment of a standardized teaching and teaching documentation system.

Ruan and James Jacob (2009) argue that *College English Curriculum Requirements* in 2007 indicates both physical and theoretical change in the College English domain. To be specific, on the one hand, the effective implementation of such a syllabus heavily relies on the availability of information technology facilities in each university; on the other hand, it calls for a complete revolution in teaching practice in terms of teaching goals, teaching mode, roles of teachers, and assessment. Table 2.5 shows the four national syllabi for English course in China's HEIs with different teaching goals and teaching approaches since 1985.

Table 2.5 Four national syllabi for English course in China's HEIs since 1985

Year	Syllabus	Teaching approach	Teaching goal/focus
1985	College English Syllabus (for Science and Engineering students)	teacher-centered	reading skill
1986	College English Syllabus (for Arts students)	teacher-centered	reading skill
1999	College English Syllabus (Modified)	teacher-centered	continuous English learning during four-year college study / multi-media courseware
2007	College English Curriculum Requirements	learner-centered	Listening and speaking ability/Self-learning ability/computer-based teaching and learning

(4) Investment for English language education in China's universities

Since 2003, a total amount of over twenty million *yuan* has been offered to 180 institutions in higher education to pilot *College English* reform. From 2006 onwards, the Ministry of Education invested 10 million *yuan* to initiate test system reform with the aim of developing the national English network test system, particularly the English speaking test system. Besides, new network or computer-based course books have been developed and published by designated presses to support the new teaching mode required in *College English Curriculum Requirements*, such as *New College English*, *New Horizon College English* and *New Era Interactive English*.

With regard to teaching practice, there is no doubt that the recent national centralized syllabi and initiatives challenge the whole system of English language education as well as most English language teachers' deep-rooted thoughts and assumptions concerning the nature and goals of English course in China's HEIs. According to Ruan and James Jacob (2009:480-482), College English language education in China faces the challenges derived from the following ideologies advocated in the *College English Curriculum Requirements*:

- English learned for competence rather than just knowledge;
- learning takes precedence over teaching;
- more stress is placed on the process rather than the product;
- developing cultural awareness;
- democratic learning

Not surprisingly, current research in China's English language education suggests that

such tremendous challenges increasingly create tension and pressure in the field (Shu, 2004; Lu and Fan, 2007). For instance, Ying (2008) points out that because *College English* teaching in China is not creative the majority of students learn English not for love but for passing examinations and better employment. Liu and Tan (2003) argue that a lot of problems exist in the field of English language education, including severe shortage of qualified teachers of English, increasing workloads for teachers of English due to lack of well-designed course books and shortage of advanced computer-assisted facilities, as well as students' lack of independent self-learning ability. Liu (2010) suggests in a review of *College English* teaching modes that both teachers and students are also suffering from great pressure due to the high expectations of English language education by the whole Chinese society and administrators. In terms of roles of teachers, Shen (2008) argues that in the traditional grammar-translation teaching mode, teachers dominate the class and students are spoonfed to survive the course. However, to adjust to the new teaching mode, teachers now are required to perform a great many new roles during the process of teaching, including course designer, task planner, class manager and organizer, learning helper and partner, learning assessor and reflective thinker as well as learner and researcher, which undoubtedly brings great challenges to them. The pressures and challenges teachers encounter also come from the assessment system of College English. Gao (2010) argues that there are three widespread assessment items used in English language education: classroom tests, school final exam and CET 4 or 6. Classroom tests and school final exams are usually textbook-based while CET 4 or 6 are proficiency tests. He further stresses that there is contradiction among the three tests which overburdens and worries teachers. Hence, in teaching practice, "no doubt that everything the teacher does in class should cater for the CET 4 to the largest extent, a test of life and death, because it matters to the students' successful completion and graduation of college study" (Gao, 2010:35). Zeng and Zhang (2004) state that English language education in China's HEIs is still exam-oriented. In most universities, Wu (2009) argues that teachers also face inadequate professional support and many are still troubled by heavy teaching tasks and have little time for research. Therefore, it is sensible to indicate that with the implementation of new national English language education policies, English language education in China's HEIs receives intense

pressures and continues to be under challenges if they are to make adjustment for better performance.

The last area worth mentioning is the impact of globalization upon quality issues of English language education in HEIs. As is widely known, the quality of English language teaching has been heavily criticized in the past decade in China. The criticism did not go unnoticed by the Chinese government. In 2004, the Ministry of Education issued the *2003-2007 Educational Action Plan for Revitalization*, in which it stressed that education should be incorporated into the economy, culture and society and provide intelligence support to enhance China's overall national strength (*Ministry of Education, 2004a*). As an important part of this *Action Plan*, in 2003, the Ministry of Education initiated *HEIs' Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project*, part of which was aimed at deepening College English reform and improving the quality of College English teaching in HEIs. To achieve such goals, three strategies were mentioned in the project: promote computer-assisted teaching reform, redefine the unified syllabus for College English with a shift from reading to communicative competence and redesign CET 4 and CET 6 to serve College English reform. However, relevant research both at home and abroad shows that the quality of English teaching in China's HEIs is still far from desirable. For example, based on research involving several hundred of English teachers from about 300 universities conducted in 2002, Shu (2004) reports that 24 percent of the teachers surveyed did not write or did not know how to write academic articles, while over 50 percent had never been involved in any research project. He then argues that the low involvement in research by English teachers leads to a low level of classroom teaching, which then contributes to negative attitudes among students. Peng (2006) also echoes this argument and suggests that the College English Reform undoubtedly calls for increasingly higher demands on the professional development of teachers. However, most teachers of English are not given enough chances for in-service training. Even when a few are lucky enough to receive training, the focus is on English language knowledge rather than how to apply effective methods in teaching practice. Besides the harsh reality of teaching practice, one needs to add to this scenario the infiltration of the capitalism-based ideology of quality into HEIs in China. In China, a long-standing conventional conception of quality in education was rooted in the perspective of

Confucianism, which emphasized morality cultivation and good personality. However, with the expansion of capital-based values into the public sector, higher education in China is inescapably being commoditized and educational activities gradually become goods for sale. In other words, values such as capitalism, consumerism and McDonaldization discussed earlier have gradually infiltrated into higher education, which eventually suggests a dominant new conception of quality in higher education: consumer quality. This influence has been marked in recent years in China's HEIs. For example, Ji Baocheng, the Chancellor of People's University of China, criticizes that in China "universities become shops seeking for profit, teachers become shop assistant seeking for benefit, students become customers seeking for money and knowledge becomes goods seeking for sale"(Ji, 2010).

English language education seems not to be immune to this trend. On the one hand, the lack of qualified teachers has enormously adverse impact upon the quality of English teaching; on the other hand, English language has been viewed as a "commodity" which is first extracted and then packaged for sale. With emphasis on the quantitative aspects of English language education sold and service offered, accountability is then heavily focused on English language education in HEI, leading to the assessment of quality of teaching and learning in terms of criteria set down by all the stakeholders (Thune, 1997). Therefore, currently, there is increasing concern with efficiency, causing a tension between efficiency and quality in English language education in HEIs throughout the country.

To conclude, in response to the urgent and great demand on highly skilled and marketable workforce with English proficiency by globalization, over the last two decades, a series of national policies has been released by the Chinese government and heavy investment has been poured into English language education in HEIs. The aim is to reshape the English language education system in HEIs throughout the country in terms of teaching goals, teaching content, course requirements, teaching mode as well as assessment. Thus, it may be fair to state that the changing global context and the national policies have far-reaching implications for English language education in HEIs as well as profound impact upon the way students conceive of English and the way teachers do their job.

2.8 Summary of the chapter

With a focus on the first Specific Research Question 1 (SRQ1), this chapter has reviewed and presented some of the key findings in the related research with the aim of setting the scene for the current research project. To be specific, this has been done first by exploring how globalization originated and developed in the past decades. Then issues in relation to how globalization heavily penetrated into higher education have been addressed, followed by an analysis of the relationship between globalization and English education worldwide. Next, it has examined how globalization is mediated in Chinese context. Then it has outlined the implication globalization has upon China's higher education. Finally, the impact of globalization upon China's English language education in HEIs has been presented.

To summarize, the forces of globalization at the international and national levels mentioned significantly set the specific context for how English teaching is likely to be perceived at Guangxi University in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Thus, it is argued that the changing globalization likewise has enormous effects upon Guangxi University. It is also argued that globalization has profound impact upon the way academic departments and educational practitioners at Guangxi University respond to such national and global pressure. This being the case, then it is argued that a further level, the institutional level, needs to be addressed if a complete picture is to be expected. Therefore, it is to an examination of Specific Research Question 2 (SRQ2), namely, the current reality of English teaching at Guangxi University, that the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW (II)

3.1 Introduction

So far, in the preceding chapter, a picture has been painted suggesting unprecedented challenges in English language education in HE at the global level, which then are mediated by current political, economic and cultural structures in China at the national level. It was then argued that, while the argument for challenges in English language education in HE at both global and national levels is a beneficial one, such a picture is highly likely to be complete only when examination of English language education in HE takes into consideration the institutional context. In this chapter, therefore, scene-setting efforts are made to evidence how educational practitioners at Guangxi University responded to the radical changes and mounting pressure caused by globalization in terms of policy and teaching practice. In other words, it seeks to address particularly the second Specific Research Question (SRQ2) mentioned earlier in the thesis:

(SRQ 2) What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?

In brief, five sections are structured to investigate the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University. Section 3.2 investigates a range of provincial contextual factors which, explicitly or implicitly, play an integral part in the policy-making and daily practice of English language education at the university. Section 3.3 examines the history and development of Guangxi University as well as its College English Department which takes charge of English language education at the university. Section 3.4 deals with the responsive strategies taken by Guangxi University in the past few years to meet the unexpected challenges in the complicated context of globalization. Section 3.5 is a summary of the chapter.

3.2 Provincial context

There seems little doubt that an understanding of English language education at Guangxi University is best gained by examining the provincial context within which the university operates.

Located in the west of south China, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is one of the five minority autonomous regions in China and the only one with access to both sea and border. Specifically speaking, it has a coastline on the Gulf of Tonkin (known today as Beibu Gulf) to the south while bordering on Vietnam to the southwest. With a population of 47.68 million and an area of 236,700 square kilometres, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was specifically formed for the Zhuang people after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Although Zhuang people form the majority of the population, there are 11 other ethnic groups dwelling on the land which include Han, Dong, Miao, Hui, Yi, and Jin (Vietnamese). Understandably, Guangxi is also characterized by ethno-linguistic diversity. Take the case of Nanning, the region's capital for example; in addition to standardized Mandarin, four dialect-languages are spoken locally: Southwestern Mandarin, Zhuang, Pinhua and Cantonese.

Throughout history, the development of Guangxi has languished far behind the rest of China and it has remained largely a popular scenic destination attracting tourists from home and abroad. However, as time elapsed, since the late 20th century, with the establishment of industrial zones in its major cities, the economy of Guangxi has speeded up. By means of construction of national-level development zones, such as Nanning Economic & Technological Development Area in 1988, Nanning National Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone in 1992, and Pingxiang Border Economic Cooperation Zone in 1992, a wide range of industries has been given priority and hi-tech information industry been introduced into the region. In 2004, Nanning was unexpectedly chosen as the permanent site for the yearly China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO), which is the only international trade fair with a theme on the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, and is co-sponsored by China and 10 ASEAN countries as well as the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Secretariat.

In February 2008, due to its unique geographical features, Guangxi was again favoured by the central government as the site for China's first international and regional economic cooperation zone—Beibu Gulf Economic Zone. Being formally incorporated into national development strategies the Zone is aimed to serve as the logistics base, business base, processing and manufacturing base and information exchange centre for China-ASEAN economic cooperation. Although people might hold different ideas and beliefs about the objectives and potentials of national initiatives carried out in the region, their far-reaching influence upon the development of Guangxi is beyond question. Moreover, such a succession of initiatives apparently does more than just fuel a great boom in the local economy. As a matter of fact, the setting in which national development zones have been formed and China-ASEAN Expo is held on a yearly basis reveals much about the opportunities and challenges to various fields in the autonomous region, particularly to its higher education. As diversified development zones and China-ASEAN Expo promised fine prospects for growth potential in Guangxi the shortage of talents and professionals soon became a major issue of concern. As Guo Shengkun, Party Secretary of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, expressed at the Regional Education Work Conference held on 6 September, 2010:

We should be clear-sighted that there is an enormous gap between the level of our education development and that of national average. Our education can not completely adapt to the regional economic growth as well as the expanding desire of high-quality higher education among people. The contradiction between the supply and requirement of talents is becoming increasingly acute.

(Source: Department of Education of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Speech on Regional Educational Work Conference by Guo Shengkun, 2010)

Hence it is sensible to say that the cultural and economic events brought a budgetary benefit to Guangxi as well as great challenges and high aspiration for its higher education, particularly in the field of economics, business, and English language education. The reasons for such a severe shortage of talents in economics and English stem from a number of sources. The first can be traced back to the long backward situation of Guangxi. Being in the far south of China, Guangxi has long been

economically backward and its higher education is also less developed. Official statistics show that 14 out of 10,000 people in Guangxi are scientific and technical personnel, which is just above one third of the national average rate. The enrolment rate in higher education in Guangxi is around 17%, which is 7.2% lower than the national average, ranking 30th among the Chinese provinces (Department of Education of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, 2010).

The second reason for insufficiency of talents can be traced to Guangxi's large minority population, in which great efforts have also been made to protect and maintain various minority languages.

The third reason stems from the multi-cultural community, which favours co-existence of Chinese culture and minority cultures. Being a relatively self-enclosed land, Guangxi has been less influenced by Western cultures over the decades compared to the developed coastal provinces in China.

Nevertheless, with China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the focus of its government's agenda has turned to economic growth, and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, like many other provinces in China has been pushed to join a homogeneous model of development, which is characterized by a market-oriented centralized economic force as well as prevailing Western values.

Consequently, there is a need to look closely at how such economic and cultural forces infiltrate higher education in Guangxi and exert profound influence on English language education at Guangxi University.

3.3 Guangxi University and its English language education

3.3.1 A brief account of Guangxi University

Founded more than eight decades ago, in 1928, Guangxi University is the largest and most important institution for higher education in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. It is situated in Nanning, the capital city of the Region. As a local comprehensive and key provincial university it offers a relatively full range of educational programmes including philosophy, economics, law, culture, natural sciences, foreign languages, social sciences, engineering, management, education, arts

and so on. In 1997, the original Guangxi University merged with the original Guangxi Agricultural University to form today's Guangxi University. Currently the university comprises 29 separate faculties and one Department of Physical Education in which for the academic year 2008/09 over 29,800 students measured as full-time equivalents were enrolled. Located in a multi-ethnic region where quite a few ethnic minority groups live as well as in a coastal province which borders on the Gulf of Tonkin in Vietnam, the university is thus a distinctive institution. Some of its distinctive features are: 1) its multi-ethnic enrolment: most of the student population is from Guangxi and some from other parts of China; 2) relatively lower tuition fees because of the economic situation in Guangxi; 3) an increasing number of foreign students mainly from Southeast Asian countries; 4) comparatively favourable levels of national and provincial funding from its inception due to its ethical location. In 1999, the university was put in the list of 100 institutions in higher education (known as the "211 Project") which are strongly backed by state funding to develop as leading universities in China in the near future. In 2004, it was approved as an institution which is sponsored and governed by both the Ministry of Education and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. In 2005, it was awarded a "very satisfactory" grade in a national quality assessment programme run by the Ministry of Education. Over decades, the university has been considered as an institution serving the local and regional economy and social development. In 2005, in response to the improved economic situation and escalating demand on higher education, Guangxi University aimed to become a high-level teaching and research university with a high reputation both at home and abroad, but particularly in Southeast Asia. It aims to achieve this by the time the university celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2028.

The Faculty of Foreign Languages is the fifth biggest faculty in Guangxi University, with four departments and nearly 900 students majoring in English, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese. As the largest department at the Faculty, the College English Department has 98 teachers and takes care of all the English language programmes for full-time non-English majors in their first two years as well as English language teaching for postgraduate students. In total, the College English Department yearly takes care of

10,000 undergraduates and 2,300 postgraduates and over 100 doctoral students who register on English courses at different levels. In this research project, the discussion of English language teaching and learning is confined to the course of *College English* offered for the first-year and second-year non-English major college students at Guangxi University.

3.3.2 English language education at Guangxi University: historical and current

In 1985, China's Ministry of Education officially issued the *College English Syllabus (for Science and Engineering students)*. According to the document English language education, namely, the course of *College English* remains compulsory in Guangxi University's curriculum. In the following decade, the course was regularly delivered twice a week for all the non-English majors, focusing on English reading skills. Normally, a written exam was given to evaluate students' English learning performance at the end of each semester. In this period, the aim of English education was to enable students to get access to advanced high-tech information from outside China through reading. In 1997, after merging with the original Guangxi University of Agriculture, the course was approved as one of the first key university courses backed up by university funding. A year later, a campus-based English language broadcast was also put in service to make English learning more accessible to students. In September 2002, level-based teaching was adopted in selected English classes by the College English Department. In 2005, the university issued the document *The Interim Provisions of Teaching Management of Level-based Teaching in College English* (Department of Teaching Affair of Guangxi University, 2005), which marked the full operation of level-based teaching. This document describes how, every year, after enrolment, based on their scores in the national College Entrance Examination, first-year students are divided in three grades with 10% of them in level 3, 20% into level 2 and 70% in level 1. Three years later, the College English Department applied to the Ministry of Education for "the First English Teaching Reform Projects" and the application was met with approval. Late in 2004, a university-based College English learning and teaching website was designed and put into use. Meantime, the university

allocated special funds to provide the *College English* course with teaching and learning resources, as well as a learning network system and videos. In June 2007, Guangxi University was granted approval as a “National Exemplary Institution for English Teaching Reform”.

In general, the course *College English* for first and second-year students at Guangxi University is offered for four consecutive semesters, with an average of about 10 teaching hours per week each semester. The course is delivered partly in multi-media classrooms by the teaching staff and partly on the campus-based network learning system at the Language Learning Centre supervised by the teaching staff. Every two weeks students also have chance to spend two hours in the Language Learning Centre for autonomous English learning. As the academic credit system is adopted at the university, the total number of credits for the college English course is 16, 4 for each semester. During the first two years, students are also encouraged to take National College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (CET 4 and CET 6), which take place twice a year, one in June; the other in December. The scores of CET 4 will be partly incorporated into the score of *College English* test in the fourth semester. Without the credits of the *College English* course, students will run a risk of being awarded a Bachelor degree after four years of study at the university.

3.4 Responsive strategies towards English language education at Guangxi University

The complex global trend, the prevailing market-oriented values as well as the fast growth of national and local economies have significantly changed the context in which English language education takes place at institutional level. In the context of Guangxi University, each academic year a total of 10,000 students register for the course of *College English*, with around 5,000 first-years and 5,000 second-years. The student-staff ratio of the course is as high as 100 students per teacher. The rapidly growing enrolment has inevitably caused tension between the students and the limited course resources. The teaching staff have frequently found themselves struggling with more and more students in the classroom partly because the university enjoys limited

teaching equipment and partly because large-group sessions are considered cost-effective by the university. Furthermore, the higher expectations of students, the provincial government and society bring great challenges to the teaching of English in terms of curriculum, textbooks, learning resources, and so on. Finally, as the dominant quality based on marketized ideology is redolent with the concepts of “fitness for purpose” and “value for money”(Hoy, *et al*, 2000:13), the College English Department has to attach great importance to fulfilling the expectations of a variety of stakeholders, such as students, the government, the faculty leadership, parents and so on. It is not, then, surprising that the College English Department at Guangxi University has been under very strong pressure since the late 1990s. Being desperately pressed by the fierce competition among domestic universities and raised expectations of English language education, the demand for reform is thus increasingly palpable at Guangxi University. It seemed obvious that if *College English* is to survive, it must face the challenges, that is, the changing economic and harsh educational reality. It is at this point that the responsive strategies for English language education taken by Guangxi University came into being.

3.4.1 Strategies for centralized policy steering and fund-raising

Viewed as one of the fundamental courses, *College English* holds a particular place, shared by no other courses, within the range of Guangxi University’s arrangement. In the past five years, this unique role of *College English* has been strongly enhanced by a series of strategies to establish a hierarchical administrative system regarding English language education. At least two key strategies have been identified. The first is the introduction of a Responsible Professor system. In 2005, the university issued an important policy called *The Implementation Measures of Responsible Professor System and Outstanding Lecturer System in Foundation Programmes at Guangxi University* (Department of Teaching Affair of Guangxi University, 2005), in which two Responsible Professors would be formally appointed to take full responsibility of English language education instead of a dean in the old administrative system. The key duties of the two Responsible Professors include:

- design and carry out course construction and reform;
- work out practical plans and measures to ensure quality of teaching;
- draw up uniformed teaching program and syllabus;
- inspect the teaching in the department;
- organize teaching and research sessions.
- visit classes on a weekly basis and present teaching demonstration on a semester basis.

The issuing of the Responsible Professor System marks a significant break with the old management of the College English Department as well as the practice of the course of *College English*. By strengthening the academic duties of the leadership in the department, the new measure is expected to create more professional guidance and to better respond to the internal and external challenges. The second strategy relates to the changed policy that all the heads related to English language education at other administrative levels of university are required to be very much involved in approval of policy in English language education. The basic aim of this strategy is by steering English language education with stringent regulations and centralized control mechanisms to stimulate the levels of quality and influence the behaviour of the department to reach the university's target.

Generally speaking, in terms of administrative structure, the newly emerging system is of four layers. At the top is a Vice Chancellor who takes charge of all teaching affairs at the university. Under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor is the Department of Teaching Affairs, which is in charge of policies and evaluations of teaching at the university. The Faculty of Foreign Languages is responsible for guidance and coordinated planning in English language education, and the College English Department takes care of teaching practice including curriculum, examination, course design and so on (See Figure 3.1).

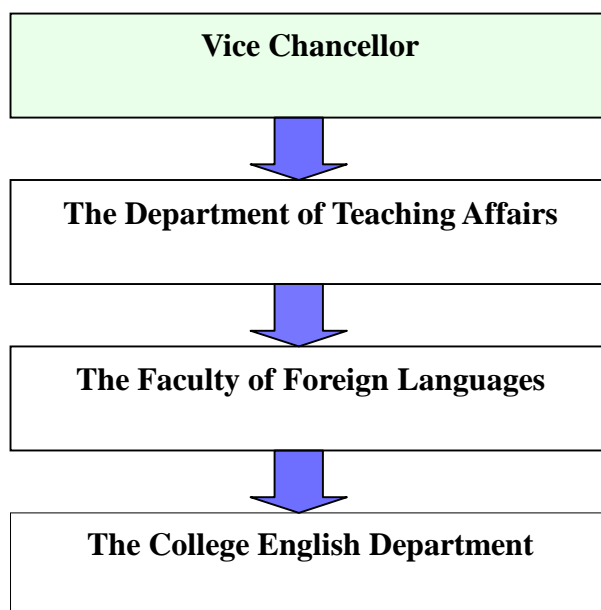


Figure 3.1 Hierarchical administrative structure of English language education at Guangxi University

In terms of personnel posts, there are accordingly layers of hierarchical status in the system. Under the Vice Chancellor, there is a dean in the Department of Teaching Affairs who oversees English language education in the university. The Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages is answerable for affairs relating to *College English*. Since 2005, The College English Department has been headed by two Responsible Professors as joint leaders who are formally appointed for a three-year term by the university authority after an election procedure inside the university. In addition to responsibility for day-to-day operations, the two Responsible Professors make the decisions concerning the curriculum, internal funding, and quality assessment (see Figure 3.2).

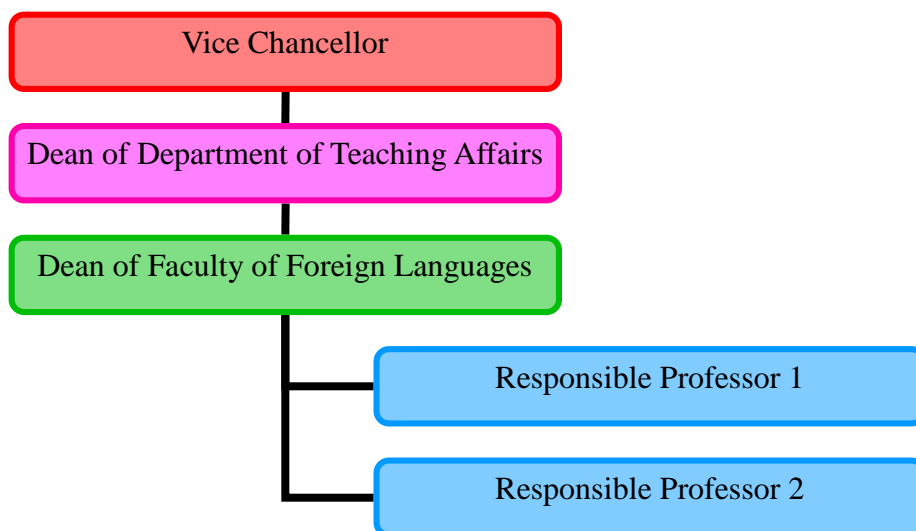


Figure 3.2 Hierarchical administrative status of staff in English language education at Guangxi University

As illustrated in the figures above, in the new system the status of *College English* is simply without parallel. It has become the only foundation subject which is given priority at all levels by university administrators. The main duties of each administrator in the new administrative system are shown in Figure 3.3.

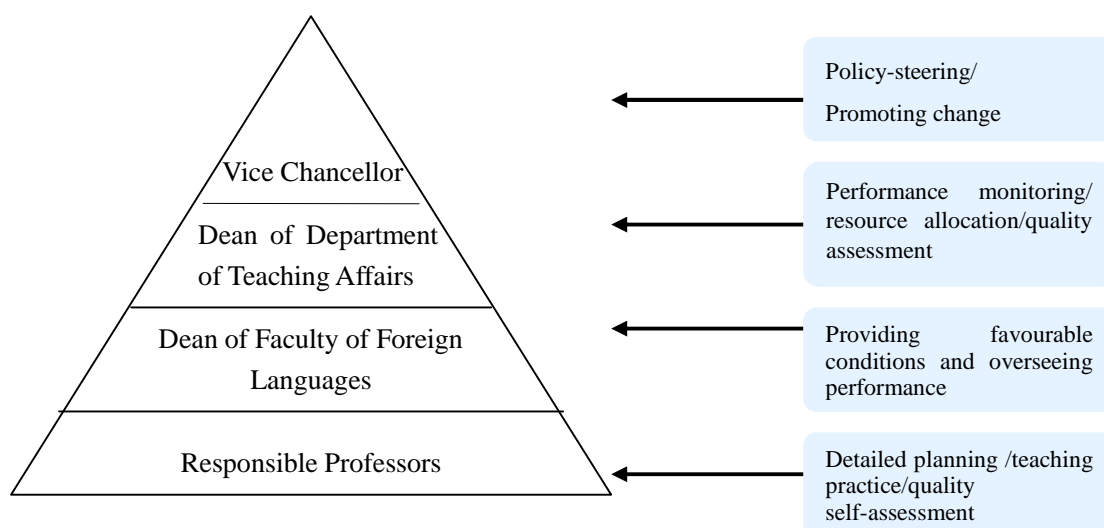


Figure 3.3 Responsibilities of heads at different levels of administration regarding English language education at Guangxi University

Since the late 1990s, fundamental changes have taken place in the level of funding. Therefore, besides the limited funding from the university, the vice Chancellor also

places an important role in steering the College English Department to compete with its counterparts in other universities to gain funding from the Ministry of Education. Within the university, it is the dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages who helps to strive for funding for the College English Department. Meanwhile, the dean of the Department of Teaching Affairs is regularly in the position to ensure the internal funding offered to English language education has been economically and effectively utilized.

Therefore, under the new administrative system, in the harsh fiscal situation, the university apparently wants to limit itself to a general control process regarding policy-making and fund-raising and give freedom to the department to operate as a relatively self-steering organization. Of course, such autonomy offered to a department, as mentioned earlier, would be only a restricted autonomy with the aim of optimizing quality from the university's point of view.

3.4.2 Strategies for target-meeting and performance appraisal

Whilst there is no argument about the importance of high-quality teaching of English in China's higher education, it is hard to define clearly what its characteristics are. Different institutions might appear to require different strategies and management. Accountability as a stimulus to quality improvement at the College English Department at Guangxi University can be clearly observed in two aspects: target-meeting and performance appraisal. In terms of strategies for target-meeting, three areas need to be highlighted, namely, institutional curriculum, level-based teaching and course books. In 2007, the Ministry of Education revised and enacted a formal finalization of the *College English Curriculum Requirements* in which English language teaching at universities is set at three levels, namely, basic requirements, higher requirements and advanced requirements. However, the Ministry also allows flexibility in implementing the national curriculum in specific institutions as it is stated clearly in the beginning of the document that "colleges and universities should formulate, in accordance with the Requirements and in the light of their specific circumstances, a scientific, systematic and individualized college English syllabus to guide their own College English teaching" (*College English Curriculum Requirements*,

2007:1). Based on the new national curriculum requirements, the College English Department of Guangxi University built its own syllabus which included items like teaching goals, teaching content, teaching management, course evaluation and teaching resources available for College English. To be specific, the syllabus clearly describes the exact percentages of students at Guangxi University to meet demanding performance targets by the national curriculum, in which all the non-English majors should be capable of meeting basic requirements, 20% of them to meet higher requirements and 5% advanced requirements, after two years of English instruction. Meanwhile, it also provides concrete performance data for requirements at three different levels in terms of listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, translation skills and recommended vocabulary, each with specific quantitative requirements (see Table 3.1). The second strategy which is related to target-meeting is the operation of level-based teaching. In accordance with such a teaching system, students are classified into three levels based on their English marks on national College Entrance Examination. For each level, there is a corresponding requirement concerning learning hours, credits and abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. The last strategy is concerned with course books for *College English*. Similarly, course books are also set at different levels, from level 1 to level 4. In each semester, the teaching should focus on one of the levels and what teachers need to do is to strictly follow the contents and complete the learning tasks given in the course book within the available teaching hours.

A third way to examine the issue of accountability applied in Guangxi University is a close look at strategies for performance appraisal both for English learning and teaching. According to the internal document, *The Teaching Reform of College English* (2007), the process of learning performance appraisal for students involves a self-assessment questionnaire at the end of each semester, a final examination and a standard national College English Test Band 4 (CET 4). The final mark for the course consists of two parts, general mark (30%) and final examination (70%). The general is composed of oral examination (40%), online learning (30%), mid-term exam (10%),

Table 3.1 Quantitative requirements for English language education at Guangxi University

Skills			basic requirements	higher requirements	advanced requirements
Listening	TV Program	Speed ¹ (wpm)	130 ~ 150	150~180	normal
	English Radio				
Speaking	Communication		basically correct	fairly fluent	fairly fluent & accurate
	conversational content		everyday topics	facts and reasons	academic papers
Reading	Intensive RD	Speed ² (wpm)	70	70-90	normal
	extensive RD		100	120	
Writing	Composition (words/within 30 minutes)		≥120 (general topics)	≥160 (academic topics)	≥200 (given topics)
Translation	E to C	Speed ³ (wph)	300	350	400
	C to E		250	300	350
Recommended vocabulary	words		4,795	6,395	7,675
	phrases		700	1,200	1,870

Notes:

- 1 Students should be able to understand radio and TV programs in English given at a speed of about 130 to 150 words per minute (wpm) to meet basic requirements, 150-180 wpm to meet higher requirements and at normal speed advanced requirements.
- 2 Students who meet the basic requirements should be able to read English texts on general topics at a speed of 70 wpm. With longer yet less difficult texts, the reading speed should be 100 wpm.
- 3 The speed of translation from English into Chinese should be about 300 English words per hour (wph) to meet the basic requirements, 350 wph to meet higher requirements and 400 wph advanced requirements. The speed of translation from Chinese into English should be respectively around 250 wph, 300 wph and 350 wph.

homework (10%) and class performance (10%). National CET 4 is essential for all the undergraduates who aim to graduate and get their Bachelor degrees. At the institutional level, the assessment of teaching is based on students' test scores, peer assessment and a quantitative course evaluation by students on a semester basis. Furthermore, the College English Department also views external quality assessment as an insightful approach to the improvement of quality in teaching practice. In 2005, Guangxi University applied to the Ministry of Education and was approved to be one of 14 exemplary institutions for College English Teaching Reform in the country, with a financial fund of 100,000 *yuan*. Therefore, the College English Department is also quantitatively evaluated by the Ministry of Education every year and is regularly provided with ideas on possible improvements.

3.4.3 Strategies for standardizing teaching practice

There was a time at Guangxi University when English teaching was considered as the

teachers' own secret garden where they could to a great extent exert their professional autonomy. However, under the profound influence of capitalism, "improving quality in education covers the process of assuring continued enhancement of the service to meet ever-exacting expectations from increasingly discerning client groups" (Hoy, *et al.* 2000:12) . There is much evidence regarding the endeavour that makes for effective and high standard teaching at Guangxi University. This may be characterized as four successive steps. The first step is to standardize the teaching process, from teaching preparation to assignments distributed. In 2006, the College English Department designed and developed a multimedia English teaching courseware for college English teachers, which was soon applied to all English classes. Following-up is an initiative to develop a teaching handbook in which all the documents of English teaching such as the College English syllabus, the documents stipulating the teaching objectives, the course description, the teaching arrangement, the content of teaching, the teaching progress, and methods of assessment for the course are all included. Teachers are strongly advised to take the handbook with them every time they have classes. The third step is to regulate the teaching practice so that it is closely linked with teaching administration. To be specific, the teaching staff are required to be able to present documents including those of registering students' status and their academic credits, regulations of assessment, students' academic scores and records, analysis of exam papers, guidelines for teaching and records of teaching and research activities for internal evaluation at the end of each semester. The final step is the introduction of an "Outstanding Lecturer" system (outlined in the 2005 internal document *The Implementation Measures of Responsible Professor System and Outstanding Lecturer System in Foundation Programmes at Guangxi University*). This system involves selecting teachers with excellent job performance and offering them rewards every semester. The assessment for "Outstanding Lecturer" is largely based on the students' final examination test scores and the national College English Test Band 4(CET 4). Those excellent lecturers are seen as the backbone of the department and are invited to give model teaching presentations regularly. The aim of the system is to reward those who can deliver a quality lecture, and to urge those who cannot do so for the time being to improve, thus maintaining the high quality of English teaching.

3.4.4 Strategies for meeting the needs of a variety of stakeholders

In the context of college English teaching at Guangxi University, however, the term “stakeholder” itself raises complicated issues. If the *College English* course is viewed as goods to be consumed, then who will take an interest in sharing such goods? A thorough investigation into English language education at the university will reveal that all the stakeholders are potential consumers. Given the fact that stakeholders in the teaching of English involves students, the government, the employers, the department, the institution and parents, it will never be an easy task to manage the course and offer the course at the cost favoured by different stakeholders. What makes it worse is that “there is every reason to expect these various groupings, representing different interests, values and experiences, to find things to disagree about” (Brennan, 1997:7). For instance, the government who pays for the higher education and provide funds for English teaching is concerned with the efficiency of English teaching and learning, that is, to achieve the most with the minimum cost. The institution leadership, on the contrary, place greater value on the national College English Test Band 4 as “the College English Test gave universities a uniform nationwide standard to compare the level and quality of English teaching” (Duan and Gu, 2005:436). As far as parents are concerned, with the increasingly intense competition for employment, they link English learning with potential employment in well-paid international companies, especially now that ASEAN-Expo is annually held in Guangxi. With regard to students, however, they focus on English speaking and listening skills in communication rather than higher test scores. To some extent, then it seems highly unlikely that any single strategy will emerge to satisfy the needs of all the interested parties or consumers in the context of English teaching in Guangxi University. The institutional response to this issue can be conceptualized in three aspects. The first is to pay a good deal of attention to internal efficiency. By regulating teaching practice and administration, the *College English* course is supposed to be managed in a more predictable and countable way, which in turn helps to deal with budgetary cuts dictated by the national educational policy. The second is taking advantage of the National College English Test. In other words, by making the CET a component of the final marks for the English course, the

department enhances the importance of national testing, indirectly increasing the standard of English teaching. The final aspect can be seen in an attempt to suggest new teaching methods in which communicative competence has been given priority. For example, from 2002-2005, all teaching staff were required to attend training courses on both teaching methodology and multimedia technology.

3.4.5 Strategies for improving learning efficiency

In Guangxi University, with increased emphasis on the market-oriented management, more attention has been paid to value for money and the relationship between price and learning efficiency. In 2005, the university earmarked 5.5 million *yuan* for a Language Learning Centre equipped with 600 computers and modern language learning software. All students are required to take computer-based English courses which focus on the cultivation and training of listening and speaking abilities. To improve efficiency in teaching, a new teaching model based on modern information technology, particularly network technology has been built so that English language teaching and learning will be, to a certain extent, “free from the constraints of time or place and geared towards students’ individualized and autonomous learning” (*College English Curriculum Requirements*, 2007:6). Furthermore, the College English Department also established a campus network offering a great deal of multimedia English learning resources, such as films, videos, international news, press conferences, music etc. Finally, it was proposed that all the courses, whether computer-based or classroom-based, should be fully individual-oriented, taking into consideration students with different learning needs. To summarize, based on university documents and the researcher’s interpretation, Figure 3.4 indicates all the five major strategies employed at Guangxi University for the effective monitoring and management of English language education in the past years.

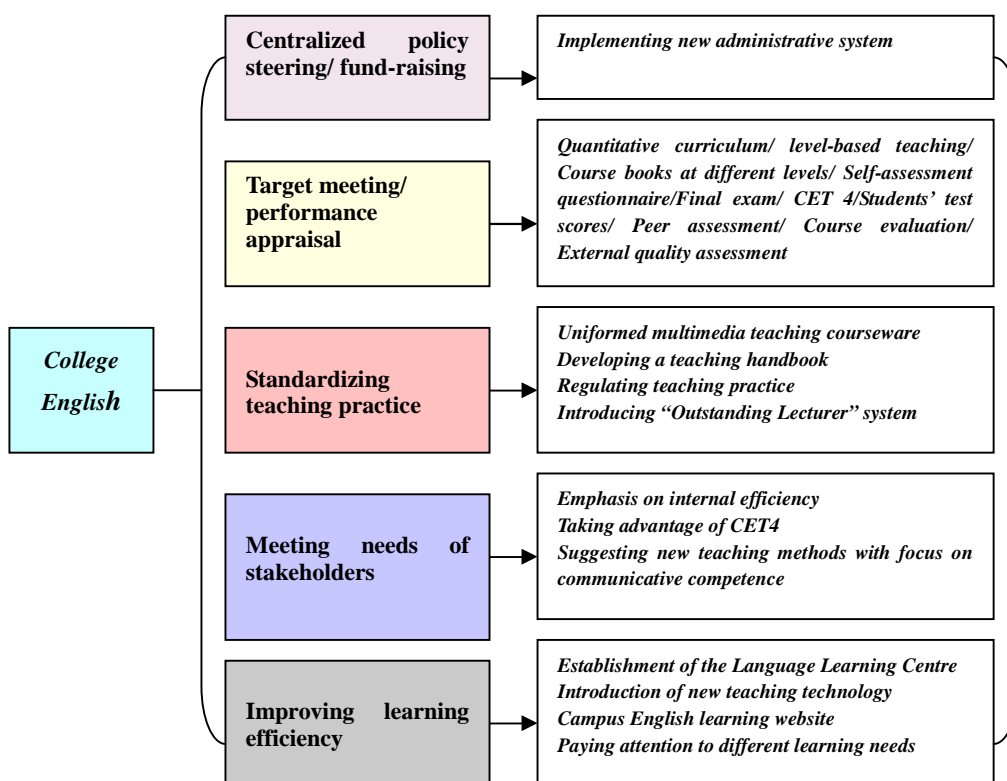


Figure 3.4 Strategies for quality assurance of English language education at Guangxi University

It should be evident from what has been discussed above that there are many factors influencing English language education at Guangxi University, which include enormous expansion of enrolment, the penetrating of values of profit-centered private sectors, the introduction of a national curriculum, and the raised expectations of government and students. All these, to a great extent, put huge pressure on the existing structure and teaching practice of the College English department. In a sense, the strategies chosen above for tackling the challenges English language education faces indicate that the faculty and the department have been struggling to find the most appropriate mechanism for their quality work. As a consequence, with new forms of policy steering, quality assurance and assessment procedure successively developed at the university, there have been some improvements in the quality of teaching as well as in management and funding. These improvements involve higher test scores in national CET 4, modern learning resources and a great emphasis on English listening and speaking ability. What is more, by taking active measures to deal with quality issues

College English Department has developed an awareness and explicit understanding of changing global and institutional contexts as well as their objectives and the way to achieve them.

3.5 Summary of the chapter

Focusing on the second Specific Research Question (SRQ2), this chapter discussed and investigated the provincial economic and cultural factors as well as the responsive strategies taken by Guangxi University concerning its English language education in the past few years to set a scene within which English language education at Guangxi University is currently practised. By so doing, it is hoped that a better sense of the current research project could be gained and its potential contribution to the current research literature could be achieved.

To sum up, then, as the establishment of industrial development zones over decades and the yearly China-ASEAN Expo accelerate the economic growth in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Guangxi University increasingly views the key function of English language education as servicing and facilitating such economic forces. Bottery (2001) identifies three different attitudes to changes, namely, a wholehearted embrace of particular change, a compliance to changes due to the inevitable reality, and a proactive resistance to changes. In the case of Guangxi University, there is good evidence to suggest that it has taken the interesting “middle path”—a compliant attitude. In other words, when changes happen, educational policies and strategies are formulated to respond to them. In brief, the strategies taken by the university mostly involve: 1) strategies for centralized policy steering and fund-raising; 2) strategies for target-meeting and performance appraisal; 3) strategies for standardizing teaching practice; 4) strategies for meeting the needs of a variety of stakeholders; 5) strategies for improving learning efficiency.

However, although such a “middle path” attitude opened up a range of possibilities for the enhancement of English language education at Guangxi University and it was also the desire of Guangxi University to improve its English language education, issues

need to be investigated a lot further. Did Guangxi University achieve what it had planned with regard to English language education? Did English language education at Guangxi University eventually satisfy its stakeholders? What do the stakeholders of English language education at Guangxi University have to say? How do both administrative staff and teaching staff perceive the economic and social pressure placed upon them? How do the students view these initiatives for quality assurance of teaching of English at Guangxi University? So whilst there has been some achievement in English language education at Guangxi University, there is good reason to argue that the behind-the-scenes story will be more complex than it might at first appear. For this reason, a further move is made in the rest of the thesis to gain in-depth perceptions and experiences of stakeholders regarding English language education at Guangxi University.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the research project is to address the challenges which English language education at Guangxi University, China is currently faced with and to suggest remedial solutions by which it can be improved in terms of policy and practice.

In Chapter 1 a background introduction of the research project and research questions were presented. In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 the existing literature concerning how global forces impact English language education at global, national and institutional levels were reviewed, based on the following two Specific Research Questions (SRQs):

(SRQ 1) What are the global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?

(SRQ 2) What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?

This chapter is directed to providing a rationale for the current research project as well as guidance for an appropriate research design and methodology. It consists of fourteen sections. Section 4.2 examines the philosophical assumptions which underpin the research design. Section 4.3 presents discussion of case study as well as the rationale behind the choice of case study in the current research project. Section 4.4 is concerned with sampling methods and sample selection in the research project. Section 4.5 considers access to participants of interviews and questionnaires. Section 4.6 covers the protocol for interviews and questionnaires. Section 4.7 examines data collection methods. Section 4.8 contains the procedures used in data analysis, in particular interview data. Section 4.9 reviews ethical issues in the research study. Section 4.10

discusses the reliability and validity of the research design. Section 4.11 is concerned with generalisability. Section 4.12 attends to issues relating to triangulation. Section 4.13 examines the position of the researcher. The final section is a summary of the chapter.

4.2 Philosophical issues

In the field of education, “all educational research is oriented toward one or both of two ends: the extension of knowledge and the solution of problems” (Wiersma, 2000:23). Although over decades there has been a broad consensus on objectives of educational research among scientific practitioners, it is important to note that there is a vast difference of perspectives as to what can be counted as “valid knowledge” in the educational field and how educational “knowledge” can be accumulated to achieve its aims. Such debate implies that research paradigms in the field of social science such as education do not emerge in a vacuum. They are underpinned by a series of philosophical assumptions that not only anticipate them but also shed light on the methodology employed in the research. Meanwhile, it also seems evident that philosophical issues have tremendous impact on researchers in social science, who will conduct research accordingly in terms of the purpose of research and the nature of research findings. Consequently distinctive research approaches might also be applied to meet such needs. In this section, therefore, it makes sense to rehearse the major underlying assumptions in research, namely, positivism and interpretivism. It also draws attention to the philosophical issues underpinning a mixed methods approach. Finally, it considers the rationale behind the choice of research paradigm in this research project.

4.2.1 Positivism and interpretivism

Although there are distinct terms referring to philosophical beliefs in social science such as positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism and participatory identified by Lincoln and Guba (2000), *positivism* and *interpretivism* are applied in the

thesis. The reasons are threefold. First, these two terms have been widely used, suggesting the major point of departure between two conventional forms of inquiry, qualitative inquiry and quantitative inquiry. Second, both beliefs have a relatively long history in research practice, from which the established and emergent assumptions or paradigms evolve. Third, it seems more reasonable to provide a broad division in the discussion rather than going into extensive and detailed connotations of different terms.

Positivism is a research tradition which strongly believes that “there is only one truth, an objective reality that exists independent of humans” (Sale *et al*, 2002:44). Positivism places high value on observable and measurable phenomena (Bryman, 1988). In other words, there is a reality “out there”, which can be comprehended and measured objectively. Usher (1997) summarizes five features of positivist epistemology: determinacy, rationality, impersonality, the ideal knower and prediction. To be specific, based on the assumption that there is a knowable reality, positivists conduct research by a rational and logical methodology from a detached position and generate a theory that explains the world. Payne (1997:105) remarks that “the ideal of ‘scientific’ research is value free and well-planned”. Therefore, the main task for researchers in social science is to manipulate, control and verify hypotheses. In terms of reasoning, scholars like Wiersma (2000) and Trochim and Donnelly (2007) argue that positivism adopts a top-down reasoning, namely, deduction, normally starting from the more general to the more specific (see Figure 4.1)

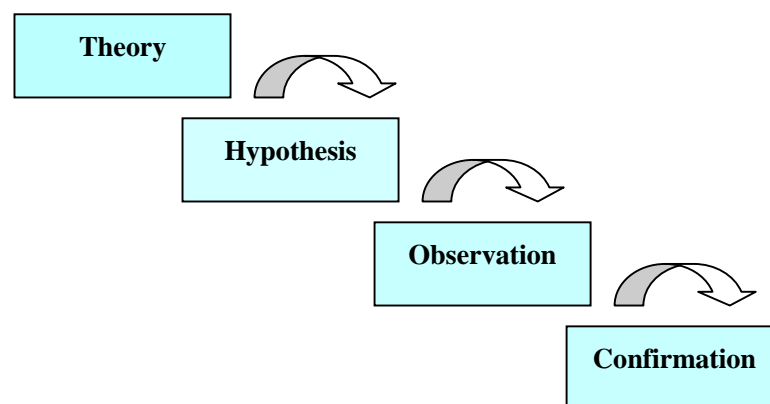


Figure 4.1 A schematic representation of deductive reasoning

(After: Trochim and Donnelly, 2007:17)

Just as every coin has two sides, positivism has not gone unchallenged and literatures show that there are now a number of criticisms on it in the disciplines of social science research. In brief, there are at least three particular problems regarding positivism. First, by assuming that there is an “objective” reality, it suggests an orderly world which leaves no space for human interpretation. However, just as from different perspectives different people may take distinctive pictures of the same house, in the real world, individuals experience and perceive from their own point of view, therefore, different people might experience a different reality. In this sense, conducting research without taking this into account neglects the fundamental fact that human beings are not simply objective entities like those in the natural science. Second, with the aim of developing general laws that explain the world, such an approach views the world as being of a rigid and logical form. This, however, fails to see the multifaceted reality as well as the interaction between facts and values. “Instead, whatever rules there are should be seen as a cultural artifact, historically-located and value-laden” (Usher, 1997:4). Finally, according to positivism, all the sciences or disciplines are approached in the same way to seek for valid knowledge. This again fails to see the tremendous distinction between the nature of the social world and that of the physical world.

In contrast, as Bryman(2004) argues, different from the positivism orthodoxy, interpretivism emphasizes the importance of distinguishing human beings from the objects of natural sciences. This idea is shared by William and May (1996: 85) when they state:

Beliefs and desires appear dependent upon the attitude of a person toward his, or her, environment, as well as the actions in that environment. People attach meaning to things in the world, as well as the actions of others.....Meaningful behavior is the product of consciousness and experiences. It is this that is at the heart of the claim that human action is different to phenomena in the physical world.

Undoubtedly, such an assumption on reality leads to the prevailing view in the field of social science that reality is socially interpreted by human beings (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). To put it another way, interpretivists hold that the world we are living in is very complicated and is viewed from different perspectives based on individuals’

experiences and situations. Merriam (1998) echoes this view when he points out that individuals make the sense of the world in their own unique ways based on their own observation and perceptions. “Interpretivist knowledge comprises the reconstruction of inter-subjective meanings, the interpretive understanding of the meanings humans construct in a given context and how these meanings interrelate to form a whole” (Greene, 1990: 235). That is why Payne and Payne (2004) contend that interpretivism features details, flexibility, sensitivity and naturalism. Moreover, it assumes that individual experience is closely embedded in a social context and thus its understanding relies on the analysis of the context (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). As far as reasoning is concerned, interpretivism is more closely linked with induction, reasoning from specific observation to a general conclusion (Trochim and Donnelly, 2007:17) (see Figure 4.2).

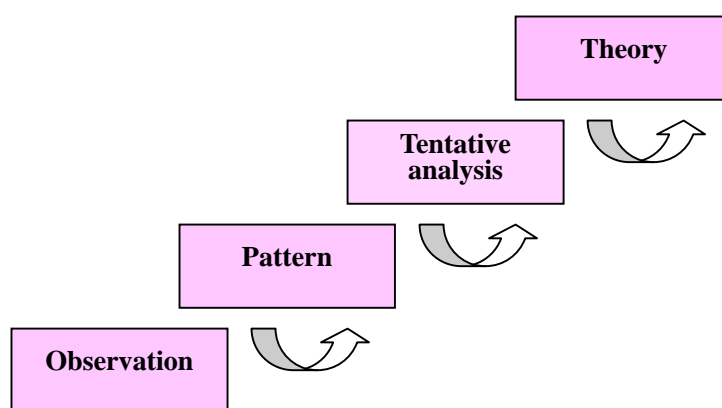


Figure 4.2 A schematic representation of inductive reasoning

(After: Trochim and Donnelly, 2007:17)

The downsides of interpretivism are also visible. Three aspects will guide the analysis of why it is under criticism. The first aspect is concerned with the assumption that there is no objective reality. One of the distinguishing features of the human world is that it is never value free. The conclusion from this assumption is inevitable: it is highly unlikely to offer any means to foretell or manipulate events in any sense. The second aspect is associated with its methodology. For instance, by means of observation or interview, research focuses on the richness and the divergence of individual cases; thus it fails to systematically generalize the theory as well as present the whole picture of the research. In practical terms, the third aspect deals with the

belief that researchers are strongly engaged in the subject. Consequently, the research findings may be underpinned by researchers' values and misunderstanding, thus failing to build up acceptable "knowledge claims", that is, "claims guaranteeing that the world was known truly" (Usher, 1997:2).

4.2.2 Philosophical issues underpinning mixed methods research

Since the 1990s, changes in social science research have heightened awareness of blending or blurring of paradigm differences. One recurrent theme has been the growth in interest in mixed methods research (MMR). *Mixed methods*, literally, means "different sorts of methods which are put together". Nevertheless, such mixed methods research is more involved than simply combining of different methods, as Greene (2007:13) puts it,

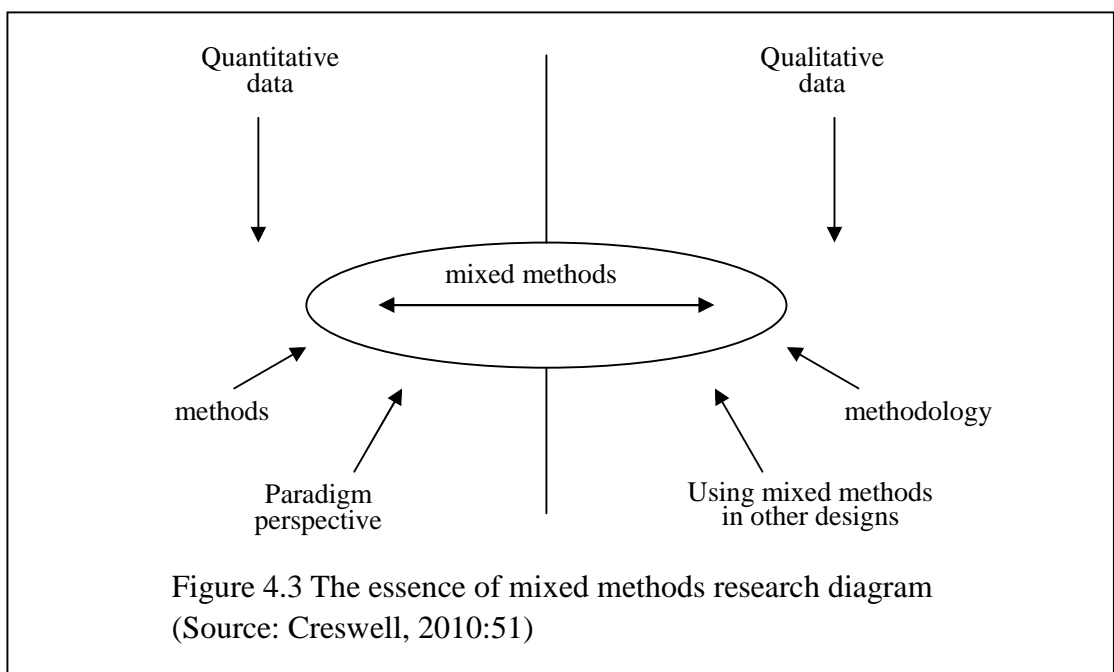
By definition, then mixed methods social inquiry involves a plurality of philosophical paradigms, theoretical assumptions, methodological traditions, data gathering and analysis techniques, and personalized understandings and value commitments—because these are the stuff of mental models.

Therefore, to conduct MMR, according to Greene (2007), it is crucial that a multiple way of thinking first be developed. In some depth, Greene (2007:20) argues that to understand such a dynamic way of thinking consideration should be given to the following three aspects, namely, "its orientation around the broad purpose of generating better understanding of social phenomena, its roots in a multiplistic mental model, and its dialogic value commitment to engaging with difference". In other words, a mixed methods way of thinking calls for a high level of philosophical commitment to multiple legitimate approaches to social science research as well as thoughtful consideration of mixing different ways of interpreting the complex world.

In an effort to provide compromise among various assumptions, Johnson and Gray (2010) present a different stance—*synechism*, in which the social world is viewed in terms of continua rather than binaries. They argue that one of the benefits of this flexible standpoint is that by interacting with multiple philosophical stances

researchers are more creative in constructing new research designs based on the different purposes of the research.

Whilst discussions of controversies regarding conceptual stances, methods selections and research design in MMR (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010) are helpful, it also seems sensible to understand how the landscape of MMR has been shaped by various research practitioners. Such an understanding is valuable in probing the various reasons behind the development of MMR. On the basis of a diagram by Creswell (2010), the contemporary social inquirers embracing mixed methods enter the field from different sources (see Figure 4.3)



Creswell believes that mixed methods research serves as an intersection between the two sharply distinct approaches, quantitative and qualitative. Different groups of scholars have conducted MMR based on their different research interests and research purposes. Apparently such a variety of sources of the expanding of the circle of MMR suggests that it derives from both philosophical perspectives as well as research practice. That helps to explain why Greene (2007:32) states that the current growth of mixed methods practice can be seen as “a natural and logical development”.

Therefore, unlike in its early conception, in which mixed methods was conventionally and primarily viewed as a method approach (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Creswell, 2010), recent contested debate and the prevailing trend indicate a holistic perception of

not just the methodological implications but also the philosophical and conceptual assumptions of mixed methods research. This being the case, in terms of the purpose of mixed methods, Greene (2007:107), for instance, presents five potential benefits from conducting MMR:

- Mixing methods for purposes of triangulation;
- Mixing methods for purposes of complementarity;
- Mixing methods for purposes of development;
- Mixing methods for purposes of initiation;
- Mixing methods for purposes of expansion.

To put it another way, by meaningfully and actively interacting with different perceptions and approaches, mixed methods is more dynamic and creative. Therefore, it serves as a better stance from which a richer, deeper and more insightful understanding of our multifaceted social world can be eventually obtained. In a similar fashion, Johnson and Gray (2010) are confident in the belief that by a more flexible perspective mixed methods can suggest a possible way to work out many pressing issues in social science research.

Whilst it is clear that mixed method research should embrace more than one method, issues concerning when the mixing will take place are in contention. This is not surprising as such issues have profound effects upon research practice. According to different phases when the mixing takes place and what roles different data plays in the research, Creswell (2009:208) identifies three types of mixing: “connected”, “integrating” and “embedding”. In other words, “connected” means that qualitative research and quantitative research are connected between data analysis of the first stage of research and data collection of the second stage of research; “integrating” refers to combining quantitative data with qualitative data; In “embedding” MMR, one form of data is collected as primary data and the other form of data as secondary data. In this research, the mixing belongs to the third type, that is, “embedding”, in which qualitative data by interviews is the major source for data analysis while quantitative data by questionnaires serves as supportive description of the case.

So far, the thesis has examined a series of considerations of two major philosophical assumptions underpinning social science research, namely, positivism and

interpretivism. It has also shown the primary value of MMR as well as how the recent shift to MMR overcomes some of the philosophical and practical problems in social science. In the following part, the rationale for the research project being studied is presented, which involves the basic philosophical assumptions underlying the research design as well as concerns about the possibility generating deeper and more insightful understanding of the research project by taking a more reflective and more interactive philosophical and methodological stance.

4.2.3 Philosophical assumptions underpinning the current research design

As a starting point, it is important to note that the current research design rests on five assumptions. First, while it is widely accepted that a particular approach is conventionally linked with a certain philosophical stance, such as the quantitative approach with positivism and qualitative with interpretivism, it is argued in the thesis that the quantitative approach does not have to be committed to positivism. That is to say, quantitative research method, which features numerical data, can also serve as a partner for other philosophical thoughts. Needless to say, such a claim does not mean to disconnect research practice from philosophical assumptions. On the contrary, there is a direct relationship between philosophical assumptions and methods adopted. May (1997:8) argues that science is often regarded as “being a coherent body of thought about a topic” and William and May (1996:45) state it “will always be present in the systematic pursuit of knowledge”. Hence, in a disciplinary sense, no matter how rarely researchers consider philosophical issues of their practice, to accept a paradigm or particular techniques for gathering evidence is “to implicitly accept a certain epistemology and all the commitments and assumptions that go with that” (Usher, 1997: 2).

Second, while there has been a rather general agreement on a traditional dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative research, it is argued that there is no hard-and-fast distinction between quantitative research and qualitative research. In contrast, they form a continuum. Such a continuum can be observed at different aspects of a research. Take data collection for instance. In research, sample size can range from a very small

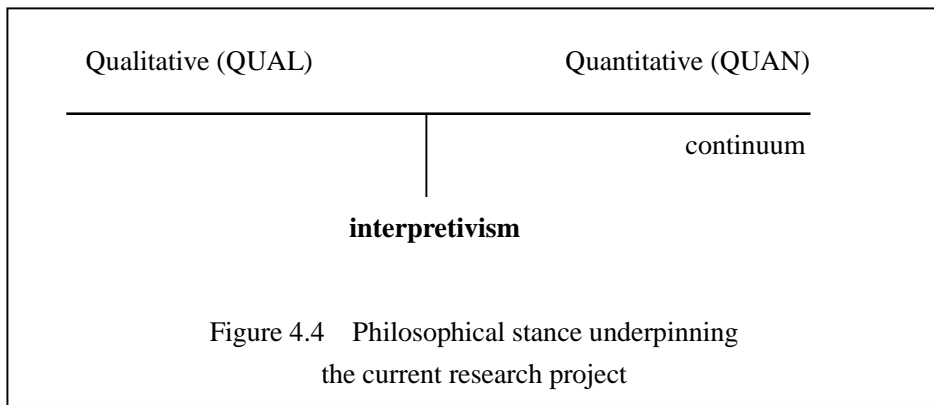
number of interviewees at one end to a great number of participants in a national census at the other end. What is more, there exists medium sample size in between and no clear requirement has been offered so far to what can be counted as the appropriate number of a “medium” size.

Third, as researches are conducted by human beings, in a strict sense, research can never be value free. In contemplating the characteristics of orthodox research methodology, Hammersley (2011) outlined a number of serious problems with objectivism. One of his strong arguments is that in any given research it is highly unlikely for researchers to be independent of their educational background, values and assumptions in drawing the research conclusion. Therefore, while researchers should seek to focus on objectivity, it is not always easy to achieve such an aim.

Fourth, all research involves different selections at different phases. The act of selection itself features subjectivity. For example, in making observations, researchers simply have to use their own eyes and ears, indicating that some kind of interpreting is inevitably involved. The same holds true in the case of objectivism, as Hammersley (2011) argues, even when researchers employ the same procedure carefully, it is still highly likely they will make personal choices based on their own social backgrounds and experiences. Hence, human selections are subjective, thus they are by nature at the lower level of objectivity.

Fifth, the world we are living in is complex; hence, “any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:8). In this sense, while a traditional dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative research offers academic explanation in a relatively clear way it can hardly reveal the whole story in the light of real world research.

Therefore, on the basis of the assumptions mentioned above, coupled with the multiple and dialectical philosophical perspectives advocated by MMR, the philosophical stance of the current research project is presented in Figure 4.4.



To be specific, firstly, the current research project adopts a stance of interpretivism in which the social world is importantly constructed and shaped by human beings. And it is by addressing these constructed meanings that a multifaceted reality can be fully unveiled. Secondly, it is also believed that, as Corbin and Strauss (2008:8) suggest, it is essential to understand the world as much as possible, at the same time acknowledging that “knowing it all is both unlikely and impractical”. Thirdly, research in social science is not a clear-cut landscape. It is assumed to be in a continuum with qualitative approach on the one end and quantitative approach on the other end. Fourthly, as the current research study is seeking for a complex and holistic picture of English language education at Guangxi University, a combination of qualitative and quantitative researches underpinned by interpretivism has been employed in the research project, which was inspired by the philosophical belief in mixed methods calling for “active engagement with difference and diversity” (Greene, 2007: xi) to suit the particular research design. Last but not least, it is noteworthy that the mixing in the research study is identified as “embedding”, in other words, the researcher aims to gather qualitative data as primary data, with quantitative data as secondary data providing supportive description of the case in the study.

4.3 Research design—case study

As a commonly used research approach in social science, case study is marked by the fact that it is conducted in “natural settings”(Walsh, 2001:52). In discussing how case study can be employed in educational research, while Burns (2000) focuses on the long

history of case study being used in education, Bassey (1999) stressed case study as a favourable and serviceable research strategy contributing to the development of educational theory. Robson (1993:146) defines case study as

a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

One can readily see two distinctive features emerging from this definition: context dependence and multiple data collection methods. Quite similarly, Punch (2005:145) identifies four characteristics of case studies: “first, the case is a ‘bounded system’; second, the case is a case of something; third, there is an explicit attempt to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case; fourth, multiple sources of data and multiple data collection methods are likely to be used, typically in a naturalistic setting”.

Sturman (1999) highlights two assumptions underpinning case study: the entirety of human community and the unmatched context. Thus from Burns’ (2000) perspective, case study is the preferred strategy to gain in-depth information and it works particularly well in situations “where our knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent” (Punch, 2005:147).

With regard to the data collection in case studies, Gillham (2000) argues that case study makes good use of a variety of sources of evidence with the aim of providing the most valid possible evidence. In a similar vein, Yin (1994) comes into line with such remark, adding that the convergence of data collected in a case study can be achieved by means of triangulation. Whilst a variety of methods like field research and interviews are employed in case studies, Punch (2009) argues that questionnaires and numerical data can also be helpful. In other words, case studies are not necessarily tied with a totally qualitative technique.

Three reasons justify the research adopting a case study strategy. First, the research study is intended to be a small-scale project with focus limited to a real and defined institution, that is, Guangxi University in China. Hence it is a functioning “bounded system”. Second, the aim of the research study is to gain in-depth understanding of the

entity being studied. To put it another way, to perceive the wholeness of the situation requires a large amount of descriptive information of English language education at Guangxi University, which can only be achieved by taking the stakeholders' perspectives into consideration. Third, the case being studied in its own right is unique and not yet understood, necessitating a profound understanding and description. Such in-depth investigation involves discovering the distinctive features in English language education at Guangxi University, scrutinizing thoroughly the unique context, developing an understanding of them and suggesting ideas for further study. In other words, the research by nature is exploratory and invites thick and rich evidence by looking at different stakeholders' perspectives. Therefore, both the purpose and the nature of research study determine the choice of case study in the research project.

4.4 Sampling methods and sample selection

“Well-developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study’s soundness” (Marshall and Rossman, 2011:105). The data for this research project is drawn from interviews and questionnaires. In this section, justification for the way the samples identified as well as the numbers of the samples selected in the research study is presented.

4.4.1 Sampling methods and sample selection for interviews

There is no doubt that sample size in a research is vital as poor sampling leads to poor research findings. Although it is very difficult to cover all potential participants, Dobbert (1982) practically proposes a method of sampling in which variation is carefully and reasonably taken into consideration. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), there are distinctive approaches to creating a sample, including homogeneous group, heterogeneous sample, stratified purposive sampling, extreme case sampling and intensity sampling. In the study, a purposive sample was used as it helped to “identify potential participants who are believed to be ‘typical’ of the population being studied” (Davies, 2007:55). Based on the subcategories identified by Trochim and Donnelly (2007), three different subcategories of purposive sampling were applied in

the research study, including modal purposive sampling, heterogeneity purposive sampling and quota purposive non-probability sampling. In many cases, “decisions about sampling people and events are made concurrently with decisions about the specific data collection methods to be used and should be thought through in advance” (Marshall and Rossman, 2011:105). Following this guidance, in the research project, the decisions about sampling participants were concurrent with those of the corresponding data gathering methods.

4.4.1.1 Sample selection for interviews

Punch (2009) notes that the type of interview should be based on the purpose of the research and the methodology employed in the research. In discussing criteria in selecting appropriate interview participants, Seidman (2006:48) suggests that a participant is properly selected when “the subject of the researcher’s study is central to the participant’s experience.” Based on the purpose of the research project, two careful considerations are involved in choosing samples in the research. The first consideration is associated with types of interviews. The decision to employ individual interview with university administrative staff and teaching staff is based on the fact that there are layers of hierarchical status of university staff. Therefore, it seems sensible to provide the chance for staff at different levels to describe their perceptions and experience of English language education in a relatively comfortable and stress-free way. The choice of focus group interviews with students in this research was originally inspired by the project I was invited to conduct at International College of University of Sheffield in the mid-July 2010, in which three focus group interviews were conducted to investigate the problems the international students might encounter while studying and living in the university. Based on the focus group interviews, the data were classified and the major themes then were sorted out, which proved to be helpful in shedding more light on the general attitudes and perceptions towards international students’ lives in Sheffield as well as their difficulties in English learning. With my previous experience of conducting interviews in Chinese universities and that I had in the University of Sheffield, I was confident about conducting the group interviews to

generate insightful discussion and gather rich data because one of the advantages of a focus group interview is to enable the researcher to gain a large amount of descriptive data necessary for the research in a relatively short time. In this study, by being carefully conducted, focus group interviews allowed students to bring out the complex and intricate issues of teaching and learning of English at Guangxi University.

The second consideration is related to the participants selected in both individual interviews and focus group interviews. As the research aimed to investigate the challenges of English language education at Guangxi University, it was crucial to find out the opinions of the major stakeholders involved. The major stakeholders in English language education are the administrative staff, teaching staff, and students. On the matter of administrative level, five potential interviewees were the Vice Chancellor of the university in charge of learning and teaching, the Dean of the Department of Teaching Affairs in charge of teaching, the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages responsible for English teaching and the two Responsible Professors of the College English department in charge of English teaching. These five interviewees are of four different levels of administration in China's educational institutions: the Vice Chancellor is of the top rank, the Dean of the Department of Teaching Affairs is of the second, the Dean of the Faculty the third and the two Responsible Professors of the Department the lowest. Four teachers are also selected for individual interviews. In Guangxi University, all the teachers at the College English Department teach the same course, and use the same textbooks and teaching plan. Therefore, the interviewees were chosen based on their academic titles: one professor, one associate professor, one lecturer and one teaching assistant. Factors like age, teaching experience and so on were also taken into account when interviewees were chosen. Eventually, 9 individual interviews were conducted and the details are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Details of individual interviews conducted in the research

DATA COLLECTION METHODS		TARGETS OF INVESTIGATION	PURPOSE
	Interview 1 (<i>Individual</i>)	The Vice Chancellor of Guangxi University in charge of teaching and learning	To gain understanding of the policy issues concerning English language education at the University

Semi-structured interview	Interview 2 <i>(Individual)</i>	The Dean of the Department of Teaching Affairs at Guangxi University	To understand the important issues regarding English language education in the University
	Interview 3 <i>(Individual)</i>	The Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Language in charge of English teaching at Guangxi University	To obtain the understanding of the factors and influences that have shaped the English language education in the University
	Interview 4 <i>(Individual)</i>	The Responsible Professor of the College English Department in Guangxi University	To access to in-depth perceptions and practice of English language education in the department
	Interview 5 <i>(Individual)</i>	The Responsible Professor of the College English Department in Guangxi University	To access to in-depth perceptions and practice of English language education in the department
	Interview 6 <i>(Individual)</i>	A professor teaching English in the College English Department	To discover the professor's perceptions and experience of English teaching
	Interview 7 <i>(Individual)</i>	An associate professor in the College English Department	To examine the associate professor's perceptions and experience of English teaching
	Interview 8 <i>(Individual)</i>	A lecturer in the College English Department	To examine the lecturer's perceptions and experience of English teaching
	Interview 9 <i>(Individual)</i>	A teaching assistant in the College English Department	To explore the teaching assistant's perceptions and experience of English teaching

In the research it was also pivotal to place value on the students' perceptions of English teaching and learning. According to Morgan (1988), the number of groups is based on the number of different subgroups in terms of homogeneity. Researchers "recruit groups that are defined in relation to the particular conceptual framework of the study" (Macnaghten and Myers, 2004: 68). In this study, with regard to the English course, the students in Guangxi University are split up into three levels when they enter the university based on their scores of English at the National College Entrance Examination. The ratio of the three levels among the first years are 10% to level 3,

20% to level 2 and 70% to level 1, with level 3 as the highest. Combining both practical and substantive considerations, Morgan (1988) suggests that the smallest size for a focus group is four and the maximum number could be around twelve. The original thought of the focus group was nine students involving three different levels. Then I realized that this arrangement might be potentially disadvantageous to the students of the lower levels. They might feel frustrated or depressed when participating with other members of higher levels in the group. Such a sharp contrast might make them feel inferior. Therefore, after careful thought, I changed my mind, deciding to conduct focus group interviews in accordance with three different levels. Based on the theoretical and practical consideration mentioned above, a decision was made that three focus group interviews with five participants in each were conducted. Details of focus group interviews used are indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Details of focus group interviews conducted in the research

DATA COLLECTION METHODS		TARGETS OF INVESTIGATION	PURPOSE
Semi-structured interview	Interview 10 (Focus group)	5 non-English major undergraduates of Level 1	To investigate level 1 students' experience of English learning
	Interview 11 (Focus group)	5 non-English major undergraduates of Level 2	To explore level 2 students' experience of English learning
	Interview 12 (Focus group)	5 non-English major undergraduates of Level 3	To explore level 3 students' experience of English learning

4.4.1.2 Piloting interviews

One of the functions of piloting an interview is to test the appropriateness of the questions asked as well as the likely duration of the interview for the main study. It not only helps to guarantee the accuracy of the wording in the questions but the whole interview schedule as well. As for me, in particular, I found piloting interview very beneficial in the sense that it provided an excellent opportunity for me to understand myself as a researcher. With the pilot schedule, I gained more sense of how the

interviews for the main study should be conducted and was convinced that rich information would be gathered by the questions carefully designed. The interview pilot in this study was conducted with my supervisor in the University of Hull in September 2010 as well as one of my colleagues in Guangxi University in November 2010. After the pilot, a post-interview evaluation was operated with them concerning the length of the interview, the feeling they had about the flow of the interview questions as well as the extra topics added to the main interviews. In practical terms, the interview pilots were successful. The feedback indicated that the interview questions flowed smoothly and the length of about one hour was acceptable. The second pilot done in Guangxi University also suggested that participants might prefer to be interviewed in Chinese, as they felt more confident in expressing their feelings or attitudes in their native language.

4.4.2 Sampling for questionnaires

4.4.2.1 Sample selection for questionnaires

The questionnaire data play a supportive role to interview data in the research study aiming to provide a more holistic picture of what is going on in English language education at Guangxi University. In addition, the student-based questionnaire also helps to identify potential participants for the focus group interviews. Finally, the questionnaires in the study also serve to guarantee the triangulation of the research. The questionnaires in the study consist of two types: teacher-based questionnaire and student-based questionnaire. At present, the number of teaching staff in College English Department is 98 and around 10,000 students have registered for the course of *College English*. Taking practicability and the purpose of the research into account, a decision was made to distribute a teacher-based questionnaire to all the teaching staff and 100 questionnaires to students.

4.4.2.2 Piloting questionnaire

Piloting a questionnaire can be very useful in a research. Bell (1993) points out three

aspects worth considering in piloting questionnaires: the time required for filling out the questionnaire, the clarity of instructions and questions and the essentialness of all the items. The teacher-based questionnaire has both Chinese and English versions. They were piloted first by two Chinese visiting scholars in the University of Hull in late October 2010, one with the Chinese version and the other with the English version. Then it was piloted again in China by two of my colleagues in November 2010, one with an English version, the other with a Chinese version. Based on the pilot, I accepted the pilot interviewees' suggestion that two versions would be offered to participants and then they could answer the one they wanted to.

The student-based questionnaire was also in both English and Chinese versions and each was piloted respectively by one of my former students at Guangxi University in November 2011. At the very beginning, I thought the students might be able to accept the English version, which in my mind, was in simple words. In the pilot, one participant spent 20 minutes in completing the questionnaire in the English version, while the other took only 8 minutes for the Chinese version. The participant with the English version admitted that the English questionnaire could be very hard for students who were at level 1 and level 2. In this situation, unreliable data might be collected due to the language barrier. Therefore, the decision was made that students would be given only the questionnaires in Chinese. In addition, based on the pilot response the questionnaires were revised in terms of wording and layout.

4.5 Access to participants

There seems little doubt that the issue of access is important as it determines what kind of data can be collected and what source of data the researcher can be offered. In this study, I found it a great challenge to get access to interview participants as staff in different ranks was involved in the interviews. Due to various cultural and social reasons, ordinary teachers seldom enjoy great opportunities to meet with administrative staff, particularly the top rank staff. Nevertheless, I believed that an open heart and consideration for others would enable me to overcome difficulties such as political barriers, social standing or lack of trust in accessing the participants.

As for the individual interviews, four steps were taken to ensure the access to all the participants. First, I made sure I obtained institutional permission to conduct the research at Guangxi University. Access to the site and population of the research study was successfully sought by first contacting one Responsible Professor of the College English Department at Guangxi University via email, telling her about my research project and asking her for help in October 2010, then by paying a contact visit to her after I returned to China in early November 2010. Second, in a friendly tone, nine invitation letters were sent to all selected participants via email, presenting the purpose and significance of the study. In the email, I also explained that the outcome of the research will benefit the English language education at the University as a whole in terms of administration, learning and teaching practice. This seemed to be a very persuasive argument for most of the selected participants. Eight of them responded in a positive way and only one potential participant replied with hesitation. Then another email was sent to the hesitant participant, explaining the aim of the study in greater detail with openness and honesty, and she eventually responded with permission. Third, once they accepted the invitation, I subsequently sent emails to them with the interview questions. Finally, I used text messages to maintain contact with them to confirm interview appointments and follow-up arrangements. Normally, a day prior to the interview date a reminder was sent via text message to the participants.

When it comes to the focus group interview participants, I included an invitation at the end of the student-based questionnaires, asking the questionnaire respondents to leave their contact information if they would like to be interviewees of this study. This method proved to be extremely successful. A total number of forty-five students expressed their willingness to join the interview and left their contact information. Because they were from different departments and took different courses with different schedules, after contacting them one by one by telephone and discussing with them the possible interview date and time, I eventually selected fifteen participants for focus group interviews. Then I emailed to all the remaining thirty students expressing my appreciation for their interest in the interview and my gratitude for their kindly support. Similarly, I made sure that every interview participant would be able to join the interview punctually by keeping contact with them and sending out reminders by text

messages.

With regard to the questionnaires, the teacher questionnaire was applied to all the teaching staff at the College English Department along with an invitation letter. The questionnaires for undergraduates were distributed in the Language Learning Centre when students were doing automatic learning and invited them to answer in their own time.

4.6 The Protocol of interviews and questionnaires

4.6.1 The protocol of interviews

The primary purpose of interviews is to collect the data in the participants' own words and to gain more insightful perceptions of English teaching practice and learning at Guangxi University. In this study such issues are addressed by individual interviews as well as focus group interviews. The interview used in the study was a semi-structured one which was tape recorded. "Semi-structured interviews are by far the most widely used instrument for collecting data for qualitative research"(Patten, 2005: 147). Based on the major research question, the interview questions were in part formed by my earlier career involvement in teaching practice and administration and in part from the discussions and comments in previous research on English language education in China as presented in section 2.7 as well as the university policy documents discussed in section 3.3 and section 3.4. In the study, the interview protocol was composed of two parts: instructions for each section of the interviews and a set of questions which helped to prompt the responses of the interviewees. To be specific, the individual interview schedule was divided into six parts and started with two general factual questions with an aim to put the interviewees at ease and engage them into interviews. The objective of the first part was to find out general information about the interviewees in terms of their educational and academic background and to see how their background helped them appreciate the quality of English language education in the university. The subsequent parts were designed to address SRQ 3 and SRQ 4. The second part, with focus on SRQ 3, was intended to seek information about interviewees' experiences related to English language education, including their daily

practice and the challenges they might encounter. The questions in the third part aimed to find out interviewees' perceptions and attitudes of current quality of English language education at the University (SRQ 3). The fourth part of the interview aimed to find out information about measures identified by interviewees to improve English language education at the University as well as how useful they found them to be (SRQ 3). The questions in the fifth part aimed to address what possible strategies can be taken to improve English language education at the individual, departmental and university levels (SRQ 4). The sixth part of the interview consisted of one question to allow interviewee to propose any issues they were interested in but were not mentioned in the interview by the researcher. The individual interview schedule for the research project is indicated in Table 4.3. Meanwhile, a copy of individual interview schedule is enclosed as Appendix 1.

Table 4.3 Individual interview schedule

Items	Questions	Purpose	SRQs targeted
Part I Question 1& 2	<i>First of all, please tell me a little about your background.</i> Q1: Can you briefly describe the personal journey you have taken in becoming vice Chancellor/ director/ dean/ responsible professor/ professor/ associate professor/ lecturer/ teaching assistant in this university? Q2: How did this background help you to appreciate the quality of English language education here?	Warm-up questions to put interviewees at ease To seek general information of their educational and professional background; To find out how the background helps them appreciate the quality of English language education at the university.	
Part II Question 3& 4	<i>Now let us talk about your daily practice.</i> Q3: Would you briefly describe your daily practice concerning the teaching of English here? Q4: Can you describe any situations where you	To find out their experiences with regard to English language education; To explore what	SRQ 3

	have encountered challenges in English language education in this university? How did you solve them or respond to them?	challenges they have encountered in their daily practice.	
Part III Question 5& 6	<i>Next I want to know a little about the quality of English language education in this university.</i> Q5: What is your view of the current quality of the teaching of English in this university? Q6: What are the possible factors do you think help shape the current state of the teaching of English in this university?	To seek their perceptions of the current quality of the teaching of English at the university; To find out factors that help shape the current state of the teaching of English at the university.	SRQ 3
Part IV Question 7& 8	<i>Now let us move on to strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education in the university.</i> Q7: What measures have you identified taken by both the university and department to improve English language education in this university? Q8: How useful do you think they have been in helping to improve the quality of English language education here?	To find out what measures they can identify to improve English language education at the university; To discover whether the measures taken are useful or not.	SRQ 3
Part V Question 9& 10	<i>Last, I would like to talk about strategies that could be taken in the future.</i> Q9: What things would help improve your management/teaching concerning English language education in the university? Q10: What new strategies, if any, at both university and department level do you think might be introduced to improve English language education in the university?	To explore possible strategies to improve English language education at the individual level; To discover possible strategies to improve English language education at the departmental and university levels.	SRQ 4
Part VI Question 11	Q11: Is there anything further you wish to add?	To allow them to propose any issues they are interested in but are not mentioned in the interview by the researcher.	

Likewise, the focus group interview schedule for the research has been formed with a little adjustment, which is indicated in Table 4.4. A copy of focus group interview schedule is attached as Appendix 2 in the thesis.

Table 4.4 Focus group interview schedule

Items	question	purpose	SRQ targeted
Part I Question 1	<i>First of all, please tell me a little bit about your background.</i> <i>Q1: Would you please briefly introduce your name, and what subject you are studying so that we get to know about each other.</i>	Warm-up question to put interviewees at ease; To find out general information of their names and their subjects, etc.	
Part II Question 2& 3	<i>Now let us talk about your learning experience..</i> <i>Q2: Would each of you briefly describe your English learning experience in this university?</i> <i>Q3: Can you describe any situations where you had difficulties in the learning of English in this university? How did you solve them?</i>	To discover their English learning experiences at the university; To find out what difficulties they have in learning English.	SRQ 3
Part III Question 4& 5	<i>Next I want to know a little about the quality of English language education in this university.</i> <i>Q4: What is your view of the current quality of the teaching of English in this university?</i> <i>Q5: What are the possible factors do you think help shape the current state of the teaching of English in this university?</i>	To find out their perceptions of the current reality of teaching of English at the university; To explore factors that help shape the current state of the teaching of English at the university.	SRQ 3
Part IV Question 6& 7	<i>Now let us move on to strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education in the university.</i> <i>Q6: What measures have you identified taken by both the university and your English teachers to improve English language education in this university?</i> <i>Q7: How useful do you think they have been in helping to improve the quality of English language education here?</i>	To seek what measures they can identify to improve English language education at the university; To discover whether the measures taken are useful or not.	SRQ 3
Part V Question	<i>Last, I would like to talk about strategies that could be taken in the future.</i> <i>Q8: What things would help you to improve your</i>	To discover possible strategies to improve	SRQ 4

8& 9	learning of English? <i>Q9</i> : What new strategies, if any, at the university do you think might be introduced to improve the quality of teaching?	English language education at the individual level; To find out possible strategies to improve English language education at the departmental and university levels.	
Part VI Question 10	<i>Q10</i> : Is there anything further you wish to add?	To allow them to propose any issues they are interested in but are not mentioned in the interview by the researcher.	

4.6.2 Questionnaire design

There are two types of questionnaires in this study: one for teaching staff in the College English Department, and the other for non-English major undergraduates in Guangxi University. The items in the questionnaires are formed based on my own teaching experience as well as the relevant literature (see Appendices 3&4). Table 4.5 gives the basic format of teacher-based questionnaire and Table 4.6 indicates the format of the student-based questionnaire.

Table 4.5 Basic format of teacher-based questionnaire

Contents	Question items	SRQ targeted
Part I Demographic information	Questions 1-5 (closed questions)	
Part II Teaching practice, belief and attitudes	Questions 6-11 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part III Career development	Question 12-14 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part IV Organizational management	Question 15-16 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part V Ideal teaching of English	Question 17 (open-ended question)	SRQ 4

Table 4.6 Basic format of student-based questionnaire

Contents	Question items	SRQ targeted
Part I Demographic information	Questions 1-2 (closed questions)	
Part II English learning experience	Questions 3-10 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part III English learning evaluation	Question 11 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part IV Strategies to improve English Learning	Question 12-13 (closed questions)	SRQ 3
Part V Ideal teaching or learning of English	Question 14 (open-ended question)	SRQ 4

4.7 Data collection methods

The primary purpose of this research is to identify challenges of English language education in Guangxi University and to explore possible resolutions to improve its quality under the increasingly intense global and national contexts. The major data collection methods used in the study were individual interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires.

4.7.1 Individual interviews

Individual interview is generally viewed as a prime and productive research tool in social sciences. Robson (1993:229) puts this point clearly in his *Real World Research*, when he argues that

Observing behavior is clearly a useful enquiry technique but asking people directly about what is going on is an obvious short cut in seeking answers to our research questions.

With regard to the strength of interview, he further suggests that individual interviews offer the great opportunity for the researcher to listen to other people's life experience and understand the way they perceive the world around them. For researchers such as Patton (2002: 341), the popularity of interview lies in the fact that "we interview

people to find out from them those things we can not directly observe”, which include feelings, perceptions and experiences. In brief, interviewing, if conducted properly, enables researchers to access rich and various values and thoughts of the potential interviewees.

Interviewing also has its disadvantages. One of the widely recognizable weaknesses of the face-to-face interview is, as Robson (1993:229) points out, that it can be highly “time-consuming” as interviewing means more than simply asking questions. In other words, to successfully conduct an interview, careful consideration should be given to many issues such as confirming schedules, seeking institutional permissions, notes-taking during the interview and accurate tapes transcription. Besides, choosing a quiet and comfortable place for an interview might also be problematic. And finally, in some cases it also appears to be difficult to build trust between the interviewer and the potential interviewee.

In Guangxi University, the individual interviews of around one hour in the main study were conducted between November 2010 and January 2011. All interviewees felt happy and relaxed to be interviewed in Chinese and this was performed as requested. In terms of the site for interviews, I allowed the administrative participants to decide on their own and they chose either their office or departmental meeting room at the University. For teaching participants, the interviews were conducted in an office at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. All the interviews were recorded with participants’ permission. The interviews were first transcribed and then translated.

The profile for individual interviewees is presented in Table 4.7. In the table, “I” is the shortened form for individual interview. “AS” refers to administrative staff and “TS” to teaching staff.

Table 4.7 Profile of individual interview participants

Code	Age	Gender	Educational background
I-AS1	57	M	Ph.D awarded in Japan
I-AS2	49	M	Ph.D granted in China
I-AS3	55	F	Postgraduate diploma granted in China/ with one-year experience of teaching Chinese in the U.S.A.
I-AS4	43	F	Postgraduate diploma granted in China/With three-month experience as a visiting scholar in the U.S.A
I-AS5	45	F	MA granted in China
I-TS1	52	F	MA granted in the U.K.
I-TS2	47	F	BA granted in China/ With three-month experience as a visiting scholar in the U.S.A
I-TS3	32	M	BA granted in China
I-TS4	26	F	MA granted in China

4.7.2 Focus group interviews

In terms of the number of interviewees involved, interviews can be classified into individual interviews (also known as one-to-one interviews) and focus group interviews. Focus group interview is “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan, 1996:30). One of the strengths of focus group interviews is that it provides opportunity to talk and to listen to other participants. In this sense, compared to individual interviews, focus group interviews provide a more interactive setting in which the interaction is not confined between the interviewer and the participant. In this sense, Macnaghten and Myers (2004:65) argue that focus group interviews are often used in an exploratory way to “reveal complex, contradictory and shifting definitions and different senses of the issue concerned”.

The main disadvantage of a focus group interview lies in the very fact that it is sometimes difficult to control both the flow and the topic of conversation among group

interviewees, if it is not properly planned. The problem also rises when one active participant keeps dominating the talk while others remain silent, and thus fail to contribute to the discussion. If that is the case, the data collected may not cover as wide a range of ideas or feelings as expected.

The focus group interviews in the main study were conducted in December 2010, and were recorded, together with note-taking. In order to fit in with the students' plans, two focus group interview appointments were made in the evening at one of the offices in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and one on a morning at the same office. Permission was given for recording before the interviews. Later on the interview recordings were transcribed and translated. The following Table 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 show clearly the profile of focus group interviewees. In the tables, "FI" refers to focus group interview of level 1, "FII" to focus group interview of level 2, and "FIII" to focus group interview of level 3. "ST" stands for student.

Table 4.8 Profile of focus group 1 (Level 1)

Code	Age	Gender	Program	Original Province
FI-ST1	20	M	Ore Resources and Technology	Shanxi Province
FI-ST2	19	F	Chinese as a Second Language	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FI-ST3	21	M	Mechanical Manufacturing and Automation	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FI-ST4	21	M	Inorganic Nonmetal Material Engineering	Shanxi Province
FI-ST5	20	M	Animal Science	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Table 4.9 Profile of focus group 2 (Level 2)

Code	Age	Gender	Program	Original Province
FII-ST1	21	F	Chinese as a Second Language	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FII-ST2	21	M	Logistics	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FII-ST3	21	F	Mechanical Manufacturing and Automation	Shandong Province
FII-ST4	20	M	Mechanical Manufacturing and Automation	Anhui Province
FII-ST5	20	M	Transportation	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Table 4.10 Profile of focus group 3 (Level 3)

Code	Age	Gender	Program	Original Province
FIII-ST1	20	F	Information Management and Information system	Henan Province
FIII-ST2	20	F	Applied Psychology	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FIII-ST3	19	F	Industry and Business Management	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FIII-ST4	19	F	Philosophy	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
FIII-ST5	19	F	Economics	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

4.7.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaire is a data collection technique used extensively in social surveys. The use of questionnaires has many benefits. First, the questionnaire is usually viewed as an efficient and economic instrument because it saves researchers' time and money. That is to say, the questionnaire enables the researcher to get quick access to a great number of respondents within a short time. Second, as the same questions are applied to all the respondents in exactly the same way, the influence of the researcher can be

minimized and the reliability of the data collected be guaranteed. In comparison with interview, Miller and Brewer (2003) also address the attractions of using a questionnaire in research. One of its prominent strengths is its cheapness. The cost of an equal amount of information obtained from a questionnaire is considerably less than that from an interview. In this sense, it is more doable and accessible. Nevertheless, a questionnaire has its weakness. For example, due to the less time spent on a questionnaire and the limited respondents, the information gathered may risk being shallow and untrustworthy.

In the main study, the teacher-based questionnaires were given to teachers personally at the Language Learning Centre and only a few were distributed via teachers' mailboxes at the department in November 2010. When meeting teachers face to face, I explained the purpose of questionnaire, the significance of the study and what would be done with the information provided. Questionnaires in both English and Chinese versions were offered for teachers to choose. All the questionnaires distributed in the Language Learning Centre were collected the same day. For those distributed through mailboxes, one or two days were allowed for the participants to fill out the questionnaires and return them to my mailbox. In total, 83 teacher-based questionnaires were sent out and 80 were collected. 100 student-based questionnaires were distributed with an accompanying invitation letter again in the Language Learning Centre when students learned English on their own. In the end, 100 questionnaires were collected immediately after they were completed.

4.8 Data analysis and data presentation

4.8.1 Data analysis

One of the most crucial issues in interpretivist-based case study is almost certainly data analysis. This is particularly true when the case being studied involves multiple sources of data. This perhaps is unsurprising for two reasons. First, there has not been a standardized data analysis method provided in the existing research literature due to the fact that "each analyst has his or her own repertoire of strategies" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:66). Second, neither the research methodology books nor the research

reports can offer an appropriate tailor-made method with regard to concrete procedures taken in a particular research study. Nevertheless, despite the inadequacy of optimal strategies for data analysis, there has been literature providing general guidance for data analysis. Roulston (2010) suggests that inductive or bottom-up approaches be used to generate interpretations from data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) focus on two mainstay strategies that bring the data to a theoretical level: asking questions and making comparison. While many qualitative researchers developed a variety of ways to deal with raw data (Patton, 2002; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Trochim and Donnelly, 2007), I found Roulston's (2010) strategies useful which were used in this study. According to Roulston, as one of the most commonly used ways of data analysis, thematic analysis consists of three parts: data reduction, data categorization and thematic representation (see Figure 4.5).

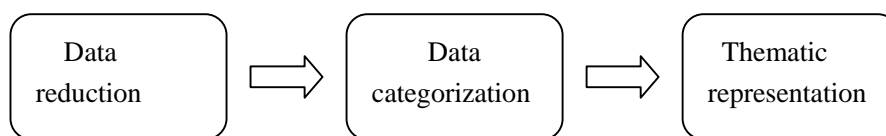


Figure 4.5 Strategies for data analysis

1) Data reduction by open coding

Data analysis begins by preparing data in a good position for generation of categories. This is done by open coding, which is conventionally viewed as the first step to reveal the sense of the data. Basically, coding refers to “taking raw data and raising it to a conceptual level” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:66). Codes are “labels” attached to “sections of data” (Roulston, 2010:151). The purpose of coding is twofold. On the one hand, coding helps to reduce and organize the lengthy raw data by excluding the repetitive and irrelevant sections. On the other hand, it helps to abstract major concepts, that is, the topics being discussed in the data. Table 4.11 shows an example of how open coding was applied to the transcript of the first interview conducted in the research study.

Table 4.11 Example of open coding of individual interview with I-TS1

Profile of individual interview with I-TS 1	Extract of transcripts	Codes
<p>Date of Interview: 8 December, 2010</p> <p>Time: 15:30-17:30</p> <p>Place: Room 407 Yifu Building</p> <p>Interviewer: YL</p> <p>Interviewee: I-TS1</p> <p>Length of time of tape: 1:19:00</p>	<p>I am busier than before, and busier and busier as compared to how I was doing in the past. I often work into deep night.</p> <p>The work makes me so busy that I have no time to do anything else in academic field.</p> <p>While teachers would prefer to teach students things about quality, cross-culture, communication with an aim to improve their whole personal quality, students would like to learn testing skill to pass national College English Test.</p> <p>In terms of English exam, as you can see from the items in exam paper, the focus has for years been grammar structure and reading comprehension.</p> <p>You have to adjust yourself to the development, and furthermore we have to lead the reform and in this way we may do our job better and make ourselves easier in the whole case.</p> <p>Many teachers felt at a loss and think something must be done but simply don't know what can be done due to the insufficient funding and limited opportunities.</p> <p>The university should give more support and should be more concerned about college English.</p>	<p>1) The interviewee felt more workload than before and had to work overtime.</p> <p>2) Not enough time in academic research</p> <p>3) Teachers and students do not have shared objectives</p> <p>4) The English exam focuses on grammar and reading skills</p> <p>5) Understanding of the ongoing reform</p> <p>6) No idea of what can be done to improve current situation</p> <p>7) What the university should do to help English language education.</p>

2) Data Categorization

After thorough and careful coding, the second step is to organize codes into categories.

There is no doubt that a methodical and thoughtful categorizing process involves the

researcher’s active interaction with the data and creative interpretation of the data. It also requires that the researchers use techniques such as asking questions and making comparison between data. In Table 4.12, a categorizing process is presented based on the transcript of an individual interview with I-TS1.

Table 4.12 Example of codes and categories of individual interview with I-TS1

CODES	CATEGORIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The interviewee felt more workload than before and had to work overtime. •Not enough time in academic research •Teachers and students do not have shared objectives •The English exam focuses on grammar and reading skills • The English course design is problematic 	GROUP 1	
	<p>Target to answer interview questions Part II:</p> <p>challenges encountered with regard to English language education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Heavy workloads – Lack of academic research – English course design – The assessment system of English course
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cannot give a general assessment of quality of English language education •Having both qualified and non-qualified teachers •Teachers do not observe classroom •Teachers don’t know how to improve teaching due to insufficient funding and opportunities 	GROUP 2	
	<p>Target to answer interview question Part III:</p> <p>Quality of English language education in the University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hard to assess – Reasons to back up assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Big investment in Language Learning Centre •Supported us in the application for National Exemplary Institution for College English Reform •Sponsored to attend research conferences •Faculty leaders paid attention to us •Adopted a system of “Outstanding lecturer” •Established a campus-based website for English language education •A blog developed to improve communication between teachers and students 	GROUP 3	
	<p>Target to answer interview questions Part IV :</p> <p>Strategies taken to improve the quality of English language education in the University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strategies at university level – Strategies at faculty level – Strategies at department level

		GROUP 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A term-end research session is necessary •Study groups and research groups among the teaching staff •The university gives more support and concern about English language education •University offers further training for teaching staff 	Target to answer interview questions	– Strategies at university level	
	Part V: Possible strategies to improve English language education in the future	– Strategies at faculty level – Strategies at department level	

3) Thematic representation

Thematic representation is concerned with in-depth interpretation of the data by analytically probing the data and sorting out the hidden themes contained within data. The aim of thematic analysis is to bring data up to a theoretical and thematic level, which eventually helps contribute to the generation of theory. To illustrate, a process of theme identification is clearly shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Example of theme identification based on codes and categories

EXTRACTS OF TRANSCRIPTS	CODE	CATEGORIES	THEME	TARGETED SRQ 3
<p>I-TS1: <i>I am busier than before, and busier and busier as compared to how I was doing in the past. I often work into deep night.</i></p> <p>I-TS2: <i>I think my workload is doubled than before.</i></p> <p>I-TS4: <i>I have a lot of classes. I have classes the whole morning everyday except Thursday.</i></p> <p>I-AS4: <i>It is not an exaggeration to say that I have triple workload now. I</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The interviewee has more workload than before and has to work overtime. •Double workload than before •The interviewee has a lot of classes in a week. •Triple workload than before 	<p>1)Heavy workload in teaching tasks</p> <p>2)Heavy workload in administrative tasks</p>	<p>Individual interview questions Part II:</p> <p>Identifying challenges encountered in English language education at the University</p>	<p>Specific Research Question 3:</p> <p>What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?</p>

<i>have not personal life.</i>				
--------------------------------	--	--	--	--

4.8.2 Data presentation

As discussed in section 4.2.2, the purpose of MMR inquiry is to present the multiple facets and complexities of human society in which distinctive paradigms, methodological traditions as well as different perspectives are highly respected. In terms of data presentation, “the mixed methods inquirer is strongly encouraged to adopt a mixed approach to writing up the results and conclusion of his or her work” (Greene, 2007:185). Greene (2007) summarizes some practical strategies of data presentation in MMR, including different methods remaining separate until the point of drawing conclusion or research results being reported separately for the different methods or data being presented within a single inquiry tradition even though there is a mix of methods. Although there have been rich samples of mixed methods research in practice since the 1990s, it is also worth pointing out that the territory of mixed methods data analysis and presentation itself “still remains under development” and thus calls for practitioners’ creative contribution(Greene, 2007: 142).

This study was conducted by mixed research methods, that is, by a combination of qualitative and quantitative research underpinned by interpretivism. As shown in section 4.2.3, the mixing in the study does not belong to “integrating”, which means “merging the quantitative data with the qualitative data” (Creswell, 2009:208). Rather, it is “embedding”, in which one form of data serves as primary data and the other form of data provides supportive information. Specifically speaking, in the study, qualitative data collected through individual interviews and focus group interviews provides the principal data while quantitative data gathered by teacher-based questionnaires and student-based questionnaires offers secondary description of the case. Hence, by taking into consideration both practical factors and the distinct roles qualitative and quantitative data play, the data in the study is presented separately, that is, in two different chapters, with Chapter 5 focusing on primary qualitative data and Chapter 6 on secondary quantitative data.

4.9 Ethical considerations

“Ethics refers to a complex of ideals showing how individuals should relate to one another in particular situations, to principles of conduct guiding those relationships, and to the kind of reasoning one engages in when thinking about such ideals and principles” (Smith, 1990: 141). Creswell (1998:19) suggests that three ethical issues need to be considered in the conduct of a research project: “seeking consent”; “maintaining confidentiality”, and “protecting the anonymity of individuals with whom we speak”. In practical terms, research should be conducted based on the principles of mutual respect between the researcher and the researched and the best interest of the researched should always be taken into consideration. To achieve this, in accordance with the guidance by Patten (2005:25), the following steps were taken: First, prior to the beginning of the research, I sought the approval of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee by completing and submitting the proforma of ethical considerations. A copy of the approved proforma of ethical consideration has been attached in the thesis as Appendix 5. Second, all the participants were sent letters asking for their informed consent, in which the aim of the research and procedures were clearly described. The participants signed the informed consent form to indicate that they understood it. Third, consent was obtained to tape-record the interviews. Fourth, all the participants were informed that their participating in the research was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time and without adverse consequences. Fifth, assurance was given to all participants that codes would be used in the research and their names and the information they provided would be kept confidential. And finally, debriefing was operated after the study, in which the purposes of the study and the procedures employed were reviewed and a discussion of the results was offered.

4.10 Validity and reliability

As two key concepts considered in scientific research, validity and reliability are seen as the guarantee of the soundness of social science research. In general, validity is

concerned with the accurate representation of what the researcher is seeking to find out. Reliability is linked with whether the research is methodologically repeatable and generates the similar results. In the study, these were met by addressing issues proposed by LeCompte and Goetz (1982). Firstly, the particular investigator-insider status position taken by the researcher of this study was explained clearly in the thesis. Secondly, a detailed description about interview and questionnaire participants was included in the research report. Thirdly, the historical, social, national and institutional context for the current research project was clearly elaborated. Fourthly, a full account was given of the philosophical assumptions and ideas that underpinned the research design. Fifthly, a detailed account was given of all aspects of research methods used in the study. To be specific, in this research project, samples were selected carefully, questionnaires were carefully designed and interview pilots were done in a rigorous way. Then special attention was given to make sure that data were collected and recorded. When analysing the data, a systematic approach was applied to all raw data. The principle of “transparency” was followed throughout the whole research process. All of these considerations helped to contribute to the validity and reliability of findings of the current research project.

4.11 Generalisability

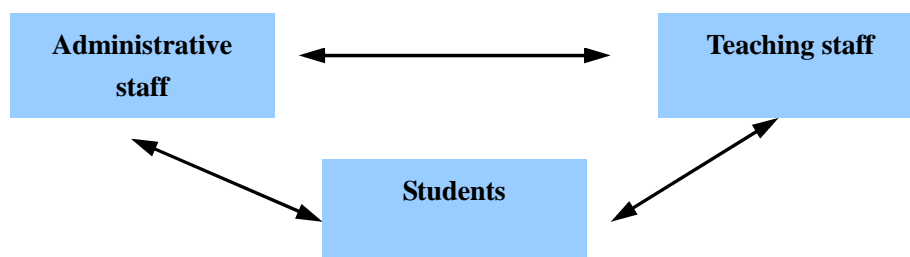
“Generalisation should not necessarily be the objective of all research projects, whether case studies or not” (Denzin, 1983:146). Being conducted in a specific context which is by its nature unique, the intention of this study is not to generalize, but rather to deeply perceive the case: its wholeness and its uniqueness, as well as in its natural context. Therefore, it is not seeking for a broad application in a strict sense. However, being specific and being unique does not mean that nothing can be learned from it. “Case study is often done without attempting broad or even limited generalisation, but readers of the research may find application to other situations” (Wiersma, 2000: 212). Therefore, those who work in educational institutions may relate to the results of the research which may help them understand better the situation and context of English language education in China’s higher education. In this sense, I see my responsibility

as a provider of a rich and thick description of a specific situation and concrete context and it is the readers who make the comparison between the case studied and their own situations to decide whether it is applicable to their situations.

4.12 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to “comparison of information to determine whether or not there is corroboration” (Wiersma, 2000:251). Likewise, Denzin (1978) notes that triangulation is characterized by combining multiple research strategies in social science research. Basically speaking, the purpose of the triangulation is to guarantee the richness and adequacy of the data. Therefore, traditionally, by means of triangulation, researchers make efforts to seek for convergence of different data. Based on Wiersma (2000:252), the triangulation for this study can be illustrated in Figure 4.6.

Triangulation involving multiple data source



Triangulation involving multiple data-collection procedure

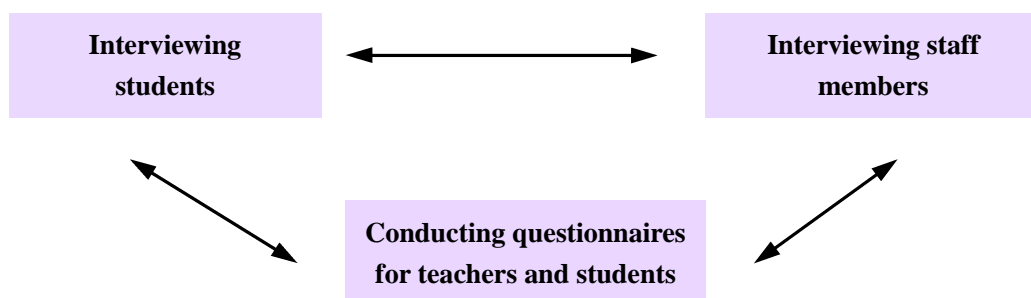


Figure 4.6 Triangulation in the research study

As is clearly shown in Figure 4.6, the study employs multiple data sources and multiple methods of data collection to address the research questions. To be specific,

the data is collected from three sources, which comprise administrative staff, teachers and students. Furthermore, the data collection procedures involve individual interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires. The convergence of multiple data sources and multiple data-collection methods help assess the sufficiency of the data used in the study.

4.13 The position of the researcher

I see my role in the study as both investigator and insider. As an investigator, I was seeking to allow “voice” of participants in the study and make sense of the accounts of participants. In other words, I aimed to look for a “thick description” of perceptions and experience of the participants. I bore in mind that I should not allow my preconceived ideas to colour the data. On the contrary, I allowed the data to speak for itself. Whilst it is not always easy to conduct research within one’s own institution, being an insider also brought me some benefits. With my previous working experience, I was greatly trusted by the interview and questionnaire participants. What is more important is that I was able to get quick access to “settings, detailed conversations and information that might not otherwise have been available” (Hobbs, 1988:15).

As the research was conducted within the organization I work for, I also made sure that my previous post as Responsible Professor would not exert unexpected influence upon interviewees, leading them to try to please me rather than telling their true feelings. This happens when a researcher acts as insider-investigator and it is mainly about the power relationship between the researcher and participants. I worked as Responsible Professor at the University between September 2007 and June 2009, which means that when I went back to China to conduct the research in November 2010, I was merely viewed by most interviewees as a research student in the UK rather than a Responsible Professor, whose administrative status is similar to a dean of department. In the study, the individual interviews involved five administrative interviewees, namely, one Vice Chancellor, one dean of Department of Teaching Affairs, one dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages, and two Responsible Professors. In an administrative sense, they were all of higher rank than me, so it was unlikely I could exert influence on them.

Among the four teaching staff interviewees, one was a professor who was higher in professional rank than me. One was an associate professor whose professional rank was the same as mine. One was a teaching assistant who was employed after my leaving for the UK. Therefore she did not know me and see me before the interview. The three mentioned teaching staff interviewees were either higher in professional rank than me or enjoying the same professional rank as me or did not know me before, so it is reasonable to say that I would not exert influence upon their answers in the interviews. The only teaching staff interviewee who knew me as Responsible Professor was a lecturer. Before and during his interview, I explained clearly my role as a research student in the UK to him and gave full attention to the way I behaved as a research student by showing him great respect. In the focus group interviews, all the interviewees were recruited through the invitation letter attached to the questionnaires. Besides, they all entered the university after I left the university to pursue my study in the UK, so I had never taught them and had never known them before the interviews.

4.14 Summary of the chapter

This chapter provided the justification for an interpretivism-based case study design used to examine the diverse and various perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of English language education at Guangxi University. The rationale for the research methodology adopted in the study is summarized as follows:

First, perceptions and experiences of stakeholders are complex and therefore can only be understood within their context. A case study provides a real and valid opportunity to explore this situation, particularly when complex factors are involved. Second, in the research, it is important to capture as much of this complexity as possible, which calls for attainment of multiple perspectives on English language education at Guangxi University. Hence, semi-structured individual interviews with administrators and teaching staff as well as focus group interviews with students are justifiable in the sense that they allow the researcher to reach the participants, in other words, “to enter into other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002:341). Third, teacher-based questionnaires and student-based questionnaires present a snapshot contributing to a

complex and holistic picture of English language education at Guangxi University. Fourth, careful consideration was given to ensure that the interviews were well-organized and went smoothly. Fifth, an effort was made to make sure the participants experienced no difficulties in completing and returning the questionnaires. Sixth, all the relevant ethical issues have been considered in terms of voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality. Seventh, the chapter also discusses in detail how a transparent and systematic thematic analysis approach has been employed in data analysis so that the manner and outcome of the interpretation could be “open and understandable by others” (Matthews and Ross, 2010:373).

In light of the research design and research methodology outlined above, the thesis is intended next to explore the opinions of stakeholders of English language education in Guangxi University. It is these opinions, or the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders that are the subjects of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

**FINDINGS (I)—PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF
STAKEHOLDERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
EDUCATION AT GUANGXI UNIVERSITY
(INTERVIEW-BASED)**

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the research project is to explore the growing challenges which English language education in Guangxi University is currently faced with and to suggest solutions to improve English language education in Guangxi University. To be specific, the research intends, first, to make a contribution which helps elaborate the reasons why English language education is to a great degree taken seriously at Guangxi University through a huge amount of constant efforts and capital investment. Second, the study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of undergraduates and staff in Guangxi University. Third, the research seeks to investigate the responsive strategies taken by Guangxi University as they adjust to this global, national and institutional context. And finally, the research aims to propose some potential remedies with regard to improving the quality of English language education at Guangxi University.

The research project draws insight from the perspectives of students and staff themselves with regard to English language education. Such objectives and assumptions give rise to the following major research question (RQ):

(RQ) What are the challenges, responses and recommendations in improving English language education at Guangxi University, China?

To offer a reasonable and justifiable explanation to the Research Question, the following **four** Specific Research Questions (SRQs) are proposed:

- SRQ 1** What are the current global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?
- SRQ 2** What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?
- SRQ 3** What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?
- SRQ 4** What possible strategies can be adopted to improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

In Chapter 4, a rationale was detailed to ensure the validity of research design and the justification of data collection methods. Hence, in this chapter and the next chapter, namely, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the information on stakeholders' perceptions derived from both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires is examined to answer Specific Research Question 3 (SRQ3) and Specific Research Question 4 (SRQ4) as follows:

- SRQ 3** What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?
- SRQ 4** What possible strategies can be adopted to improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

Chapter 5 focuses on interview data and Chapter 6 on questionnaire data.

5.2 General information on interview participants

The primary data collection methods used in this research included individual interviews and focus group interviews. In total, five key administrative staff, four teaching staff and fifteen undergraduates were engaged in the interviews.

The purpose of interviewing administrative staff is to gain in-depth understanding of the policy issues concerning English language education and explore the factors and influences that have shaped English language education at the university. The aim of interviewing teaching staff is to obtain deep and varied perceptions and experiences of English teaching at the university. By interviewing undergraduates the research aimed to explore the English learning experiences of students at three distinct levels at Guangxi University.

For the sake of discussion, a label was attached to each interview participant. For instance, the first participant in individual interviews for administrative staff was labeled as “I-AS1”, in which “I” stands for “individual interview”, “AS” for “administrative staff” and “1” is for “participant 1”. Similarly, I-TS1 refers to teaching staff participant 1 in individual interview. A student in focus group 1 is likewise marked as FI-ST1, in which “FI” refers to “Focus group 1”, “ST1” to “student 1”.

The individual interview participants were selected by modal purposive sampling and heterogeneity purposive sampling. In selecting teaching staff participants for individual interviews, factors like age, gender, academic title, experience, different educational backgrounds were taken into account. Administrative staff participants were chosen in accordance with the hierarchical system of administration at the university. The undergraduates for focus group interviews were selected by a combination of heterogeneity purposive sampling and quota purposive non-probability sampling via an invitation letter added at the end of the questionnaires. Undergraduate participants were from different programmes and were formed into three different groups based on their level of English proficiency.

The findings in this chapter are presented in accordance with types of interview, namely, individual interviews with administrative staff, individual interviews with

teaching staff and focus group interviews with undergraduates. The reports on the three kinds of interviews are all structured to present first a number of common themes that emerged from the interviews, and followed by specific issues which were the concern of individuals.

5.3 Perceptions and experiences of administrative staff

5.3.1 Challenges and difficulties encountered in daily work

Although working in one of the “211 Project” universities which have been financially and socially backed up by the Ministry of Education and provincial government, all administrative staff participants raised deep concerns about the great challenges they encountered concerning English language education. This is perhaps hardly surprising given that there has been growing expectation of the quality of English language education from the society, the parents and the students, coupled with shrinking funds and institutional efforts to reduce cost of teaching. The challenges they encountered from the very start of their office were formidable, so much so that they seemed to have almost nothing to rely on. The strongest example of such challenges was that of I-AS1, when he remarked that:

There are too many difficulties. I have been in charge of this job since 2003. At that time everything was lacking: equipment, funding, staff and attention paid to English language education, etc.....What we could offer to the teachers and students was terribly limited.

Besides inadequate investment in English language education in the university, for I-AS2, the biggest challenge stemmed from the lack of favourable policy. With a sense of frustration, he stated:

College English teaching is basically skill-oriented education. In some countries like France, they have established the system of teaching-based professor, in which *College English* teachers are mainly assessed and judged by the quality of their teaching instead of by their academic research. We hope we can issue such policy but we simply can not.

I-AS2 was certainly not alone in his frustration. I-AS3, like I-AS2, was also acutely aware of the challenges encountered in English language education but her concerns were about the long-standing misconceptions of English in the Chinese educational field:

Many in our country do not weed out false thinking with regard to the teaching of English. With such deeply-rooted reasoning, we teach English as a subject of knowledge like those in natural science. English is basically seen as a complicated subject and so after many years of instruction, our students can not open their mouths and speak out a word.

As far as I-AS4 was concerned, the challenges seemed to be the fact that she had to accept a very heavy workload. This was clearly expressed when she related:

My biggest problem is the excessive investment of time and energy. For instance, when I want to conduct some research, I just cannot find time. I am fully occupied with giving lectures, preparing the lectures and taking up my administrative responsibilities.

She constantly mentioned her completely being snowed under at work during the whole interview and concluded with helplessness by saying that “at the moment I don’t have a personal life....But I have no way out....All my time has been given to work.”

The situation with I-AS5 seemed to be equally undesirable concerning workload. She admitted that her current workload was three times as much as before, leading to her terrible state of “no spare time”. She attributed her shortage of spare time as the fact that there were so many unforeseen urgent things to be dealt with at work. In addition, she acknowledged that another aspect of challenges she met was the issue of management. She said:

Maybe due to my personality, I tend to do my utmost with every task at hand. Therefore, all tasks, small or big, once I am asked to do, I will do it with all my heart and so I feel completely tired out.....sometimes when I assign work to the teachers, they will either ignore or postpone it because they are not willing to do. This troubles me a lot.

The distinct perceptions of differences among the participants about the challenges and difficulties in their job then are interesting. Although they all seemed to be clearly aware of their challenges, obviously those challenges lack consensus. This probably was caused by a variety of factors—their diverse educational backgrounds, different ages, distinct understanding of the nature of English language education, various working experiences, dissimilar responsibility involved in their respective posts. Hence, if some found that their challenges came from a macro-view, thus were more invisible, such as policy, funds and facilities, for others it was clearly not the case. Rather, theirs—heavy workload—seemed to be more visible and stemmed from their daily work.

5.3.2 Quality of English language education at Guangxi University

Whilst considerable variation in the responses of individuals' perceptions of challenges was identified, the issues of quality of English language education at Guangxi University received very similar agreement. The evaluation of quality of English language education followed the Chinese conventional way of marking between 1-100, with 1 as the lowest and 100 as the highest quality. When invited to give a round score to the quality of English language education of Guangxi University, most participants came to a relatively low mark. For instance, while expressing a feeling of extreme challenge in assessing the quality, I-AS4 later felt comfortable with a score of 60 out of 100. I-AS1 rated the quality of English language education at 75. I-AS2 thought the quality is far from desirable and gave a score between 60 and 70. I-AS5 echoed the marking but explained that if comparison was merely made within the regional universities, the score could be as high as 90 because “many young teaching staff are willing to reform....they try to apply modern new technology into their teaching practice such as multi-media facilities and network learning.” The most positive mark was given by I-AS3 when she said:

If I am asked to mark, mine will be between 80 and 85 because teachers know something must be done with English language education and they keep trying new things. However, only 60% of the staff is involved in this process. Among

those active staff, many just consider the superficial matters without taking details into consideration. The head wants to promote the reform, but she herself faces a dilemma, that is, she has a full timetable with teaching tasks, which then leads to poor management.

Not only did the participants give their assessment via marking, they also offered a variety of factors which helped shape their evaluation. I-AS1, for example, raised concern about teaching staff, both in number and quality. He seemed to firmly believe in the positive relationship between the number of teaching staff and the quality of English language education as he said:

If the number of teachers is doubled.....with more teachers, students will get more attention. And this is important, especially in language learning. I am in charge of this and I know it too well.

The lack of learning environment was also a major factor which led to the relatively unsatisfactory state of English language education at Guangxi University. As I-AS2 said:

Compared to those universities which enjoy a favourable atmosphere for studying, in our university we rarely see a great many students get up early for English reading in the morning. The building-up of such a favourable learning atmosphere is associated with teaching staff, society, even with the local customs and culture.

However, he also stressed that such a learning environment without doubt could not be created overnight. Both I-AS4 and I-AS5 believed that the quality of English language education was closely associated with national and institutional policy as “the teaching of English is evaluated by students’ scores, either in CET or end-term examination”. It is perhaps worth pointing out here that the national College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) is basically a standardized test which centres on English reading and is measured merely by grades. Hence, a negative attitude towards the national College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) was sensed when I-AS4 stated:

I feel we are doing a kind of balance job. On the one hand, we have to take care of CET 4; on the other hand, we are required to improve students’ English

competence in communication. However, we definitely cannot be sure we are able to keep such balance successfully.

However, although personally expressing unfavourable feelings about CET 4, I-AS1 highlighted the need to stick to it. He said:

There is a saying: those who can adjust themselves to the society have a better chance to exist. The need of society can never be neglected. You will feel bad if your students are rejected in society only because others have passed CET Band 4 or 6 and yours don't. Many of our students had good marks of English when entering the university. You just push a little and they would pass it.

Here we note the seeming contradiction. While to some extent criticizing aspects of CET 4, most participants admitted that they had to accept it as the harsh reality within the field of English language education. This contradiction, as we may see later, is one which reoccurs in other interviews as having a significant importance related to our discussion.

Sadly speaking, the overall result with respect to quality of English language education at Guangxi University then seemed to be far from outstanding. The issues relating to this situation involve the shortage of teaching staff and poor quality of staff, unfavourable institutional policies, lack of a conducive learning environment and the influence of CET 4.

5.3.3 Strategies taken to improve English language education at Guangxi University

Most participants showed a keen awareness of coping strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education, but varied considerably in how efficient those strategies turned out to be.

Strategies identified by I-AS5 involved annual performance review for teachers, evaluation by students, class observation and the system of "Outstanding Lecturer". However, she then went on to say that in her mind most strategies failed to reach their intended goals. She expressed her feelings towards those strategies in this way:

First, annual performance review is completely useless as it is just done as a formality. Second, the aim of evaluation by students is good in itself. But as the assessment system can show merely one's own evaluation but not being able to tell where exactly a teacher is in the rank. Thus it makes no difference to teachers.....The system of "Outstanding Lecturer" may also be well-intentioned but it has big problems in its implementation and therefore it is of little use.

The only strategy of which she spoke relatively favourably was class observation because "the feedback of class observation will soon go to the Faculty and the head will discuss it with the teacher being observed". I-AS3 was also able to make a list of strategies which involved the system of "Outstanding Lecturer", heavy investment in Language Learning Centre, evaluation of English language education, class observation, and involvement in the national program for exemplary institutions for College English teaching. She considered that exams based on textbooks were of not much value while activities aiming at the improvement of English skills were good. She was clear, however, that the system of "Outstanding Lecturer" was problematic when she admitted:

I have heard some feedback on the system and am aware of its problems but both university and faculty can do little. Teaching itself is an art and art can't be judged by a certain standard. Anyway it might be a thing better than doing nothing.

Unlike I-AS3, I-AS2 seemed to have only a vague idea of strategies taken with regard to English language education, but he showed confidence when he said that "more funds have been put into network learning and Language Learning Centre" and "more staff with higher degree was recruited". I-AS1 divided the strategies taken at the university into two types:

One kind is for long term and the other exercised in a short time. To improve the quality of College English, both are needed. The first kind includes having good teachers.....The other kind for example includes having better facilities and more staff.

Thus the most prominent and efficient strategies, in his mind, were related to teaching staff. With respect to the system of "Outstanding Lecturer", despite other participants'

critical attitude, he was positive, saying: “I think this system is good as it stimulates the active part of teachers”. He further displayed his viewpoint of the link between policy and practice:

I think in any case there is difference between the aim of a policy and the result of its practice. This is also the case with the policy of the system of “Outstanding Lecturer”. The problem in my opinion is not that the system is wrong itself, but it has not been carried out well.

Certainly, not all participants in the interviews could list a couple of strategies. I-AS4, for instance, only mentioned the system of “Outstanding Lecturer” and frankly said that she knew little about other strategies. In summary then, it can be said that although strategies have been taken to improve quality of English language education, they were not equally identified by all interviewed. Moreover, most strategies were seen as failing to come up to expectation, thus were marked by participants as either “of little use” or “problematic”.

5.3.4 Suggested resolutions to improve English language education at Guangxi University

In general, a number of resolutions were voiced by participants. These suggestions included:

- English language education reform;
- promotion of academic research;
- promotion of quality of teaching staff,
- creating a favourable learning environment;
- introduction of various incentive systems;
- reduced teaching schedule.

1) English language education reform

One important issue appears to be the need for English language education reform. On a number of occasions participants raised concerns about the need to reform English language education as well as what such a reform truly implied to them. This seemed

to be significant for them as it had implications for how confident they were about the work they were doing and how successful they could be in the matter of English language education. Such need is explicitly expressed by I-AS1:

.....in the future what we must do as our aim is to further teaching reform including course design, and on the base of this may we still go further and ask what else we can do. It seems that we have a big room to contribute to the field.

This view was fully shared by I-AS3, with a focus on different students' needs. She strongly believed:

I think the reform should be based on the students' need. In line with students' level of English proficiency, we can start our reform from those at the level 2 and offer them a programme in which they are asked to use English to fulfil real tasks.

I-AS4 was also in little doubt that priority should be given to course reform when she said:

The purpose of reform is to enhance students' ability in using English. Then the course should be reformed. For instance, besides the course-book, can we offer special training to students at different terms respectively in terms of listening, speaking and writing?

For I-AS5, the key point of reform was strengthening the crisis awareness among teaching staff. She put it like this:

In the past, we practiced egalitarianism, with everyone "eating from the same big pot". This hasn't been entirely changed. Many still hold that once they become academics, they are free from worrying about losing jobs. We need to inspire them with new thoughts of professional crisis. We have done something relating to it but more needs to be done in practice.

There were, however, participants like I-AS2 who mentioned the need to reform but with perplexity:

I don't give a lot of thoughts to reform. I know it is a must but I have no idea how it can be done.

This sentiment of bewilderment was echoed by I-AS4 when she described her feelings towards the ongoing reform which seemed to be full of uncertainty:

If it changes too fast and too rapidly, that is, there are too many movements, you will find it difficult to adjust yourself to it. As it keeps changing, you feel confused because you don't know what your teaching goals are. And this confusion takes place in the whole teaching process.

Therefore, whilst all participants raised concerns about English language education reforms, some apparently had only a vague picture of the orientation of the reform, thus showing a sense of confusion.

2) Promotion of academic research

Promotion of academic research was viewed by most participants as being helpful to improve English language education at the university. I-AS3, for example, stressed the vital role academic research played in one's career:

To refuse research means going backwards. And a backward teaching idea leads to backward teaching methods..... Research and teaching are like two wings of a bird which support each other in flying.

This view was repeated by I-AS5, who further pointed out the reason why teachers were less committed to research:

The research should go hand in hand with teaching. Many teachers say that heavy teaching tasks rob them of time for doing research. That is probably because they think only theoretical research in the field of linguistics can be viewed as valuable one.

Interestingly, however, there was some divergence of views on why teachers did not take an active part in conducting research. I-AS4, for instance, on the contrary, considered that it was shortage of time that made teachers unable to conduct research:

Teachers want to be engaged in research projects. But they have such a big job that they don't have enough time and energy to do research.

It also seemed clear to I-AS2 that teachers did not have many options concerning research as “in the current educational context, they have to conduct research”. However, he assumed that “their research might not be very helpful to their teaching practice”. The most critical attitude towards teachers' lack of commitment to research was expressed by I-AS1 when he pointedly said that:

There are some teachers around me, like teachers of College English, who do not do any research. Actually it is because they do not know how to step into the research field.

3) Promotion of quality of teaching staff

As regards promoting the quality of teaching staff, there was almost complete unanimity on the need to improve it but different viewpoints were expressed on how this could be achieved. Besides English language competency, I-AS3 believed that it is extremely important for a teacher to be a “good manager”:

A good teacher should be a good manager. She has to be skillful in emotion management, strategic management, emergency management, and management of incentive system. She needs to be with managerial vision.

I-AS1 put his emphasis on the “strong sense of responsibility and deep devotion to his work”, for “this is the key point in improving the quality of English language education”. This was further developed by I-AS5 who said:

The sense of responsibility is linked with one's professional accomplishments. With responsibility, one will be more willing to improve his professional knowledge and skills.

4) Creating a favourable learning environment

Both I-AS1 and I-AS5 agreed that a favourable learning environment was very essential for improvement of quality of English language education. I-AS5 said that:

Such a learning environment is extremely important. We are working hard to create it. We have an English learning website, English radio station and various English contests and recent English talent show. But they are still far from enough.

5) Introduction of various incentive systems

I-AS4 and I-AS5 contended that one of the workable solutions was to introduce various incentive systems. For I-AS5, such an incentive system should place stress on “material rewards” because “they proved to be more effective”. However, I-AS4 also pointed out more review needs to be done before the implementation of the incentive strategies, for “it could be a discouragement instead of encouragement if it is not well-thought and well-tested”.

6) Reduced teaching schedule

I-AS4 repeatedly mentioned the heavy workload of teaching staff in the interview. Therefore, she regarded the excessive teaching tasks as the biggest problem and the principal contradiction in English language education. She insisted such situation be changed in the immediate future:

We need to first solve the issue of heavy workload because it affects teachers' energy.

Thus the overall impression of perceptions of administrative staff was that there has been a variety of challenges which accompanied the post they hold at the moment. In addition, they were all aware of the unsatisfactory state of English language education at the university and could reason out the factors that shaped the current situation. Furthermore, various strategies have been recognized by participants to improve the quality of English language education, however, the result, according to their responses, is less desirable than expected. Finally, while most of them seemed to be very clear about what can be done in the near future to change the situation, others showed less confidence and confusion in English language education reform in terms of its direction and implementation.

5.4 Perceptions and experiences of teaching staff

5.4.1 Challenges and difficulties encountered in daily work

Surprisingly enough, although three out of four teaching staff participants expressed that they basically “felt OK with the ongoing reform”, the most prominent theme that came out of these interviews concerning challenges encountered was the ongoing reform. Such contradictory responses then are of interest and might deserve deep analysis later. For instance, the reform apparently had huge impact on I-TS2’s daily practice and thus became her special challenges:

Of course there are challenges because we have constant reforms. Every time the reform calls for new teaching ideas, new teaching methodologies and new teaching paradigms, in other words, some improvement and changes. Then you need to adjust yourself continually to be well-prepared to such changing need. You have to better your teaching skills and learn knowledge of information technology like computer skills. In many ways you have to learn as you are indeed beginners. These are really challenges to me.

She certainly was not alone in this viewpoint. I-TS1 likewise was concerned about a dilemma in English language education reform. Meanwhile, she strongly expressed a feeling of powerlessness when she commented:

The English course has been taken so seriously that for many years it has played a decisive role in students’ access to diplomas and degrees. As a matter of fact, we, like our students, are facing the same dilemma. If students pass the course but fail the national College English Test, they still fail to get their Bachelor degrees. So this is a problem completely beyond us.

She was so critical towards such course design that she said with agitation, “On many occasions, I made it clear that the course should have nothing to do with the Bachelor degree or national College English Test (CET). I even doubt the legality of such a policy”. She further strongly complained of the impact of such a policy upon daily teaching practice by saying that:

Such a policy makes us feel difficult to decide on what should be instructed.

While teachers would prefer to teach things about quality, cross-culture, communication with an aim to improve their whole personal quality, students would like to learn testing skills to pass national College English Test. It is really a dilemma for us.

In a similar vein, I-TS3 believed that the biggest challenge was the poor knowledge teaching staff had about the reform:

The procedures, intentions and orientation of the reform confuse many of us. We cannot afford to ignore CET4 which obviously runs contrary to the aim of reform. We don't have clear knowledge about many issues. For example, where will we be after reform? How should we instruct students? And what is the intention of reform?

Whilst such embattlement of constant reform was clearly displayed by teachers interviewed, it seemed to be clear that teaching staff were also troubled by intense pressure coming from lack of teaching methods or skills. This is particularly significant to teaching staff with less experience in the job. I-TS4, for example, had only one year's experience and felt frustrated when she said:

I hope I can train the students with a clear aim. That is, set up a goal for them every semester. Up till now, however, I haven't given this a lot of thoughts.....I also have problems in classroom management for I seldom reach my expected teaching goals.

Furthermore, she also acknowledged another area of difficulty, this time not with respect to teaching skills, but with respect to being ignorant of students' needs. Here is an episode she recounted with depression:

When I first came to this university, I was full of passion. I told my students they should make a plan for the future. To do so, I showed them a lot of extra-curriculum materials. But later on students complained to me that they considered my teaching of those things a burden to them. What they wanted was simply to pass CET4.

Similar frustration was expressed by I-TS1 when she critically reflected on the influence of the national curriculum for *College English* and pointed out that this

curriculum led to lack of flexibility:

The national policy is compulsory with uniform requirement, which I think is wrong. I always think every university should have their own autonomy. It is ironic that we always follow others. We are so obedient that we don't want to speak out our disagreement and novelty cannot be seen here.

The last but not the least challenge teaching staff confronted was the issue of overwork. This was illustrated by I-TS1, who said, "I am busier than before, and busier and busier as compared to how I was doing in the past. I often work into deep night". This concern was further developed by I-TS2 who believed the overwork came as a result of higher requirement on teachers in terms of teaching and research. She said:

I think it (workload) is more than I expected because the university assesses our performance not only in terms of teaching but also of research.....Therefore, if I want to do some research I have to do it during my holiday, which makes me really worn out both physically and spiritually. Needless to say, it is necessary for us to conduct some research during vacation. However, such research now is taken as a required and compulsory task so I feel rather burdened down.

Hence, this seemed to be a clear indication that the stress has been completely unmanageable for at least part of the teaching staff.

To sum up, the issues of challenges and difficulties raised by teaching staff covered a variety of topics including ongoing reform, the influence of national curriculum and CET4, lack of teaching methods, neglect of students' needs and overwork.

5.4.2 Quality of English language education at Guangxi University

Compared to the administrative staff, teaching staff seemed to be less confident in giving an overall evaluation to the quality of English language education at Guangxi University. I-TS1, for instance, found this was the situation for her. She said:

I don't think I can give a general assessment of the quality of teaching in this university because it is really hard to make judgments.

She attributed this to one main reason:

As you know, we have qualified teachers as well as unqualified ones.

In like manner, I-TS4 felt equally sorely perplexed to account for the whole situation but spoke specifically of the fact that “there was a willingness among teachers to share their experiences in the work”. Moreover, if they were able to assess the quality of English language education they displayed views without consensus. I-TS3, for instance, gave both a negative and positive reply when he said:

Our job takes the lead in this region because we are the No.1 university in the land.

Then he added:

But compared with those within the whole country, particularly with those in developed districts, there is still a long way to go. The fact is that, after two years of instruction at the university, our graduates completely forget English, or they cannot open their mouths to express themselves in English.

He then rated the quality of English language education between 60 and 70. Interestingly, I-TS2 seemed to be more optimistic and therefore gave a score between 70 and 80 out of 100 for “in general English language education in the university is getting better and better each year”.

Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that there was divergence of views among the teaching staff participants on the quality of English language education at Guangxi University. Another point coming from the responses was that not every teaching staff participant felt confident to provide assessment, partly because the whole situation was very complicated and partly because there was a lack of agreed standards for quality evaluation, as echoed in section 6.2.2.6 in Chapter 6.

5.4.3 Strategies taken to improve English language education at Guangxi University

In line with the previous interviews with administrative participants, one might have anticipated that there would never be a lack of strategies recognized by teaching staff simply because such strategies have direct impact on them and their daily practice. Indeed, this was the case with teaching staff interviewed. A couple of them could not only describe a number of strategies at different levels but also offered their feelings towards those solutions with relatively more confidence as well. I-TS2, for instance, talked of the university's support offered in terms of financial support and management:

At the level of university, I might say it has given us lots of support. For instance, a large sum of money has been pumped into our Language Learning Centre and network learning system. They also backed up our management. Take the implementation of level-based teaching for example; this teaching mode definitely would cause problems for management of students enrolment status, but the Department of Teaching Affairs did give us help and make sure such teaching mode could eventually be practiced.

Such comments were echoed by I-TS1 and I-TS3. I-TS1 positively added in details that:

The university also supported us in our application for the national programme for exemplary institutions for English teaching reform as well as in sponsoring us to attend research conferences. They also make our views known.

However, after she showed a feeling of yearning for the past when “the Vice Chancellor came a few times to the department to hear teachers' views”, she complained that “the university pays less attention to us now.” When asked the reasons she replied:

I don't know why, maybe because our situation now does not worry them.

This, interestingly, seemed to contradict the theme coming out of the administrative

staff interviews in the earlier discussion, in which the administrators seemed to take this course very seriously for its situation upset them greatly.

Strategies taken at the faculty level were also detailed by I-TS2 who said:

.....occasionally we have experts coming to deliver lectures to improve teachers' quality. This is a good practice. What's more, every year the faculty will send some teachers for further training which is also helpful in improving the quality of teaching staff.

I-TS1 also agreed that they received attention from the faculty:

The leaders of the faculty pay much attention to us. They attend our academic meetings. Now we have cross-department research projects and we do it together with teachers from English department....It seems that they also help us in our application for professional titles.

When it comes to the departmental strategies, I-TS1 mentioned communication via blog between teachers and students, English learning website and multi-major background training project for prominent students from different departments and programmes. Besides, I-TS2 raised issues including teaching mode reform and involvement in the national programme for exemplary institutions for English teaching reform.

However, it should be noted that although many were aware of a variety of coping strategies, I-TS4, for instance, seemed to know very little about them and only mentioned CET4 training for students after a few seconds of silence.

A final issue of strategies has to be with the system of "Outstanding Lecturer" and the system of "Responsible Professor" raised by most participants. Surprisingly, there were generally both favourable and critical attitudes towards them. I-TS1, for example, spoke pointedly of the system of "Outstanding Lecturer":

The system of "Outstanding Lecturer" is very controversial.

However, I-TS2 disagreed with this, saying "the system contributes to the improvement of quality of teaching staff." I-TS3 first believed the system inspired

teachers to improve their teaching methods through competition and rewards, but then he went on to say that in time there were big problems with it, that is, “teachers only paid attention to the score instead of teaching process” because “the system is evaluated mostly by students’ scores in final-term examination”.

More contention was felt with regard to the system of “Responsible Professor” (see section 3.3.1 for details). Except for I-TS4 who said she did not know much about it and I-TS1 who believed it only stimulated the enthusiasm of both the applicants and the ones who were formally appointed, the other participants were critical towards it.

I-TS3 said:

From my observation, I don’t see many changes. Some responsible professors are dealing with administrative affairs and don’t perform well the role they should do.

The same feeling was also felt by I-TS2 when she said:

To tell the truth, I don’t sense obvious benefit in carrying out the system of “Responsible Professor”. Because what so-called responsible professors do is just part of the jobs done by head of teaching and research group or dean of department in the past. Without responsible professors, the dean could keep the department moving.

However, when asked whether she thought the system should be abolished, she first refused to reply and then after keeping silent for seven seconds she said:

Yes, I feel it’s hard to say. Because now our university highlights it as one of its achievements which is also being introduced to other universities in the country. I don’t feel comfortable to make any comments on it.

To sum up, it will be apparent from the above responses that the majority of the participants were acutely aware of strategies taken to improve the situation at the university. Furthermore, there was also a wide difference of perceptions on assessment of such strategies.

5.4.4 Suggested resolutions to improve English language education at Guangxi University

Strikingly, going through the transcripts, the prominent resolutions proposed by the teaching staff participants were basically two aspects: teacher training and research guidance.

I-TS2 believed that the most efficient way is to get training abroad:

I think everyone of us needs such training. We are non-native speakers but we are here teaching English. I think every teacher of English should go to the English-speaking countries to experience the language and its culture, and to learn how English is taught in those countries. Only in this way can we do a better job.

However, then she felt somewhat helpless when turning to the implementation of her proposal.

There is also the problem of teaching arrangement. If too many are away to get training, then we will not have enough teaching staff to offer the courses. This is a very practical issue.

I-TS1 was similarly concerned about teachers' career development but seemed to make her proposal more doable and practicable:

The university should give more support and be more concerned about English courses. For example, they should support teacher career development. If we can not get chances to go out for further training, then we should be given the opportunity in getting training in university. The university can offer training for us.

She then explained three reasons why most teacher cannot afford to get training outside the university:

...because first, they have heavy workload; second, their financial ability is limited; third, they have to care for their families.

The same issue was also raised by I-TS4 who expressed a strong desire to go to noted universities in other cities for further training but pointed out that the best way is to study abroad in the English-speaking countries, such as the U.K., the U.S.A or Australia.

It seemed that teachers at relatively lower professional rank also badly needed research guidance. This was best illustrated by I-TS3 who said:

What I want is more research guidance. Young teachers always lack research skills. We don't have a system to support young teacher concerning doing research.

I-TS4 showed great anxieties about her research performance:

With regard to academic research I feel terribly under pressure. I am very worried about my research. I am afraid I have no research project. You know these are evaluated in the annual performance review.

I-TS1 suggested more study groups should be formed and end-of-semester research sessions within department should be held regularly.

Other strategies that drew less attention included the reform of the assessment system, more transparent management, and more penalty systems.

In summary, while there was no doubt that in the minds of teaching staff participants they were embattled by pressures, theirs seemed to mainly come from the ongoing reform and thus were exercising huge influence on their daily teaching practice. Besides, being within the field, they found it harder to evaluate their own job, partly because they did not think they were able to give a fair judgement and partly because they had to take a defensive attitude towards their job. Furthermore, they were generally clearly aware of the strategies taken in the university and showed more positive attitudes towards the support they had been given. Last, they seemed to be very clear about the strategies they needed in the future and believed those were the key points to improve the quality of English language education.

The similarities and differences between administrative staff participants and teaching staff ones, then, are interesting. There is a clear divide between them on their

perceptions of national College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) and the most efficient strategy to improve English language education. With regard to CET4, on the one hand, most administrative staff believed that retaining CET 4 helped their graduates to be more acceptable in the society; on the other hand, teachers felt they were completely constrained by CET4, thus failing to increase students' ability in using English. While most administrative staff participants advocated faster reform, believing that was the most efficient way to better English language education, most teaching staff felt they had already been under mounting pressure of the ongoing reform and what they truly needed was the supportive system for their career development via further training and research guidance. There are, however, similarities, the salient being the perception of heavy workload in the job and the perception of current quality of the English language education at the university.

5.5 Perceptions and experiences of students

5.5.1 Challenges and difficulties encountered in English learning

The answers to this question can be grouped into three separate categories. The first category involved responses from participants of level one—those with relatively low English proficiency at Guangxi University. Interestingly, however, the challenges they confronted did not lie in reading or speaking, as conventionally expected. Rather, their difficulty in English learning stemmed from writing and listening. Therefore, there was a cohort who talked of their problems with depression and helplessness:

.....my difficulty is that I dare not write English. I don't understand what others say. When I write in English I think I just write wrong sentences. (FI-ST5)

Because I don't know International Pronunciation Alphabets, I am poor at English writing. (FI-ST2)

I find it difficult to spell out English words. Sometimes I try hard to understand a word while doing listening exercises, but feel frustrated for I couldn't write it down correctly. (FI-ST4)

My major problem is listening. If I listen to news, I can only understand a little.
(FI-ST1)

Within the group, there was a respondent who felt that his problem was lack of perseverance:

I find it very hard to keep at English learning every day. (FI-ST3)

Whilst one participant in level two was aware that his problem was also lack of vocabulary, others raised concerns about listening and speaking and lack of opportunity to use English. They seemed to be troubled a lot by such difficulties:

To me, English listening is really a challenge. If people speak slowly I am ok, but if they speak fast, I feel troubled. (FII-ST1)

I think the problem is that we seldom use English in our life. (FII-ST4)

FII-ST2 firmly believed his challenge derived from English speaking and described a scenario in which he experienced very unpleasant feelings:

I like to play guitar. One day, a foreign teacher suddenly picked me out to play with him. He told me to adjust the instrument to the expected pitch. I basically understood him. But instead of speaking out, I could only nod my head or just reply simply with “OK, got it”. I don’t think I can communicate with him or maybe I am afraid of speaking to foreigners. (FII-ST2)

Besides, FII-ST3 strongly complained of the wide range of English knowledge and learning when she said:

English learning covers a wide scope and I cannot find a breakthrough point.
(FII-ST3)

Strikingly, there was throughout the interviews with participants of level three—those at

the highest level of English proficiency, a high concordance on the question of challenge they confronted in English learning. The majority were quite clear:

There are no challenges at all. (FIII-ST2)

.....because there are no difficulties. (FIII-ST1)

They (the English Courses and teachers) never challenge us. (FIII-ST3)

FIII-ST3 was further developing a lucid awareness of her point through illustration:

When I took CET4, I found no difficulty at all because it seemed to be at the same level as what I learned in my secondary school. (FIII-ST3)

The final comment on this theme, by FIII-ST4, is particularly interesting as well as striking:

The challenge and difficulty is that I don't want to go to the English course but I have to because the teacher always checks attendance. (FIII-ST4)

Then what the responses in the third category seem to indicate is a dissimilar picture to those of the first and second category, in which participants more or less experienced challenges concerning English learning, with too many challenges for levels 1 and 2, and not enough challenge for level 3.

So far there seemed little doubt that those of lowest English proficiency level were more frequently challenged by poor listening and writing skills as well as lack of persistence and confidence in learning English. When it comes to participants of relatively higher level, their problems and anxieties mainly stemmed from English listening and speaking. In the case of participants of the highest level, however, there were no challenges, partly indicating English programmes offered were not demanding. The findings, therefore, suggested varied and interesting experiences of participants in English learning. What then of the next question in the interview: participants' views

on the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

5.5.2 Quality of English language education at Guangxi University

If the replies by participants on the question of challenges encountered suggested a spectrum of viewpoints, from a lot of frustration and problems to no anxieties and difficulties at all, there was a similar range of opinion on the quality of English language education. However, it seems possible to group the opinions into three categories based on the mark given by participants:

- inadequate (20-40)
- satisfactory (60-65)
- good (70-80)

The first of these categories involved two respondents, FIII-ST5 and FIII-ST2, who respectively gave a rating of 20 and 40 out of 100. FIII-ST5 strongly expressed her dissatisfaction with the English language education she received:

The teachers of English really need to improve their quality. Their English pronunciation is far from standard accent....I have been here for a semester but I have never heard or seen a foreign teacher....when the teacher gives lectures, we don't know what he is doing. He has no focus at all. (FIII-ST5)

This disappointment was similarly shared by FIII-ST2 but for different reason:

It is just typically Chinese exam-oriented. You can never get away from it. (FIII-ST2)

If such comments were somewhat extreme, then the second category suggested better representation. A standard reply in this group was:

I will rate it at 65. That is the highest score I can give. (FII-ST1)

Interestingly, there were a variety of reasons to support such marking within the group, most of which were concerned with the English course they attended:

The course contents are not attractive. (FII-ST5)

.....the teachers don't deliver it (English course) well. Some just teach vocabulary and entirely ignore the text. (FII-ST3)

The aim of activities in English course is to train our ability, including listening and speaking skills, which is good. But she (the teacher) doesn't achieve this aim. Everything she does is just like scratching the surface. Just go through the formality. I dislike this. (FIII-ST4)

The English course here is rather boring. I cannot use the English I learn in my life. (FI-ST3)

However, there was one participant (FIII-ST1) raising concerns about learning atmosphere and teaching hours. She said that:

We don't have a good learning atmosphere....The university doesn't emphasize English learning. Many other courses, including specialized courses and general courses such as Ideological Cultivation and Political Economy, occupy much more time than English in our schedule. (FIII-ST1)

Interestingly, it is to be remembered here that the first part of her remark was similarly voiced by administrative staff. However, the second part of it was contradictory to the views of administrative and teaching staff mentioned earlier in 5.3 and in 5.4.

If most of level two and level three marked the quality of English language education as "satisfactory", then in view of most participants of level one, the English education they received seemed to deserve a better grade –"good". The following were reasons given by participants to back up their marking:

English teaching is a lot better than we had in secondary school where it was completely exam-oriented. At least, in the university it is just partly exam-oriented. The university doesn't force us to receive training for CET4. (FI-ST3)

There has been more investment in English learning. Teachers try many ways like oral exam, English talent show during the course. I am basically satisfied with it. (FI-ST4)

I am happy with it. There is an essential difference between English course here and that in my secondary school. It is now more practical. (FI-ST1)

Hence, after what has been said above, it is perhaps surprising that one of the significant themes coming from the groups interviewed was that the less able students tended to rate the English course more highly than the more able. This is important, because not only does it suggest that student participants are aware of the quality of the English course offered, but, more interestingly, it seems to indicate that the English course is more successful at meeting the needs of the students of lower English proficiency but fails to attend to the needs of those of higher proficiency.

5.5.3 Strategies taken to improve English language education at Guangxi University

If differences of perceptions of student participants have been found on most of the issues above, the same differences are repeated here. In line with the interviews, participants' knowledge of strategies taken to improve English language education at the university could be divided into three categories:

- no knowledge at all;
- very small amount of knowledge;
- much more awareness;

Interestingly, three participants seemed to have no knowledge of the strategies taken to improve English language education at all. Typical reply in this category were as follows:

We lack information. We don't know what happens in our faculty, not to mention the university. (FIII-ST5)

I don't think there are such strategies in our faculty. (FIII-ST4)

Most participants fell into the second category. They were aware of the issue but could only clearly name one of the strategies. The issues they raised included the English learning website, oral English contest, Language Learning Centre, Association of English, English corner, English drama, Specialized English, library books, The Association of Reading English in the Morning.

Likewise, it might be unsurprising that participants viewed those strategies either in a positive or negative way:

There is an Association of English at the university. I went there and came back soon. I don't want to waste my time because people there are not truly learning English. (FI-ST3)

One girl in our dormitory often goes to the English Corner and her oral English has become a lot better. (FII-ST1)

Last semester our faculty held an English drama contest....Our team was eliminated in the first round. But other teams were successful....they used simple English and I could understand them, which inspired me a lot. (FII-ST5)

The final category of replies includes two participants, FI-ST4 and FIII-ST1, who could identify two strategies. FI-ST4, for instance, seemed to be more aware of support offered by the university when she said that:

The English learning website has a lot of resources on which you can either do exercises or test listening. There are also a great number of English books in the library for students. (FI-ST4)

5.5.4 Suggested solutions to improve English language education at Guangxi University

Participants seemed to be more forthcoming when interpreting the issues concerning potential solutions to improve English language education at the university. This is

perhaps unsurprising, for participants needed more support in order to survive in an increasingly globalizing world and English has become one of the instruments that contributes to that end. Judging by the interviews, there appear to be three aspects to the responses:

- strategies related to course design
- strategies related to learning environment
- strategies related to other support

Whilst student participants suggested a variety of potential remedies to enhance the quality of English language education, the most prominent theme was undoubtedly associated with its course design, including foreign teachers, teaching hours, instruction based on students' needs, and the combination of English and specialism.

FII-ST5, for instance, felt that the best strategy was to recruit more foreign teachers to offer extra English course:

I think we should have foreign teachers. They can give us one or two oral English lessons every week. In this way English becomes more useful and everyone can speak it out. (FII-ST5)

Like FII-ST5, FI-ST2 said, "I wish I could have a foreign teacher" but she preferred to have a foreign teacher who "can also speak Chinese." The viewpoint was also echoed by all participants of level three, who believed that foreign teachers could greatly help them with their spoken English.

While quite a number of participants preferred to have foreign teachers, FI-ST3 suggested reducing numbers on the English course and he further developed his viewpoint by saying that "if some individuals don't want to learn English, they shouldn't be forced to do it". He even proposed that the English course should be seen as an optional course instead of a required one. Yet, his suggestion did not go unchallenged. The strongest opposition was from FI-ST4, who expressed his concerns with part sarcasm and part seriousness:

The English course should become a required course.....It certainly is very useful and it will be more useful in the future.....Although I personally don't like it and don't want to learn it, it is beneficial to raise the whole level of English of the Chinese population. (FI-ST4)

There were also a couple of individuals who believed English course design needed to be changed. FI-ST1, for instance, felt that the desirable English course should be an “option-based required course”, that is, there are “various modules within English course and students can select one or two based on their own interests and needs”. With a complaining tone of voice, FII-ST3 felt deeply that what she learned from the English course was “not useful”, therefore, suggested a combination of English courses with her own specialism. She put it in this way:

English should integrate with our own specialism. Otherwise, why take trouble to learn it? I don't think I will have a chance to communicate with foreigners. Even if I want to watch American soaps, I don't need English because I can read Chinese subtitles. (FII-ST3)

The second important issue was linked with creating a more favourable learning environment. FIII-ST1, for example, was fully aware that a relaxed approach of “as long as you can pass English course” among students led to poor learning environment in the university. FII-ST1 believed that there is one way to improve such a learning environment, that is, “the faculty managed to distribute English magazines to students on a regular basis”. Other strategies like encouraging all the students to keep reading English early in the morning, offering a specialized English course for freshmen, and more incentive rewards provided to students who excelled at English learning were also mentioned in the interviews.

In terms of other support, FIII-ST4 complained of the library service, saying that “those English books in the library are too out-of-date”. Therefore, she called for replacement with new books. FIII-ST2 also felt that the university lacked such an environment and suggested more information about studying abroad be introduced to students.

The overall result of the focus group interviews, then, was that participants experienced different challenges in their English learning. To be specific, the less

proficient their English was, the more challenges they confronted in the university. Besides, the participants of the lowest level also raised concerns about other non-English challenges including lack of confidence and shortage of perseverance. Interestingly, however, with regard to the quality of English language education in the university, the responses indicated that there was more satisfaction among participants of lower level who experienced great challenges in English learning than those of higher level who faced fewer challenges or even zero challenges. Although a number of reasons may account for this unexpected result, the major reason seemed to be that the current English course provides relatively appropriate learning materials to participants of relatively lower level but failed to meet the needs of participants of higher level. In other words, because it is quite basic, it meets the needs of those who still need to learn the basics, but does not stretch those who are better at the language. On the matter of strategies taken to improve English language education, the findings showed that participants generally lacked such knowledge, indicating students were not well-informed. There were also abundant opinions about possible solutions to improve the quality of English language education, although there was considerable variation in the interviews.

Hence, compared to findings from the previous interviews, the overall conclusion was threefold. First, we have seen similarly diverse perceptions and experiences of English language education among the stakeholders at Guangxi University, which then suggested a multifaceted reality within a specific educational context—Guangxi University. Second, although there were positive voices, there seemed to be too much uncomfortable similarity throughout the interviews, indicating that all the stakeholders were truly under various enormous pressures and faced dilemmas at different levels. Third, like putting a camera in different places, stakeholders apparently viewed English language education in the university from different perspectives; thus each provided piecemeal vignettes, which then implies that if reliable solutions are to be found, the only means is by taking all the voices in the interviews into account.

5.6 Summary and discussion of the interview data

5.6.1 Summary of the interview data

As educational practice is bound to be influenced by different factors at a number of levels, the interview data has justifiably demonstrated the concerns that matter to and challenges faced by stakeholders currently at multiple levels, namely, at the administrator, teacher and student levels. Such complexity of perceptions and concerns was examined based on four headings as follows:

- Challenges and difficulties confronted
- Quality of English language education at Guangxi University
- Strategies taken to improve English language education at Guangxi University
- Suggested solutions to improve English language education at Guangxi University

With respect to issues regarding challenges and difficulties, three things were apparent. First, while there was a considerable difference of perceptions, there was little doubt that administrative staff, teaching staff, and the majority of students interviewed were facing tremendous challenges and difficulties either in their daily practice or in English learning experience at the present. Second, there was indication in the responses that the pressures or challenges for most of participants have increased in the past few years, which partly accounted for their sense of frustration and anxieties. Third, compared to administrative staff, teaching staff seemed to face more challenges partly because they were expected to work better under greater stress and partly because they lacked needed skills to deal with the challenges. Fourth, perhaps the most interesting findings concerning the issue was that, unlike their counterparts, student participants of the highest level of English proficiency met neither challenges nor difficulties in their English learning, indicating deeper issues that need to be considered in later discussion.

With regard to the quality of English language education, at least three points need to be mentioned here. Firstly, there was a wide range of ratings among the participants,

with the lowest one at 20 and the highest at 85 out of 100. Secondly, some participants were clearly aware that English language education at the university took the lead in the region but was considerably poorer within the country. Thirdly, while the majority of participants shared the marking of “satisfactory”, they justified their evaluation with different reasons, including the issues of teaching staff, national policy, daily practice and the influence of CET4 and so on.

In terms of strategies taken to improve English language education at Guangxi University, two aspects are particularly worth noting. First, while a great number of participants could talk of strategies taken with full awareness and confidence, there were a few who failed to raise any issues of strategies. Second, although some participants were concerned with similar or even the same issues of strategies, they varied considerably in their views of how efficient those strategies turned out to be.

On the matter of suggested solutions to improve English language education, two major themes came out of the interviews. First, at the most general level, all participants expressed a sense of awareness of the effective solutions to the problems they faced at the present. Second, although realizing changes need to be introduced, a number of participants at the same time also raised the difficulties in putting them into practice.

5.6.2 Discussion of the interview data

The semi-structured interview data have revealed the richness and complexity of perceptions and experiences of stakeholders at Guangxi University regarding English language education.

Similar to the research findings by Shu (2004), Lu and Fan (2007), and Liu (2010) that challenges caused by both global and national forces are massively great and increasingly create tension and pressure in English language education in China, the study found that administrators, teachers and students in Guangxi University are all suffering from great pressure in terms of English teaching and learning. Xu (2006) states that as a result of higher education expansion, teachers of English have become one of the most overloaded yet most neglected groups. The study partly agrees that the

past few years have witnessed the increased workload and challenges for teaching staff at Guangxi University but suggests that they have also been given support in terms of funding, management and policy.

Based on Ruan and James Jacob (2009), College English education in China's HEIs has long been blamed for its low quality. Huang's study (2006) suggests that the standards of the current college English language education at Guangxi University are still too low to meet the needs of the region's economic development. This research agrees with Ruan and James Jacob, and Huang that the current quality of teaching of English is far from outstanding. The difference between this study and the previous study is that in the past few years the quality of English language education in Guangxi University has been relatively increased due to investment into modern facilities as well as College English Reform. The data also confirmed that the undesirable quality of English language education at Guangxi University is mainly caused by unqualified teaching staff (Liu and Tan, 2003), lack of funding (Xu, 2006), teachers' heavy workload (Ai, 2006), outdated teaching mode (Ying, 2008)), the influence of CET4 (Zeng and Zhang, 2004), and lack of research guidance for teachers (Shu, 2004)).

Researchers (Cai, 2006; Liu and Tan, 2003; Shu, 2004; Shen, 2008; Liu, 2010) have studied the situation of English language education in China's HEIs and suggested a number of solutions to improving the quality of English teaching, including increasing investment, emphasizing communicative ability in teaching, developing favorable learning environment, and reforming the College English curriculum. The interview data agree with them but highlight two primary solutions: teaching staff's career development and easy access to reform information. The study confirmed the research findings by Locastro (1996) and Richards (1985). Locastro(1996) states that career training is the key to any successful implementation of new educational policy. Richards' study (1985) suggests that convincing teachers to reform and getting them well-informed on new changes is of vital importance to any curriculum reform. The teaching staff participants, in this study, indicate that the two most urgent forms of support they need are career training and enough information about reform. The former includes both professional training and research guidance and the latter involves knowledge about the orientation of reform, the procedure of reform and the destination

of reform and so on.

The initial overall conclusion, then, is that different kinds of factors have deeply affected English language education at Guangxi University, causing tensions between administrative staff and teaching staff, as well as between teaching staff and students. In other words, it seems to be reasonable to say that stakeholders of English language education at Guangxi University faced a multitude of dilemmas under the backdrop of ongoing English language education reform in China. Therefore, if interview data have revealed that those dilemmas derived partly from national policy and partly from their daily practice, thus deeply impacting their working, teaching and learning at the university, then what would the questionnaires distributed unveil for us? At this point, then, it is to the findings of the questionnaire that the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS (II) — PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES
OF STAKEHOLDERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
EDUCATION AT GUANGXI UNIVERSITY
(QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED)

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of English language education at Guangxi University were uncovered based on the interview data. In Chapter 6, their beliefs and attitudes towards English language education are described in detail based on questionnaires, with the aim of answering Specific Research Questions 3 and 4 (SRQ3 and SRQ 4) as follows:

SRQ 3 What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?

SRQ 4 What possible strategies can be adopted to improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

This chapter is composed of four sections. In Section 6.2 the results derived from teacher-based questionnaires are presented. Besides demographic information on participants, it shows teaching staff's perceptions and experiences of English language education on a variety of issues, including teaching practices, career development and organizational management. It also presents teaching staff's understanding and feelings about ideal English language education.

Section 6.3 describes the findings coming from student-based questionnaires, including participants' basic information and issues of learning experience, learning evaluation,

strategies to improve English learning as well as what ideal learning and teaching of English is.

Section 6.4 presents a discussion of results.

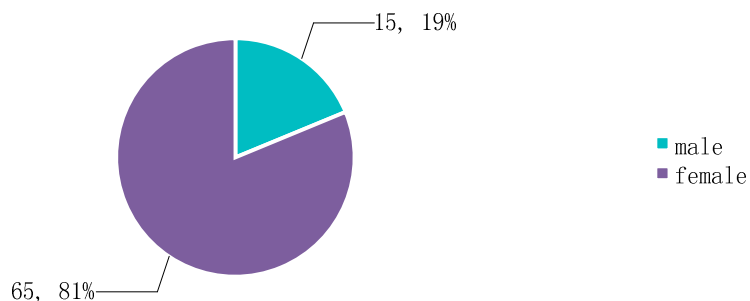
6.2 Teachers' perceptions and experiences of English language education at Guangxi University

6.2.1 Demographic information

In this section, participants were asked questions about their background, including their age, education received and their status as teacher of English at Guangxi University.

6.2.1.1 Gender of participants

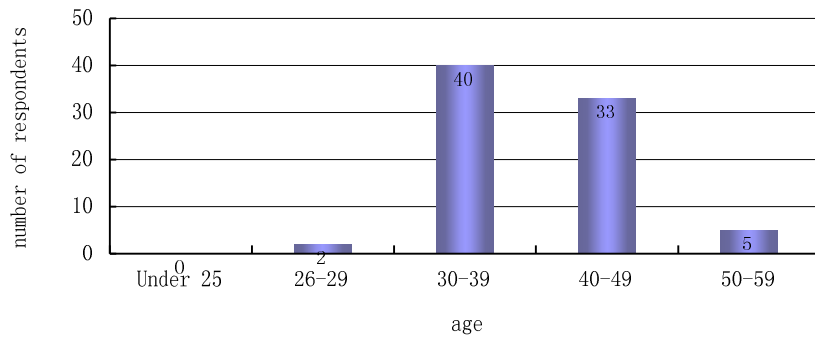
Figure 6.1 Gender of participants



Administered between November and December 2010, the teacher-based questionnaire involved 80 teaching staff at the College English Department in Guangxi University, with 65 females and 15 males (see Figure 6.1).

6.2.1.2 Age of participants

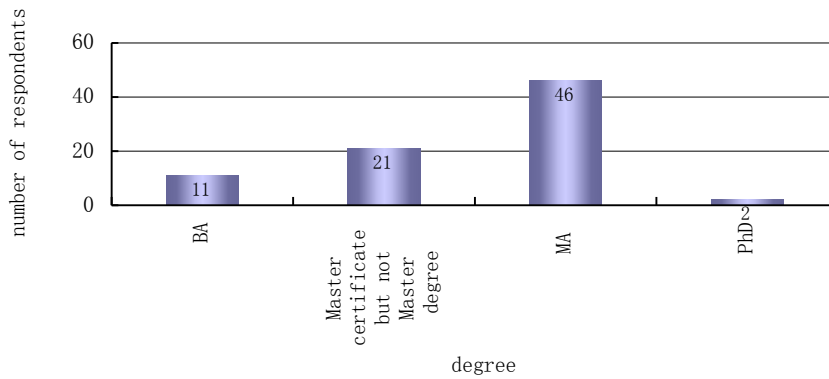
Figure 6.2 Age of participants



The age of questionnaire participants ranged from 26 to 59, with 2 between 26-29, 40 between 30-39, 33 between 40-49 and 5 between 50-59 (see Figure 6.2).

6.2.1.3 Highest level of general education completed

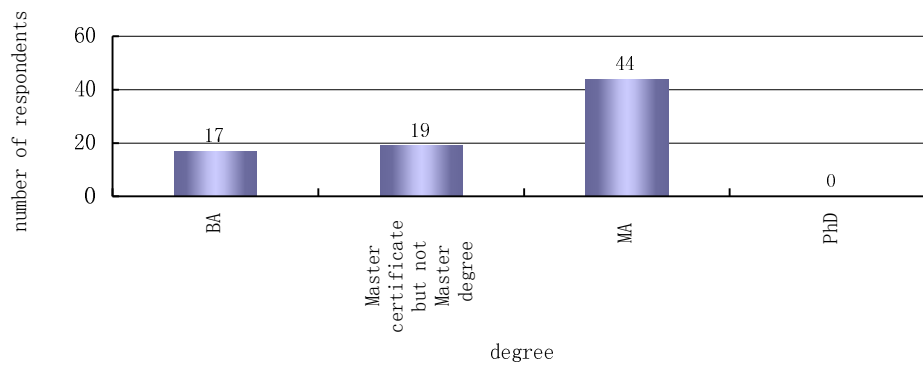
Figure 6.3 Highest level of general education completed



In terms of the highest level of general education received, 46 participants were awarded a Master degree, 21 were granted a Master Certificate but not a Master degree, 11 were awarded a Bachelor degree and 2 were granted a PhD (see Figure 6.3).

6.2.1.5 Highest level of English qualification received

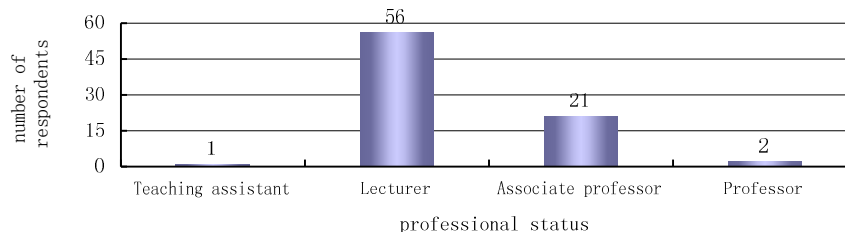
Figure 6.4 Highest level of English qualification received



With respect to the highest level of English qualification, however, 44 participants were granted a Master degree, 19 were awarded a Master certificate but not a Master degree and 17 were granted a Bachelor degree. No participant was granted an English qualification at doctoral level (see Figure 6.4).

6.2.1.4 Professional status of participants

Figure 6.5 Professional status of participants



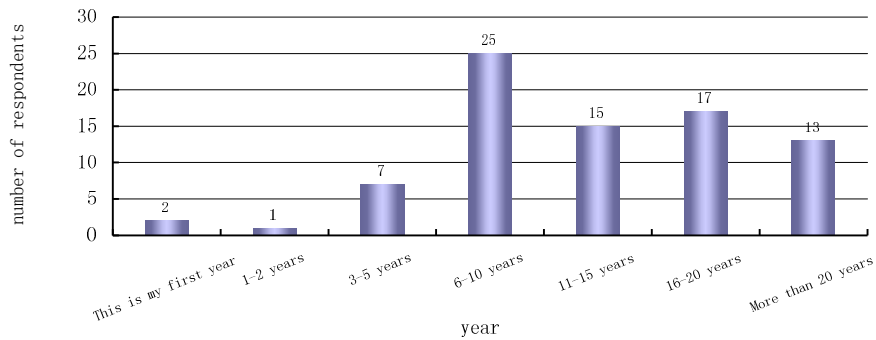
On the basis of the data collected, 56 out of 80 participants were lecturers and 21 were associate professors. The figures for teaching assistant and professor were respectively 1 and 2 (see Figure 6.5).

6.2.2 Teaching practice, beliefs and attitudes

In this section, participants were invited to answer questions about their teaching experiences at the university, including daily practice, teaching beliefs and attitudes.

6.2.2.1 Length of time working at the university

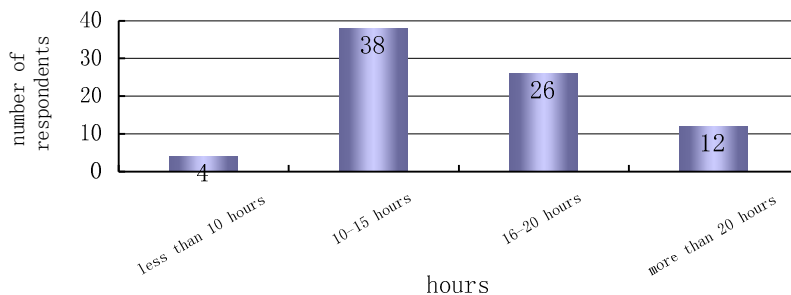
Figure 6.6 Length of time working at the university



The figures show that 70 participants had been working as teachers of English for more than 5 years at the university, indicating that the great majority of teachers at the College English Department had good experience in this area (see Figure 6.6).

6.2.2.2 Average teaching hours per week

Figure 6.7 Average teaching hours per week

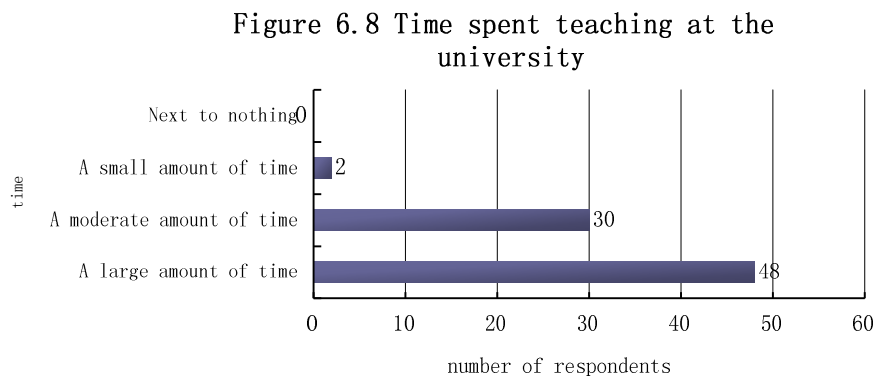


When approaching the average teaching hours in a typical academic week, surprisingly, there were a large number of participants who taught more than 10 hours per week. To be specific, 38 out of 80 participants taught between 10-15 hours, 26 taught between 16-20 hours and 12 taught more than 20 hours (see Figure 6.7). Generally speaking, the overall teaching hours at Guangxi University in a typical academic week are about 37 hours, with 11 periods each of 40 minutes a day from Monday to Friday.

6.2.2.3 Time spent on various activities at the university

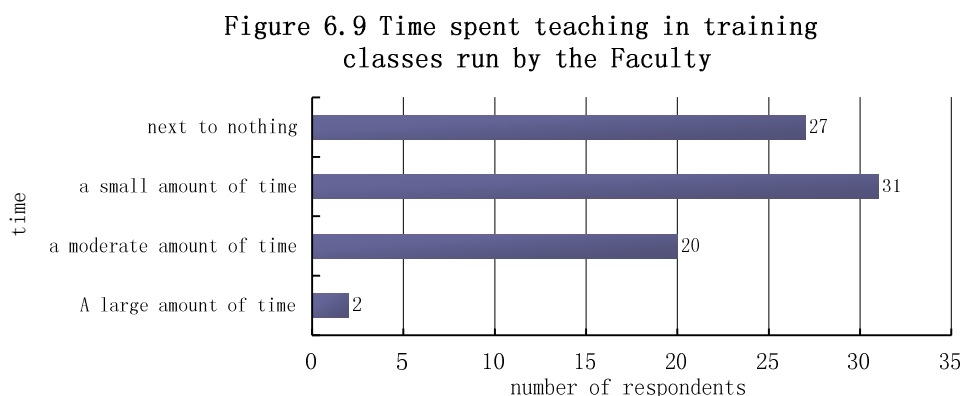
With regard to time spent on various activities at the university, the questions were designed to obtain participants' perceptions of the spread of their work rather than quantifying the exact amount of time they spent on different tasks. Therefore, terms like "a large amount of time", "a moderate amount of time" and "a small amount of time" were used to this end in the questionnaire.

a) Teaching students at the university



Perhaps it comes as no surprise that 60% (48 out of 80) of the participants spent a large amount of their time delivering lectures at the university. The result also shows that there were 2 participants who spent a small amount of time giving lectures (see Figure 6.8).

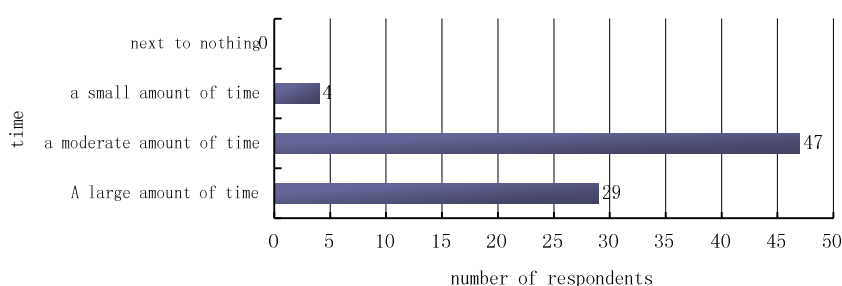
b) Teaching in training classes run by the faculty



In the Faculty of Foreign Languages, besides the formal degree courses offered to undergraduates, various part-time or short-term non-degree training classes are also offered for adults with different backgrounds, particularly those who are at work and want to improve their language skills. The teaching staff in the faculty usually takes the responsibility of teaching in such training classes. Part of the tuition fees coming from the training classes serve as a bonus for staff in the faculty at the end of each term. As higher pay is offered for giving lectures at training classes than in those to undergraduates, teachers usually accept such teaching tasks for the sake of financial benefit. Hence, despite the relatively heavy workload of teaching on the degree course, it is perhaps of interest that 20 participants also spent a moderate amount of time teaching in training classes run by the faculty and 2 participants spent a large amount of time fulfilling similar tasks (see Figure 6.9). Although it is too early to draw far-reaching conclusions based on this single fact, the finding seems to suggest a thought-provoking problem: too much time spent on teaching in training classes undoubtedly means less time and effort on teaching in formal English classes for undergraduates.

c) Preparing for lessons

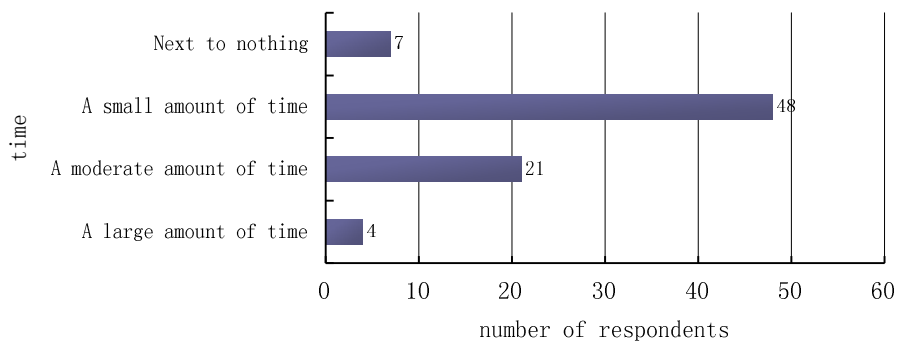
Figure 6.10 Time spent preparing lessons



Whilst 29 participants spent a large amount of time planning for the course, a clear majority of them (47 out of 80) thought that they spent a moderate amount of time preparing for lessons (see Figure 6.10).

d) Attending staff meetings and team meetings

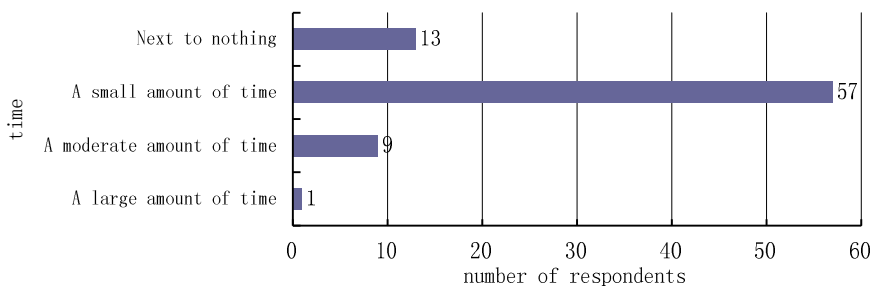
Figure 6.11 Time spent attending meetings



It can be noted from the result that 21 participants spent a moderate amount of time attending various meetings at different levels and 5 spent a large amount of time having meetings (see Figure 6.11).

e) Observing classes

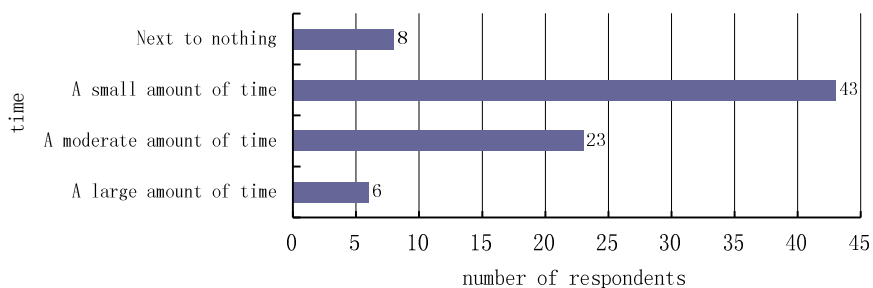
Figure 6.12 Time spent observing classes



Given the above, it seems not surprising that, of 80 participants, 57 spent only a small amount of time and 13 spent nearly no time observing classes (see Figure 6.12).

f) Conducting research project tasks

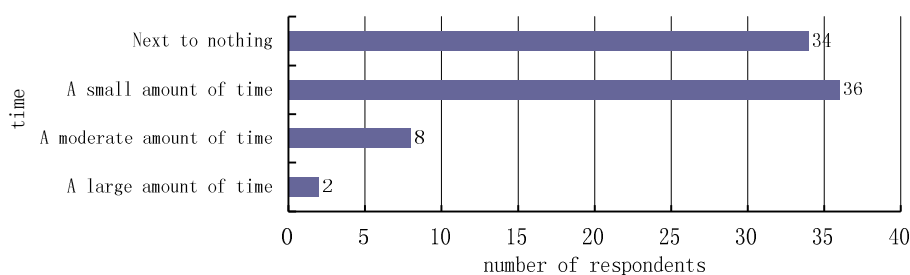
Figure 6.13 Time spent conducting research project tasks



There were, then, a fair number of participants (43 in 80) who spent a small amount of time and 8 spent nearly no time conducting research projects (see Figure 6.13).

g) Administrative duties either at or out of the university

Figure 6.14 Time spent on administrative duties



Whilst there were 10 participants who spent a large amount of time or a moderate amount of time fulfilling administrative duties, the majority of them (70 out of 80) showed a low level of engagement in administrative duties. This is perhaps one of the surprising findings compared to the large volume of administrative duties lecturers have in the context of England, due to the growth of quality procedures and inspection. In terms of the difference between the Chinese educational system and the English educational system, however, two points need to be mentioned here. The first point is associated with the distinctive understandings of “administrative duties”. For Chinese lecturers, “administrative tasks” mainly refer to the duties taken as administrative heads, therefore, ordinary teaching staff are not greatly involved in such administrative tasks. The second point is related to the actual amount of administrative duties Chinese lecturers have. In this case, it is reasonable to say that the lecturers at the Faculty of Foreign Languages do perform more administrative duties than they did a decade ago but not so much as their English counterparts.

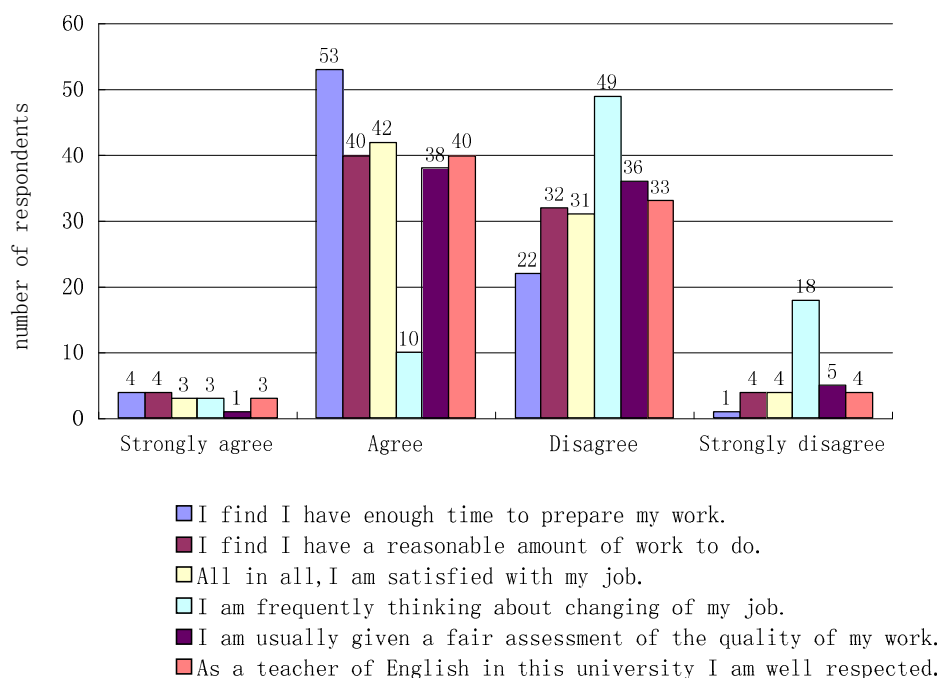
Besides, seven participants added that they spent a lot of time on either family care or post-graduate instructions or interpreting job out of university.

So far, a number of conclusions might justifiably be drawn from the findings. A first point is the fact that 87.5% of participants (70 out of 80) had been working as teachers of English at Guangxi University for more than 5 years (see Figure 6.6), indicating that the majority had gained considerable teaching experience. A second point is that it is

clear that the overwhelming majority of teaching staff participants were preoccupied by their teaching tasks, which was also strongly confirmed by their responses concerning their time spent on various activities at the university. Consequently, it is perhaps hardly surprising that 78 out of 80 participants spent a moderate amount of time or more delivering lectures (see Figure 6.8), and 76 out of 80 spent a moderate amount of time or more planning lectures (see Figure 6.10) while spending substantially less time on classroom observation and research projects, which echoed the perceptions of teaching staff interviewed in Chapter 5. A third point is that 70 out of 80 teaching staff participants in the questionnaire showed a low level of engagement in administrative duties (see Figure 6.14), which can be partly accounted for by their different understanding of “administrative duties” and partly by the relatively fewer administrative duties they had compared to their English counterparts. Finally, a further issue, relevant to this discussion, is the indication that teachers also seemed to take on additional interpreting jobs or extra teaching tasks in training classes operated by the faculty with a desire to take better care of their family’s financial needs.

6.2.2.4 Perceptions of being a teacher of English at Guangxi University

Figure 6.15 Perceptions of being a teacher of English at Guangxi University



Although it is a little simplistic, it seems fair to say that there was a clear divergence of responses (see Figure 6.15), indicating the complexity of perceptions of teaching staff at Guangxi University.

The data first shows that 57 participants said that they had enough time to prepare for their work and 23 had not. This echoed the findings in 6.2.2.3, in which ordinary teaching staff said that they spent a lot of time giving lectures and planning for lectures and teaching staff in charge of departmental administration spent much time attending meetings and fulfilling administrative duties.

In terms of workload, while there were 44 participants who were in agreement or strong agreement on the reasonable amount of workload, 36 participants found that this was not their situation.

Interestingly, 45 participants were satisfied with their job but 35 were not, which indicated a rather mixed picture of their satisfaction.

In addition, 67 out of 80 felt they did not frequently think of changing jobs. There are probably two reasons for this. First, in the context of globalization, it is more difficult to seek employment than before due to the fierce competition, particularly in the field of higher education. Second, a post in higher education in China currently is still considered as a relatively “safe” job in terms of various benefits and social status.

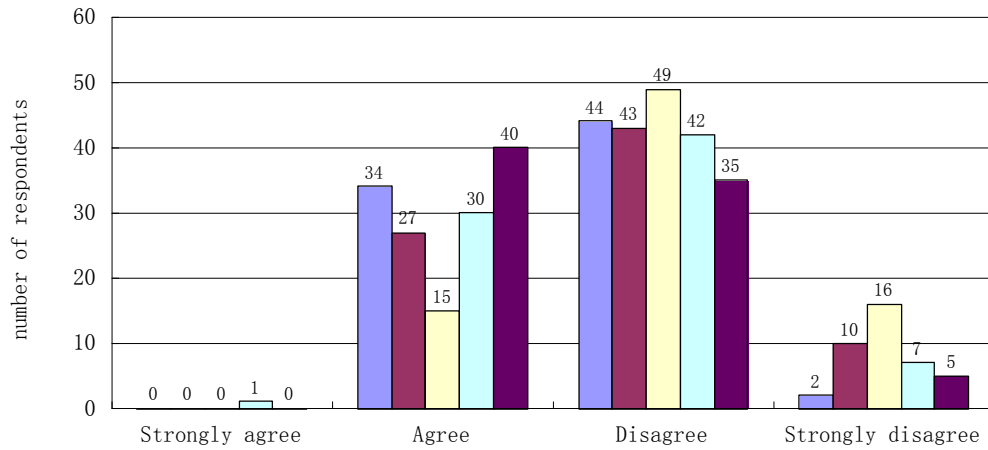
Besides, an almost equal division of viewpoints was found among participants on the issues of assessment of the quality of work. 39 participants thought they were given fair assessment of the quality of their job but 41 did not think so.

Finally, 43 out of 80 participants acknowledged that as teachers of English they were well respected at the university but 37 disagreed.

The overall impression, then, is a “mixed picture”. There does seem to be an agreement that teaching staff are in a relatively advantageous position at the university, but there is also strong belief that their situation is far from favourable.

6.2.2.5 Perceptions of the quality of English language education at the university

Figure 6.16 Perceptions of the quality of English language education at Guangxi University (I)



- In general, the quality of teaching of English in this university is satisfactory.
- There is an appropriate number of students in one class.
- There is enough time to discuss issues with individual students.
- There is a rich and stimulating environment of English teaching at this university.
- The contents of English course book at this university are adequate to help students acquire communication skills.

Figure 6.17 Perceptions of the quality of English language education at Guangxi University (II)

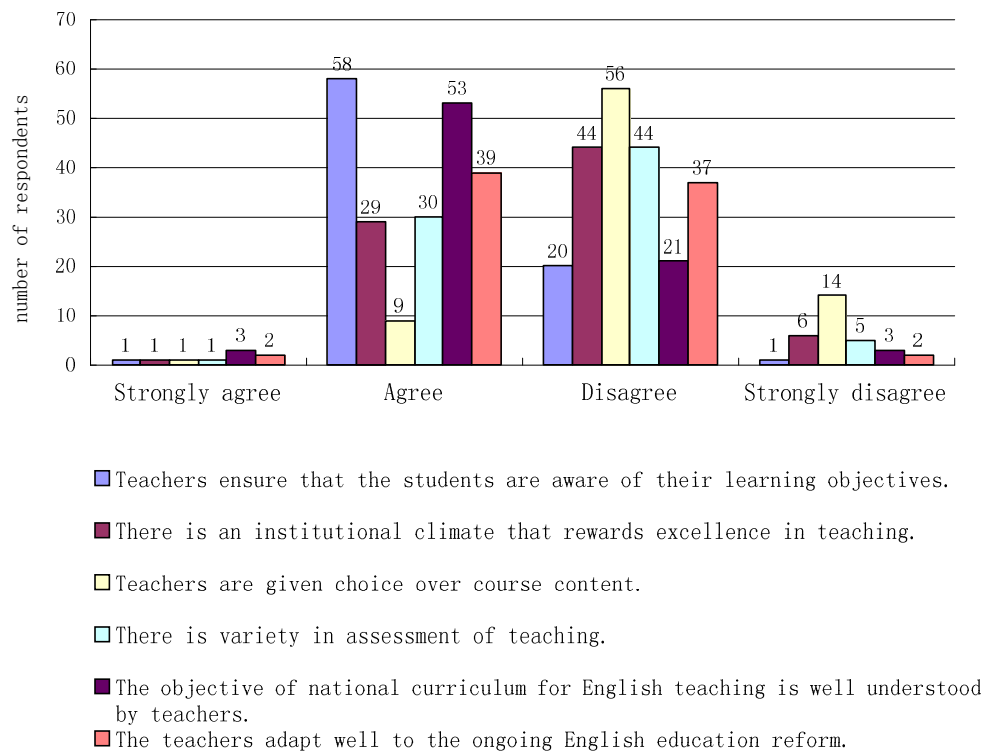


Figure 6.16 and Figure 6.17 likewise expose a wide divergence of opinions that were reflected in many issues throughout the report.

Although a sizeable number of participants (34 out of 80) spoke favourably of the quality of teaching of English in the university, 46 participants regarded it as “not satisfactory”.

The result also shows that whilst 27 participants were in agreement or strong agreement that there were an appropriate number of students in one class, 53 participants, did not think there were.

Although 15 participants thought that they had enough time to discuss issues with individual students during the class, the majority of participants (65 out of 80) thought it was not the case.

Meanwhile, 49 out of 80 believed the university lacked a rich and stimulating environment for English teaching and 31 believed otherwise.

In addition, there was an equal split between those (40 out of 80) who felt the contents of the course book used were adequate to help students acquire communication skills and those (40 out of 80) who disagreed.

Furthermore, 59 out of 80 participants held that teachers did their utmost to ensure students' awareness of their learning goals and 21 disagreed.

Of all participants, although 30 felt that an institutional climate that rewards excellence in teaching has been successfully created at the university, 50 were not convinced of this.

Moreover, it is of interest to note that the overwhelming majority of respondents (70 out of 80) believed that teachers were not given choice over course content.

Although there were 31 participants who believed that there was variety in assessment of teaching, 49 did not think that was the case.

Whilst 56 out of 80 participants thought the objective of national curriculum for English teaching was well understood by teachers, 24 were in disagreement or strong disagreement.

Last, 41 participants agreed that teaching staff successfully adapted themselves to the ongoing English language education reform but 39 disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Indeed, it is worth reiterating the point made earlier in the interview findings that teaching staff participants felt strong pressure coming from ongoing English language education reform, although they also expressed "being OK with the reform". This apparent paradox is not inconsistent with all that has been reported above. To put it another way, based on the questionnaire findings, whilst 41 teaching staff surveyed believed that teachers adjusted well to the reform there were 39 who considered that teaching staff failed to respond to the reform in a positive way (see Figure 6.17). It may be the case that young teachers are more inclined to embrace the changes than the senior teachers. However, there was not enough evidence for us to know the real reason and thus further research on this issue is needed.

6.2.2.6 Top three factors considered respectively by different stakeholders in evaluation of English language education at Guangxi University

This question aimed to find out staff perceptions of criteria used by the various stakeholders. In the question, teaching staff were given a list of factors possibly concerned in evaluating the quality of English language education at higher education in China. They then were asked to select the top three factors considered respectively by different stakeholders with regard to English language education. The possible factors to be chosen from included:

- students' term-based test scores
- retention and CET pass rates of students
- students' feedback on the teaching they receive
- how well teachers work with their colleagues
- direct appraisal of classroom teaching
- innovative teaching practices
- relations between teachers and students
- academic publications by teachers
- teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field
- extra-curricular activities in English with students (e.g. English dramas and contests)

The result obtained from the questionnaire is presented in Table 6.1 as follows:

Table 6.1 Three top factors considered by various stakeholders in evaluation of English language education at Guangxi University

Stakeholders	Three top factors considered
<i>Teachers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students’ feedback on the teaching they receive (58) •Teachers’ knowledge and understanding of their main subject field (40) •Students’ term-based test scores (33)
<i>Senior staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students’ term-based test scores (42) •Direct appraisal of classroom teaching (41) •Teachers’ knowledge and understanding of their main subject field (41)
<i>University administrators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Retention and CET pass rates of students (67) •Academic publications by teachers (58) •Students’ term-based test scores (41)
<i>The government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Retention and CET pass rates of students (70) •Academic publications by teachers (59) •Innovative teaching practice (27)/ Teachers’ understanding of their main subject field (27)

Note: Numbers in brackets refer to the numbers of respondents to the questionnaire.

One of the strongest impressions coming from responses is that the criteria used by various stakeholders are not entirely distinct and to some degree overlap. Two points are worth making here. Firstly, both teachers and senior teaching staff place high value on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the main subject field as well as students’ term-based test scores. It is also noteworthy that university administrators and government equally emphasize the retention and CET pass rates of students as well as academic publications by teachers. Secondly, it is perhaps particularly interesting that students’ term-based test scores is a shared criterion among teachers, senior staff and university administrators, which clearly indicates that the exam-oriented culture in China’s English language education remains unchanged, despite the ongoing reform,

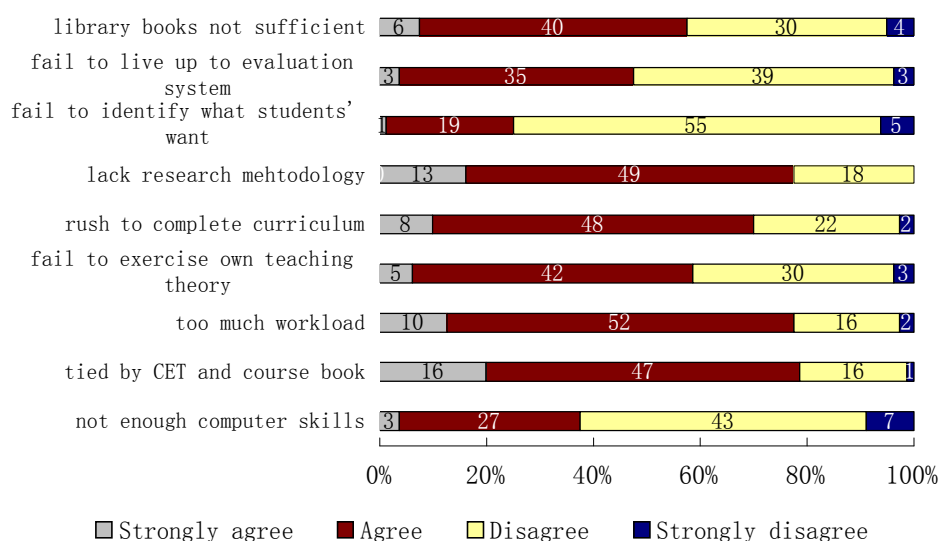
which calls for a system of diversified assessment of English language education.

Although there are genuine similarities in criteria by various stakeholders, their differences must also be recognized. In other words, while factors such as students' feedback on the teaching they receive, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and students' term-based test scores were strong concerns of the teaching staff, the government and university gave priorities to students' CET pass rates and academic publications by teachers and innovative teaching practice. Indeed, these rather distinct criteria could suggest that teachers undoubtedly face dilemmas and thus are highly likely to be forced to try every means to meet the targets in different aspects rather than concentrating on English teaching. Hence, there seems little doubt that the disagreement on priority given by various stakeholders in evaluating quality of English language education has complicated the existing thorny situation at Guangxi University.

6.2.3 Career development

6.2.3.1 Challenges encountered as teachers of English at Guangxi University

Figure 6.18 Challenges encountered as teachers of English at Guangxi University



It comes as no surprise that participants did not fail to identify challenges they confronted in daily practice. This is understandable: willingly or unwillingly, they have

been embattled by such uncomfortable pressures and have to give an excessive amount of time to cope with these issues. It is apparent from Figure 6.18 that their challenges involved being tied by the CET and course book, too much workload, lack of research methodology, rushing to complete curriculum obligations and failing to exercise their own theory of practice.

Whilst 30 participants thought one of their challenges lay in lack of computer skills, 50 believed they had enough computer skills to cope with their job.

Sixty-three out of 80 participants felt they were tied by the CET and course book but 17 participants showed the opposite opinion.

Of all participants, 62 thought they had too much workload and only 18 did not think so.

Besides, 47 out of 80 participants believed they failed to exercise their own theory of teaching and 33 thought they were able to do so.

Although 56 participants found that they had to rush to complete the curriculum, 24 participants felt that was not their situation.

For 62 participants, one of their challenges was the fact that they felt they lacked research methodology.

While a small number of participants (20 out of 80) believed that they failed to identify what students want, a significant number of participants (60 out of 80) thought they were able to do so.

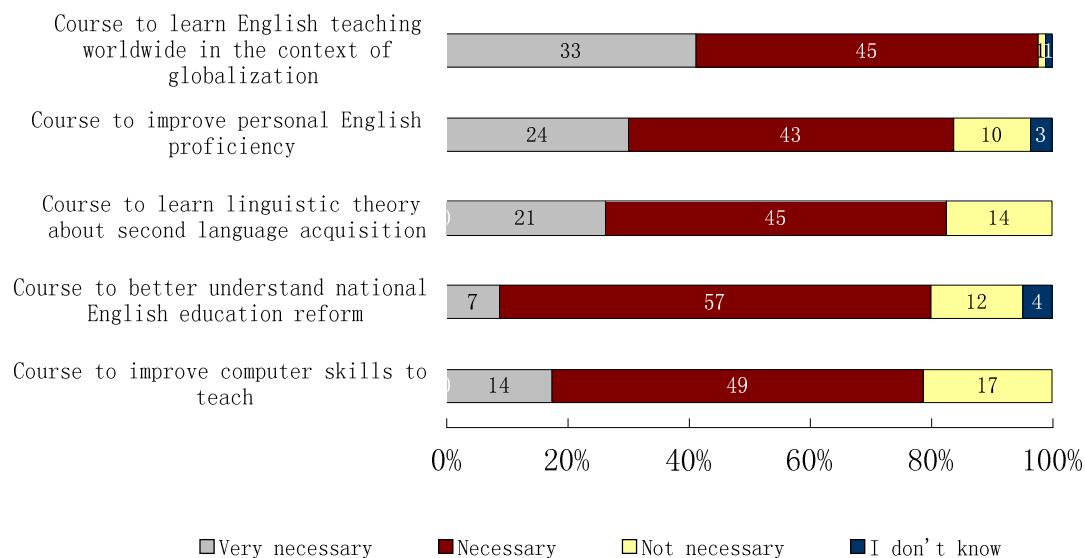
What is more, 38 out of 80 participants were in agreement or strong agreement that they failed to fulfill the expectation of the existing evaluation system of teaching of English at the University and 42 believed they could live up to the expectation.

Last, 46 in 80 participants believed the books in the university library were not sufficient and 34 thought there were abundant books in the library.

In accordance with the findings, most participants seemed to be weighed down by increasing challenges they had to face in their daily practice. However, it seems sensible to argue that few of these challenges are entirely new and unique. Not just once, but time and again we see these similar pressures clearly voiced by teaching staff in individual interviews described earlier in Chapter 5.

6.2.3.2 Perceptions of refresher courses to improve teaching of English

Figure 6.19 Perceptions of refresher courses to improve teaching of English



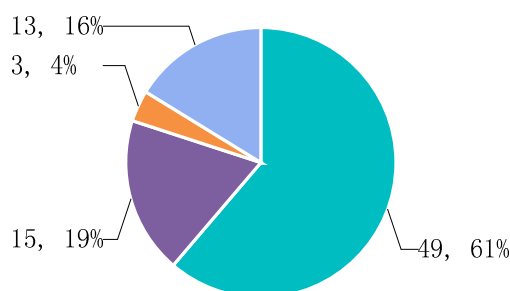
Given the above challenges, it is hardly surprising that participants embraced nearly all the possible refresher courses with the utmost enthusiasm (see Figure 6.19). There was, then, a significantly unified positive response concerning various refresher courses to improve teaching of English.

To be specific, 63 out of 80 expressed the need to take courses to improve their computer skills. Besides, 64 participants showed their serious concern about having a course to better understand the national English education reform. In addition, 66 participants welcomed the idea of taking a course to learn linguistic theory about second language acquisition. Furthermore, 67 out of 80 showed a desire to improve their personal English proficiency by taking courses. Last but not least, 78 participants believed that courses to understand English teaching worldwide in the context of globalization would also be one of the best helps to their job, which suggested they were becoming aware of how globalization might have profound impacts upon their job.

The findings then indicate that with increased responsibility and growing pressures, teaching staff participants strongly felt the need to update their knowledge and skills to deal with the challenges ahead.

6.2.3.3 Perceptions of relationship between teaching and research

Figure 6.20 Perceptions of relationship between teaching and research



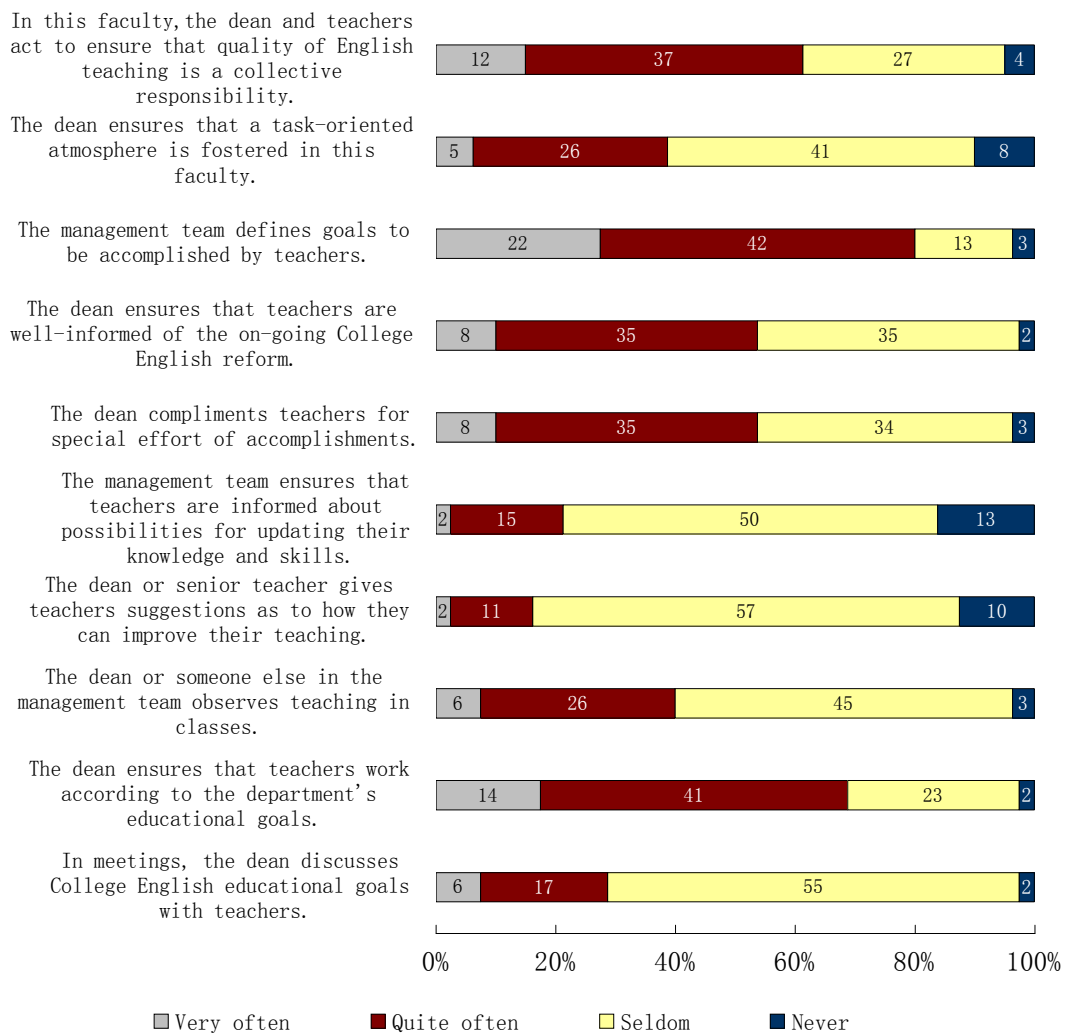
- University English language teaching and research should go hand in hand with each other to achieve harmonious effect.
- University English language teaching alone is enough for College English teachers.
- English language teachers should give priority to research than teaching as teaching is rarely counted in professional assessment.
- There is no direct relationship between research ability and teaching ability.

With respect to the relationship between teaching and research, whilst most participants (61%) felt that teaching and research should go hand in hand to achieve a harmonious effect, there was also a sizeable percentage of participants (19%) who believed teaching alone was enough for teachers of English (see Figure 6.20). Furthermore, 16% held that there was no direct relationship between research ability and teaching ability. This evidence is thought-provoking as “actions begin in the mind”. If a number of teaching staff see the relationship between teaching and research in a negative or indifferent way, it is highly unlikely that they will conduct research besides their heavy teaching tasks.

6.2.4 Institutional management

6.2.4.1 Perceptions of institutional management

Figure 6.21 Perceptions of institutional management

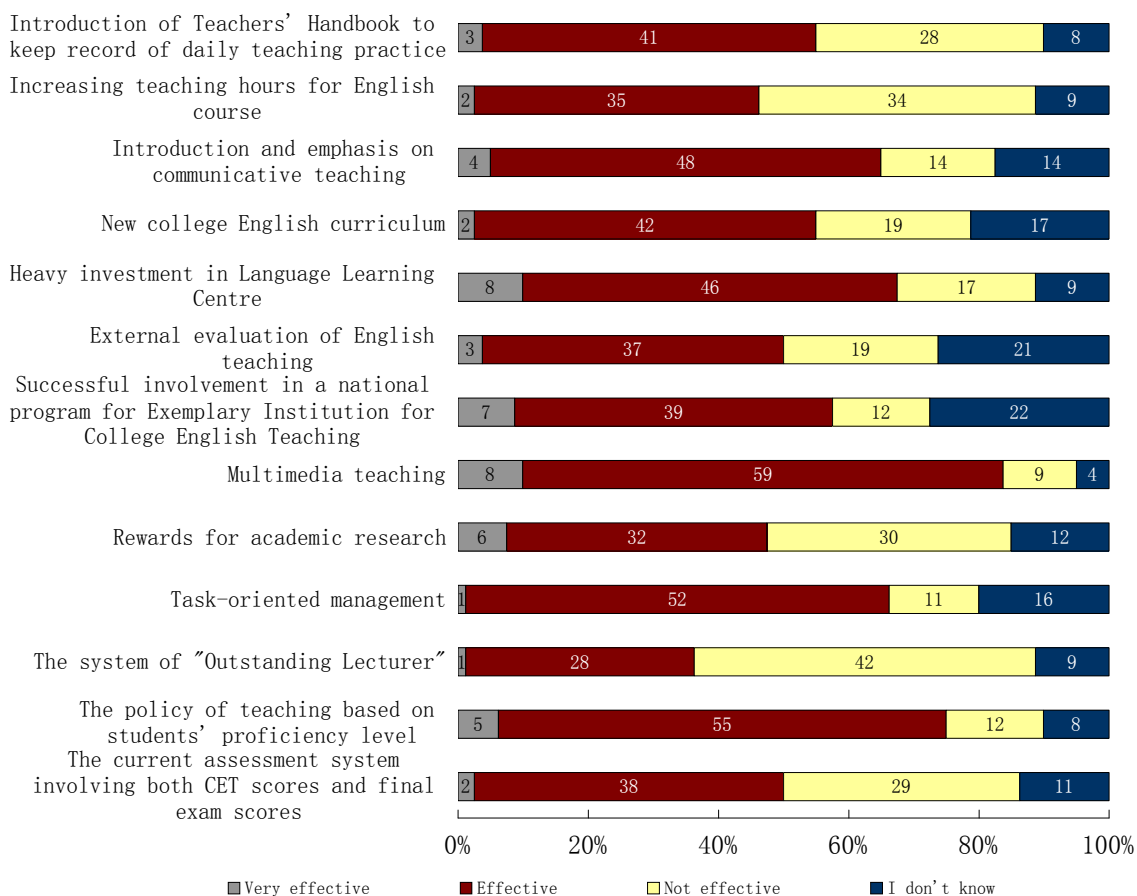


Unsurprisingly, there were distinct perceptions of institutional management, particularly to issues about educational goals as well as the ongoing reform (see Figure 6.21). Three prominent aspects are mentioned here. First, the data reveals that most teaching staff felt less than well informed regarding opportunities as well as the necessary knowledge and skills to improve their teaching. Sixty-three out of 80 felt that they were not informed of the possibility for updating their knowledge and 67 believed that they were not given any suggestions by the dean or management team to improve their teaching. Second, there was a nearly equal split of opinions among the participants on the issues of ongoing reform and compliment for special efforts of teachers' accomplishments. Whilst 37 out of 80 said that the dean seldom or never ensured that the teachers were well-informed about the on-going reform, 43 thought

the dean often did so. Forty-three participants acknowledged that the dean complimented teachers on their accomplishments but 37 did not think like that. Third, when it comes to institutional educational goals, the data indicate a controversial reality. 57 participants considered that the dean seldom or never discussed *College English* educational goals with teachers at the meetings. On the contrary, 64 out of 80 believed that the management defined goals to be accomplished by teachers. In the meantime, 49 out of 80 participants also felt that the dean seldom or never ensured that a task-oriented atmosphere was fostered in the faculty. The implication then is clear: the educational goals are highly likely to be set for the teaching staff without negotiating or discussing them with teachers, and thus to some degree are lacking in transparency.

6.2.4.2 Effectiveness of strategies taken to improve teaching of English

Figure 6.22 Effectiveness of strategies taken to improve the teaching of English at Guangxi University



In light of the strategies, again, a great variety of opinions was expressed here.

First, 40 out of 80 regarded the current assessment system involving both CET scores and final exam scores as effective but 29 did not think so and 11 didn't seem to know.

Second, while 12 participants had the opinion that the policy of teaching based on students' proficiency level was not effective and 8 had no idea of its effectiveness, 60 had no doubt that it was effective.

Third, although 29 out of 80 saw the system of "Outstanding Lecturer" as useful, 42 found it not effective at all.

Fourth, 11 participants acknowledged that task-oriented management was not effective and 16 showed no idea of its effectiveness. On the contrary, 53 participants saw it as an effective or very effective strategy.

Fifth, with regard to rewards for academic research, 38 maintained that it was a useful strategy; however, 30 considered it useless and 12 were not sure of its usefulness.

Sixth, in terms of multimedia teaching, 67 out of 80 considered it as an effective or very effective strategy. Only 9 saw it as not effective.

Seventh, concerning successful involvement in the national programme for exemplary institutions for College English teaching reform, 46 held that it was helpful and 12 believed it to be of no help. Twenty-two did not know whether it was effective or not.

Eighth, 40 out of 80 believed external evaluation of English teaching was effective but 19 did not think so. 21 participants had no idea of its effectiveness.

Ninth, 54 participants spoke positively of heavy investment in Language Learning Centre but 17 did not consider it as effective.

Tenth, 44 out of 80 were in favour of the new College English curriculum and saw it as an effective strategy, however, 19 were not.

Eleventh, with respect to an introduction and emphasis on communicative teaching, whilst 52 participants found it effective, 14 believed otherwise. There were still 14 participants who did not know whether it was useful or not.

Twelfth, 37 out of 80 thought increasing teaching hours for English course was effective but 34 did not think so.

Finally, whilst 28 participants considered that the introduction of the *Teachers' Handbook* to keep records of daily teaching practice was not effective, 44 spoke favorably of it.

To sum up, on the one hand, there seems little doubt that there was a general agreement on the effectiveness of strategies, which included multimedia teaching, heavy investment in Language Learning Centre, introduction and emphasis on communicative teaching, the new College English curriculum and task-oriented management. On the other hand, it was also evident that the system of “Outstanding Lecturer” and rewards for academic research were seen as not effective by the majority of participants.

6.2.5 Perceptions of ideal teaching of English

If there were differences of perception on most of the issues, the similar divergence was replicated among comments in the only open question at the end of teacher-based questionnaire. Sixty-one out of 80 participants provided answers to this question. In a general sense, it seems possible to suggest that there are six issues raised by the participants as follows:

- emphasis on communicative skills and cross culture ability
- teaching based on students' desires
- lively and innovative learning atmosphere
- flexibility in curriculum and assessment system
- cooperation between teachers, students, university and government
- teachers' career development

The first issue is essentially pragmatic in nature. Twenty-four participants felt that ideally teaching of English should be centered on developing students' English communicative skills and improving their cross culture ability.

The second issue is concerned with students' desires. Eighteen participants believed that in ideal English learning, teaching of English should be based on the students' desires, and oriented to their future career.

The third issue is connected with learning atmosphere. There was an acute awareness of developing a lively and innovative atmosphere in the English course. Seventeen participants believed that what matters was that students could get fun and a sense of making progress from the English class, rather than being crammed with too much work in order to keep up with the course programme.

The fourth issue stems from the very fact that a unified curriculum and the national CET4 have been applied to English courses in China's higher education. Twelve teaching staff participants perceived that an ideal teaching of English featured flexibility in curriculum and assessment system. That is to say, teachers should not be restricted by the curriculum and should be able to decide by themselves the teaching contents and give an assessment of students mainly according to their daily performance.

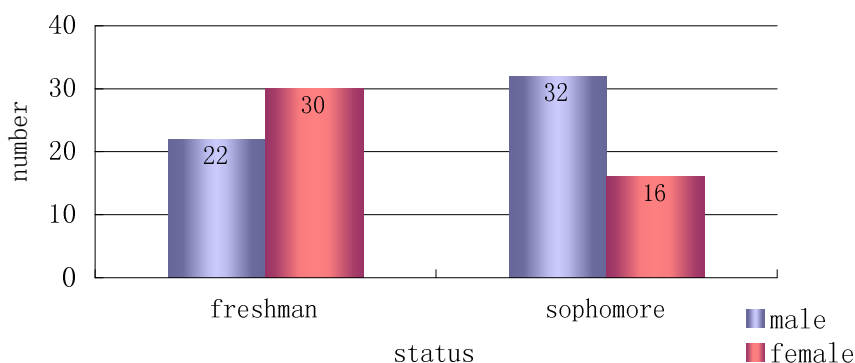
The fifth issue focuses on the cooperation among teachers, students, university and government. Eleven participants strongly held that in ideal circumstances, all the stakeholders should have a shared goal and English language education should be seen as a collective responsibility rather than merely the job of English teachers.

The last issue is concerned with teachers' career development. Six participants thought ideal teaching of English involved regular training for teachers to equip them with up-to-date knowledge and necessary skills.

6.3 Students' perceptions and experiences of English language education at Guangxi University

6.3.1 Demographic information

Figure 6.23 Demographic information on student participants



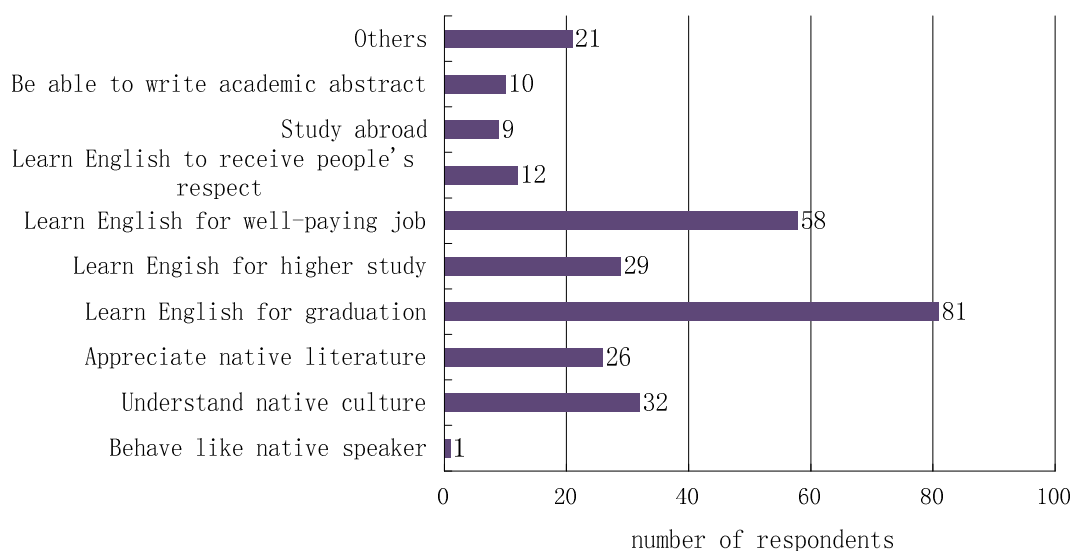
The total number of respondents of the student-based questionnaire was 100, with 54 males and 46 females. Among them 52 were freshmen and 48 were sophomores (see Figure 6.23).

6.3.2 English learning experience

This section contains questions about student participants' English learning experiences at Guangxi University, including their reasons for learning English, time spent on English learning as well as their perceptions of the English language education received.

6.3.2.1 Reasons for learning English

Figure 6.24 Reasons for learning English

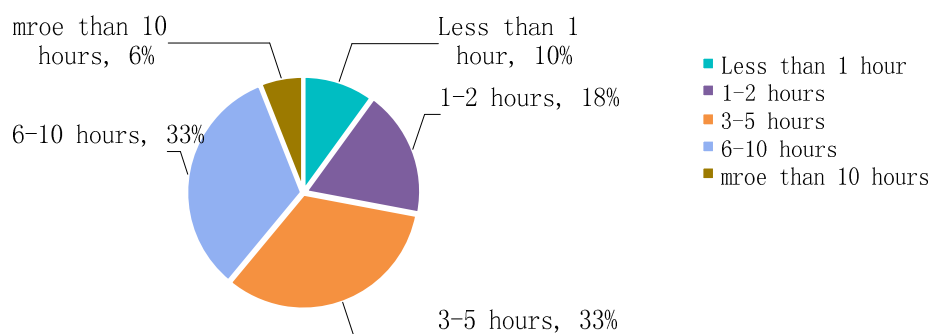


In this question, student participants were asked to select reasons for learning English, with three reasons as maximum. Figure 6.24 shows that there were various reasons for students to learn English at the university, of which learning for graduation ranks the top, learning for a well-paying job the second and learning for understanding native culture the third. The message conveyed then seems apparent: their reasons for English

learning were basically personal and practical. In other words, more attention was concentrated upon the practical and financial benefits they could obtain from the course.

6.3.2.2 Average hours spent on English learning per week

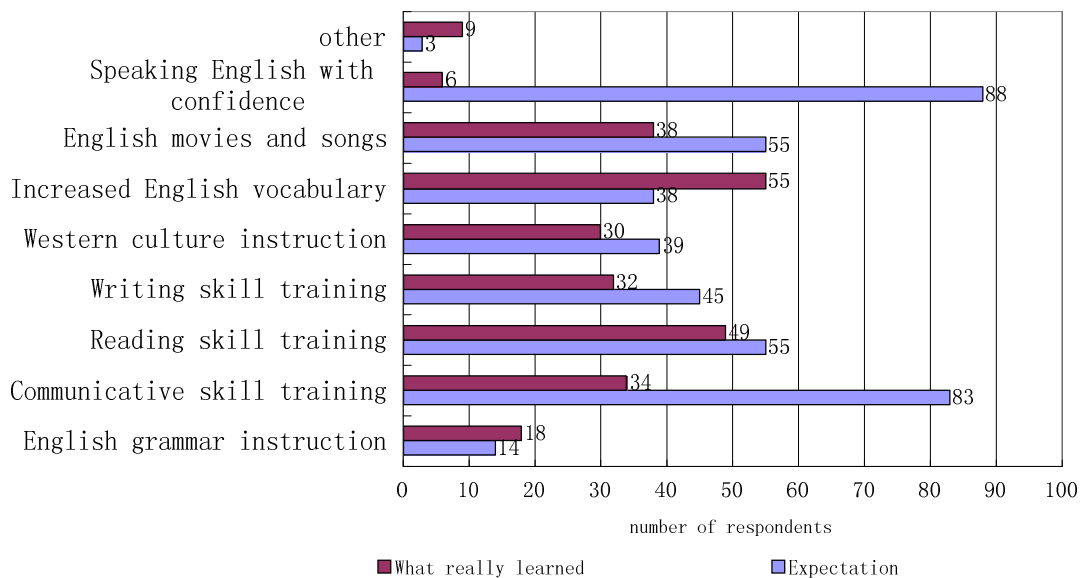
Figure 6.25 Average time spent on English per week



In terms of average hours spent on English learning every week, 33% participants studied between 3-5 hours, 33% between 6-10 hours, 18% between 1-2 hours, 10% less than 1 hour and 6% more than 10 hours (see Figure 6.25). Normally, undergraduates at the university are required to take an English course for five periods weekly, of which totaling about three hours. The result indicates that most participants spent a considerable amount of time in learning English.

6.3.2.3 Expectation from English course before entering Guangxi University

Figure 6.26 Expectation of English course and what participants really learned



As is clearly shown in Figure 6.26, what participants most expected from the English course at Guangxi University were communicative skill training and speaking English with confidence. Eighty-eight out of 100 held that they expected to be able to speak English with confidence after the course. Eighty-three participants expected to receive communicative training in the English course. They also showed their high expectation of receiving English reading skill training and listening to English songs and watching English movies in their English course. Fifty-five participants expected to have better reading skills and 45 to improve their writing skills after the course. Furthermore, 55 in 100 participants wanted to learn English songs and watch English movies in the English class. The findings thus suggested that a great number of participants were fully aware of what they wanted concerning their English learning—communicative competence in English.

6.3.2.4 What was learned in English course at Guangxi University

It is of interest to note that what participants really learned in their English course were increased English vocabulary and reading skill training (see Figure 6.26), which suggested the English course basically replicates what participants learned before

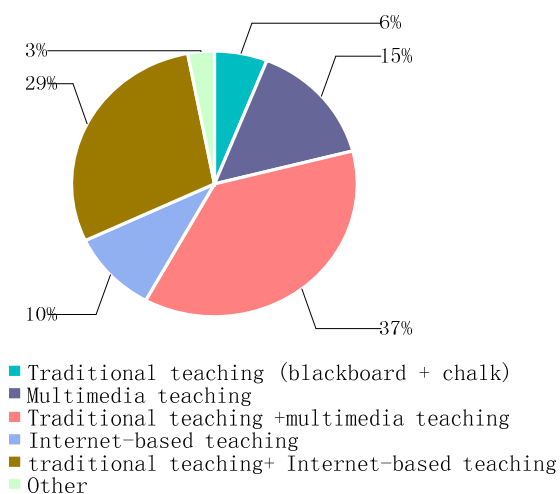
entering university. To be specific, 55 out of 100 participants acknowledged that what they actually learned from the course was increased English vocabulary. Forty-nine participants thought that what they learned in the English course was reading skill training. Although statistics indicated that 34 out of 100 respondents received communicative skill training and 38 listened to English songs and watched English movies in their courses, only 6 out of 100 acknowledged that they could speak English with confidence after the course.

In addition, based on the questionnaire findings, before entering the university, one participant expected what he would learn in English course could be beneficial to his whole life. However, after the course, what he had learned was “separate pieces of information of English”. While four participants remarked they learned very little in English course, one participant indicated he learned how to study by himself.

By comparing what participants expected and what they really learned in English course, one must draw the important conclusion that student participants were not getting at all what they expected and wanted. Such a conclusion is very significant but certainly not an inspiring one. Rather, if that is the case, the situation of English language education at the university is really worrying.

6.3.2.5 The preferred teaching mode in English course

Figure 6.27 The preferred teaching mode in English course

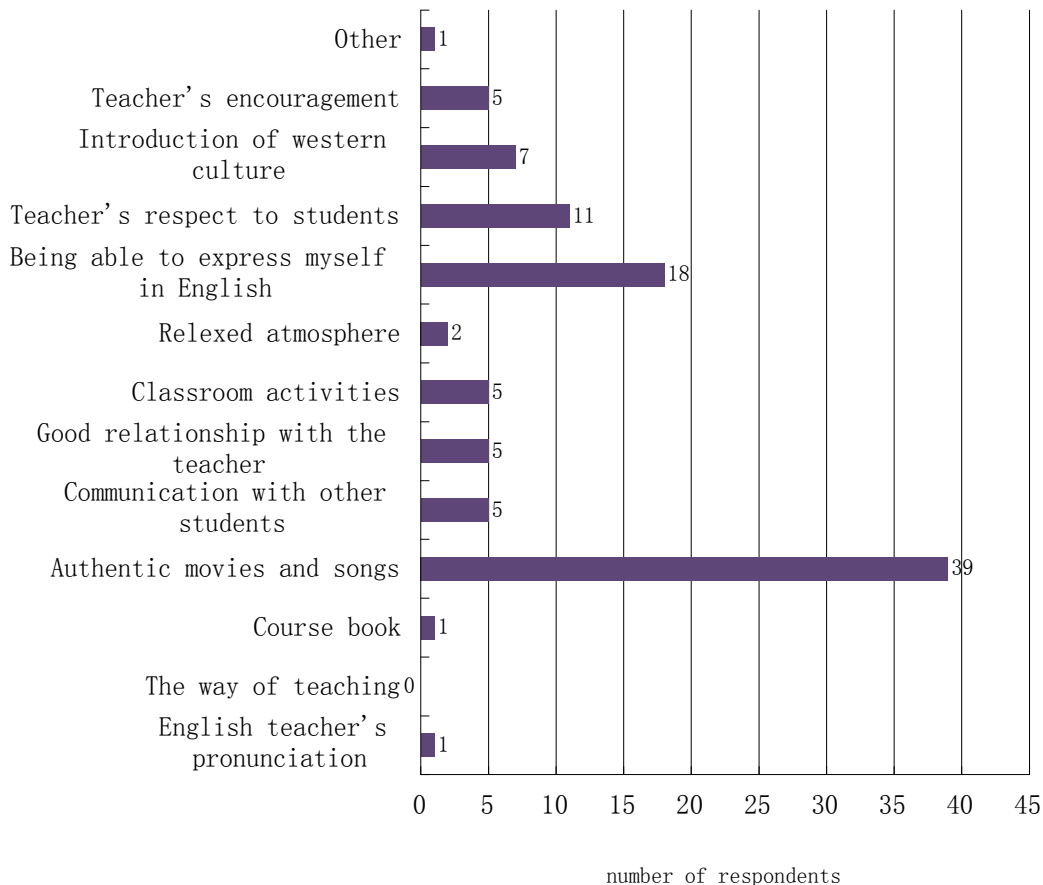


In China's universities, multimedia teaching basically refers to computer-based teaching without access to the Internet, in which teachers can apply PowerPoint, projector as well as slides as a teaching aid in the classroom. Internet-based teaching refers to similar computer-based teaching but with access to the Internet.

It has been clearly shown in Figure 6.27 that the majority of student participants believed traditional teaching plus multimedia teaching was the best way for English course, which accounted for 37% of the total number of respondents. Besides, 29% preferred to have a combination of traditional teaching and Internet-based teaching. The result suggests that participants preferred modern teaching methods plus traditional teaching.

6.3.2.6 The favourite part of the English course

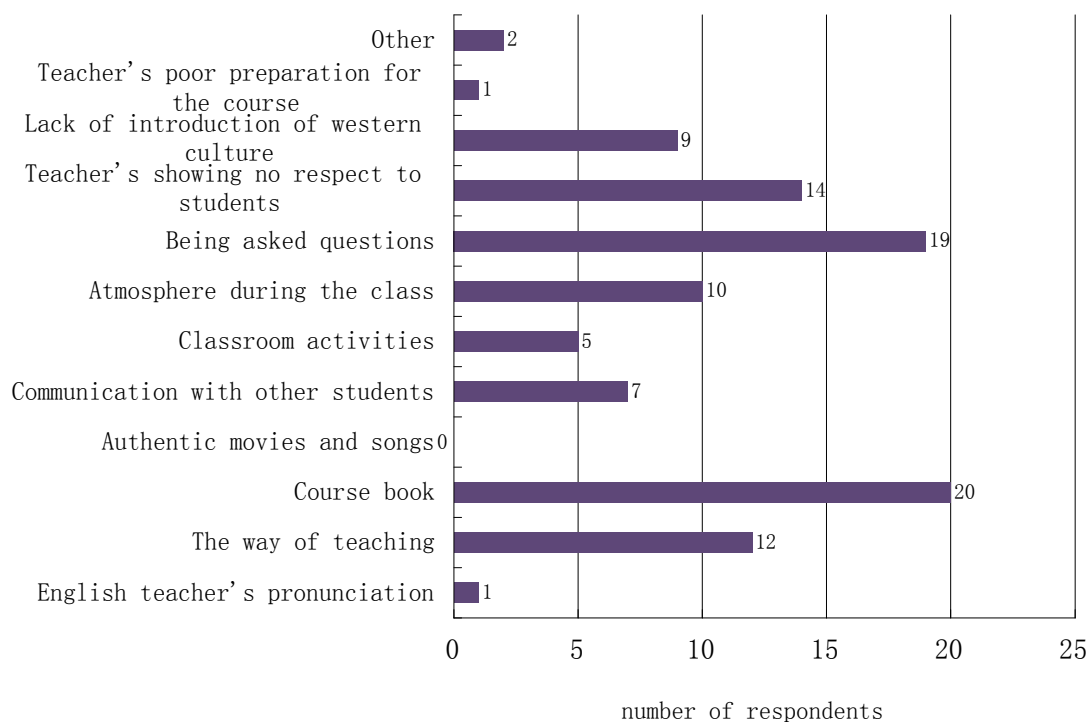
Figure 6.28 The favourite part of the English course



With regard to the favourite part of the English course, Figure 6.28 clearly reveals that participants enjoyed authentic movies and songs most, which accounted for 39% (39 out of 100 student participants) of the total respondents. “Being able to express oneself in English” ranked the second as the favourite part of the English course. Eighteen participants held that they enjoyed being given chances to express themselves in English. The findings also showed that 11 participants enjoyed “teachers’ respect to students”. Surprisingly, however, no participants viewed the style of teaching as her favourite part of the English course and only one participant liked best the course book, indicating that the way of teaching and the course book were equally worrying and problematic. In addition, only one participant thought that he or she most enjoyed English teachers’ pronunciation, which indicated that teaching staff at the University did not have a desirable teaching style and pronunciation and English course books probably failed to live up to students’ expectation.

6.3.2.7 The least enjoyed part of the English course

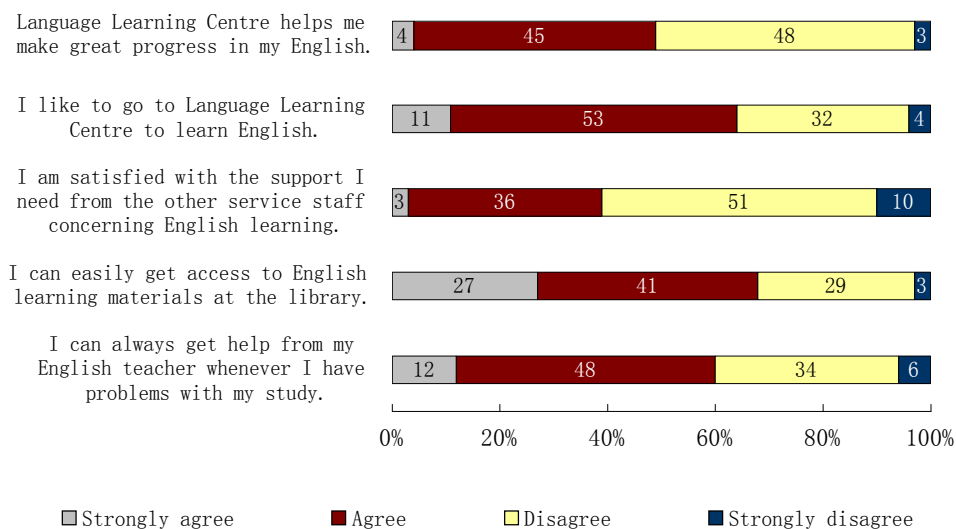
Figure 6.29 The least enjoyed part of the English course



Interestingly, Figure 6.29 showed that 20 out of 100 student participants enjoyed least the course book. Nineteen of them disliked being asked questions during the course. Fourteen student participants disliked the fact that the teacher did not respect students.

6.3.2.8 Perceptions of learning support at Guangxi University

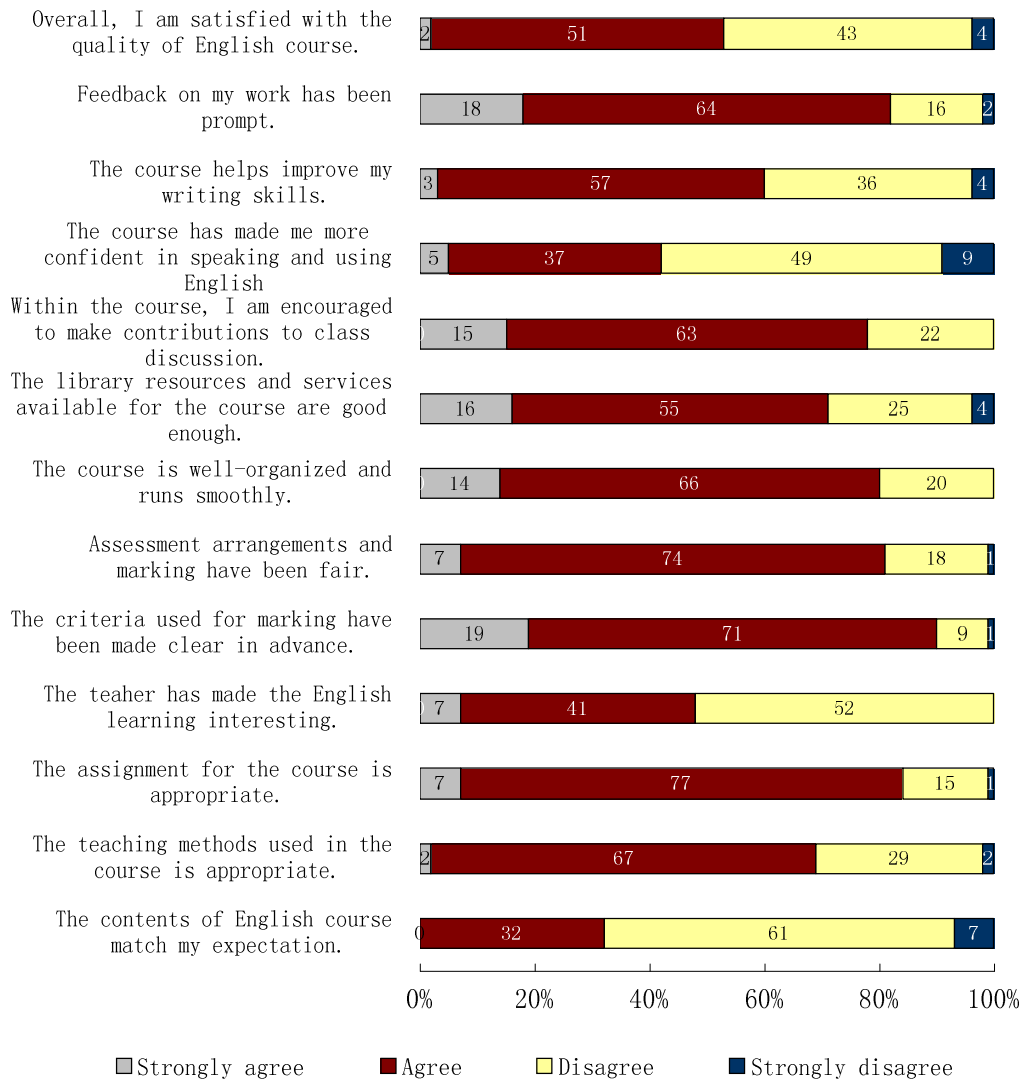
Figure 6.30 Perceptions of learning support at Guangxi University



As far as learning support available at Guangxi University is concerned (see Figure 6.30), 64 out of 100 student participants agreed that they liked to go to the Language Learning Centre to learn English and 68 thought they had easy access to English materials at the Library. Sixty participants found that they could also get help from their English teacher when they came across difficulties. However, 61 out of 100 participants expressed dissatisfaction with the learning support offered by other service teaching staff in the university. In addition, although 49 participants found that Language Learning Centre helped them make great progress in their English learning, 51 believed otherwise.

6.3.3 English learning Evaluation

Figure 6.31 Perceptions of evaluation of English course at Guangxi University



On the basis of the data, what becomes apparent is that there were substantial differences among student participants on their perceptions of the evaluation of the English course. There was, however, similarity in three aspects shared by most participants which is worth pointing out. The first is that 68 out of 100 student participants acknowledged that the contents of English course did not match their expectation. The second is that there were 58 participants who believed the course did not bring them more confidence in speaking English. These two facts then partly lead to the third aspect: 52 out of 100 participants thought that their English teachers did not make English learning interesting.

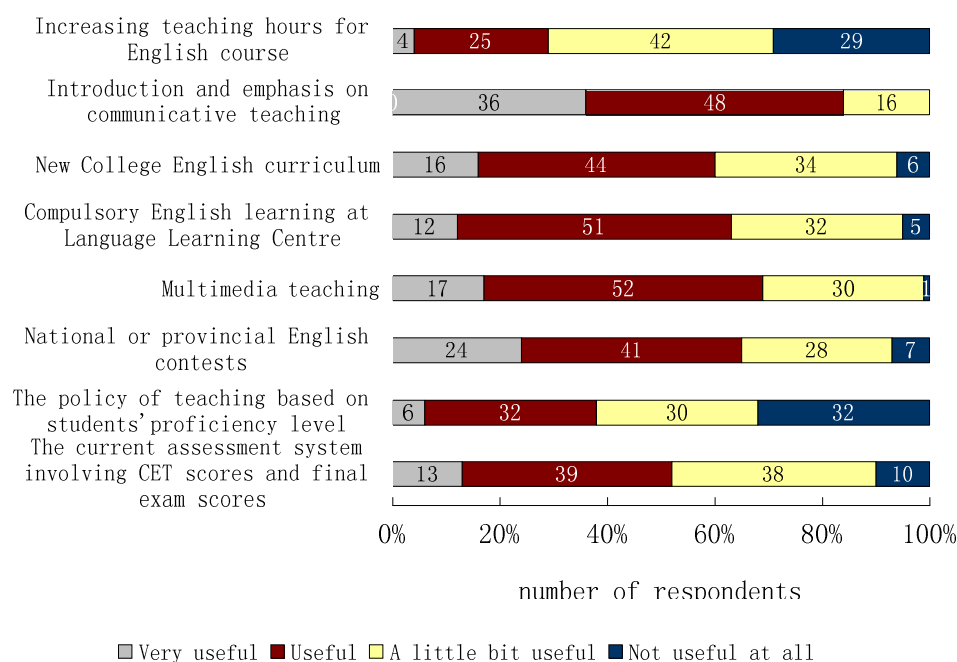
In general, student participants showed a diversity of attitudes towards evaluation of

the English course they received. Sixty-nine participants believed the teaching method used in the course was appropriate. Eighty-four out of 100 participants held that the assignments in the course were suitable. Ninety participants thought that the criteria of marking had been made clear in advance by their teachers. Eighty-one out of 100 thought that the assessment and marking of the course had been fair. Eighty participants found that the English courses were well-organized and ran smoothly. Seventy-one participants spoke positively of the English materials and services offered to them in the library. Seventy-eight participants found that within the course, they were encouraged to make contribution to class discussion. Sixty out of 100 believed that the course helped improve their writing skills in English. Eighty-two thought feedbacks on their work were prompt. Fifty-three out of 100 acknowledged that overall they were satisfied with the English course they took.

6.3.4 Strategies to improve English learning

6.3.4.1 Perceptions of policies to improve English learning at Guangxi University

Figure 6.32 Perceptions of policies to improve English learning at Guangxi University



Unlike teaching staff, students participants showed more favourable responses to the policies which have been taken to improve English learning at Guangxi University over the past few years. On the basis of the questionnaires, it seems possible to suggest that the responses were spread across three categories: positive, negative and neutral.

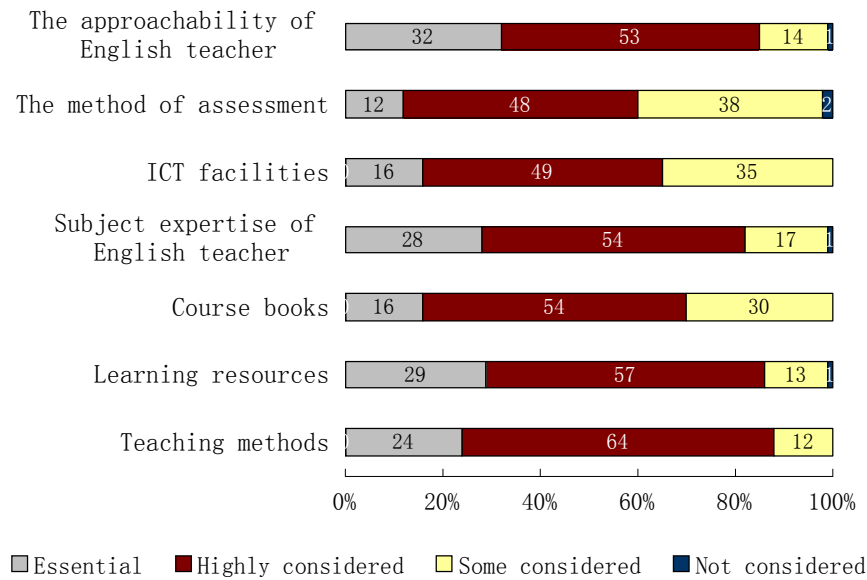
First, there were a great number of participants who believed that the introduction of communicative teaching, new College English curriculum, compulsory learning at Language Learning Centre, multimedia teaching and various English contests are useful or very useful. Eighty-four out of 100 participants regarded the introduction to communicative teaching as useful or very useful. Sixty participants believed new College English curriculum helped to improve the quality of English education. Sixty-three saw compulsory English learning at Language learning Centre as helpful. Sixty-nine out of 100 participants found that multimedia teaching was effective in English learning. Sixty-five participants also held that national or provincial English contests were good to improve their English.

Second, the majority of respondents also regarded policies such as increasing teaching hours for English courses and teaching based on students' proficiency level as "a little bit useful" or even "not useful at all". Although 29 participants were in favour of the strategy of "increasing teaching hours for the English course", 71 believed it was useless. Moreover, 62 out of 100 participants found it useless to teach students based on their language proficiency level.

Finally, there was a near equal division of opinions among participants concerning the current assessment system involving CET scores and final exam scores. Whilst 48 out of 100 participants considered it useless, 52 found it useful or very useful.

6.3.4.2 Perceptions of issues to ensure the quality of English learning at Guangxi University

Figure 6.33 Issues to ensure the quality of English learning at Guangxi University



Interestingly, opinions here were fairly unanimous that to ensure the quality of English learning at the university, efforts have to be made by taking all the issues into consideration. An overwhelming majority of participants saw the necessity to take all the relevant issues into consideration. Eighty-eight out of 100 participants called for attention paid to teaching methods. As far as learning resources were concerned, 86 out of 100 believed they should be essential issues or be highly considered. Seventy participants thought importance should be attached to issues such as course book. Eighty-two out of 100 respondents considered that stress should be laid on subject expertise of teachers. Sixty-five out of participants believed that sufficient importance should be attached to ICT facilities. Sixty participants also held that the method of assessment should be given consideration. Eighty-five out of 100 participants were of the opinion that the approachability of English teachers should be essential or highly considered to ensure the quality of English language education at the university. The findings without doubt indicate that students were generally aware of the current state of English language education at the university and to some extent implicitly expressed their heartfelt welcome to potential changes in the future.

6.3.5 Perceptions of ideal English learning and teaching

Clearly, the picture of English language education at Guangxi University may still be incomplete if there is ignorance of what ideal picture participants have in their mind. Therefore, at the end of the questionnaire, an open question was asked concerning their perceptions of ideal English learning and teaching. Whilst there was a variety of viewpoints among the 92 student participants who answered this question, six prominent aspects can be generated as follows:

- interaction in English class
- focus upon practicability
- the way of learning and teaching
- learning atmosphere and learning facilities
- introduction to Western culture
- maintaining interest

First, 38 student participants raised deep concerns about creating great opportunities for both teacher-student and student-student interactions in English course via group discussion and various classroom activities.

Second, it should be stressed that many concerns were closely related with the practicability of English learning. Twenty-four participants strongly expressed that they wanted to learn English to be able to communicate with foreigners rather than just passing the exams to graduate.

Third, there were 37 participants who believed that the best way to learn English is students' autonomous learning plus teachers' appropriate guidance.

Fourth, 20 respondents also developed an awareness of having a relaxed and lively learning atmosphere in the English course rather than being anxious and passive in the classroom. Eleven participants expressed their concerns about sufficient traditional and modern facilities available to English learning.

Fifth, cultural considerations were also seen as a central part of ideal English learning. Eight participants thought that introduction to western cultures via watching western

movies and practicing English songs in the course help better enjoy the diversity of cultures in the world.

Finally, 7 participants made it explicit that the key to effective English learning is keeping constant interest. Therefore, in an ideal situation, students are not forced to learn English but learn according to their various needs and personalities.

6.4 Discussion of the results

The discussion serves two primary functions. First, based on the findings, comparisons will be made between teacher-based and student-based questionnaire responses to find out the similarities and substantial differences between staff and student questionnaire responses. Then by comparing the interview data described in Chapter 5 and the questionnaire data in this chapter it aims to identify in what specific areas the interview and questionnaire data agree and disagree.

In a broad sense, the similarities between staff questionnaire and student questionnaire responses in this chapter can be summarized into three dimensions: perceptions of strategies, perceptions of quality of teaching staff and ideal teaching.

In terms of perceptions of strategies, both teaching staff and students participants had a general agreement on the effectiveness of three particular strategies, the introduction of communicative teaching, the new College English curriculum as well as multimedia teaching.

With regard to perceptions of quality of teaching staff, 82 out of 100 student participants strongly believed that the subject expertise of English teacher was an essential issue which needed to be addressed to ensure the quality of English language education at the University (see Figure 6.33). This was partly and implicitly echoed by findings in Figure 6.19, in which 66 out of 80 teaching staff participants held that they needed to participate in training courses on linguistic theory of second language acquisition. In addition, 67 thought they should be trained to improve personal English proficiency and 78 out of 80 teaching staff participants wished to take courses about English teaching worldwide in the context of globalization (see Figure 6.19).

When it comes to ideal teaching, the common concerns raised by both teaching staff and student participants involved communicative skill training, introduction to Western culture and the cultivation of an active learning atmosphere.

However, the substantial differences between staff questionnaire and student questionnaire responses should also be recognized. The differences stemmed from three aspects: strategies to improve English language education, quality of the English course and learning support.

With respect to strategies, 37 out of 80 staff participants viewed increasing teaching hours for English course as effective (see Figure 6.22) but 71 out of 100 student participants found it a little bit useful or not useful at all (see Figure 6.32). Furthermore, 60 out of 80 staff participants believed that teaching based on students' proficiency level was effective or very effective (see Figure 6.22). However, 62 out of 100 student participants viewed it as not helpful at all (see Figure 6.32).

With regard to perceptions of quality of the English course, whilst 57.5% (46 out of 80) teaching staff participants held that the quality of English language education at the university was unsatisfactory (see Figure 6.16), 53% (53 out of 100) student participants considered it as satisfactory (see Figure 6.31). Forty out of 80 staff participants thought the contents of English course book at the university were adequate to help students acquire communicative skills (see Figure 6.16) but 68 out of 100 student participants thought the course book did not match their expectation (see Figure 6.31).

As far as learning support is concerned, 46 staff participants thought the material in the library was not sufficient (see Figure 6.18) but 71 out of 100 students were satisfied with material available in the library (see Figure 6.31).

In addition, one of the most striking findings derived from the questionnaire was that the main reasons for students wanting to learn English at Guangxi University were for graduation and a well-paid future job, indicating students' motivation was basically personal and practical.

Another striking finding was that what students expected from the English course and what they really learned in the course did not match. They simply did not get what they

wanted in the English course. The implication then seems apparent: English language education in the university does not take students' desires into account.

Then, by comparing the findings discussed in both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, in terms of similarity between staff interview data and staff questionnaire data, four significant and interesting conclusions can be drawn here.

First, with regard to challenges staff participants encountered concerning English language education, it is clear that the common challenges to both interview and questionnaire staff participants included ongoing English language education reform, being tied by CET4 and national curriculum, lack of research methodology and heavy workload.

Second, with respect to the quality of English language education, both interview and questionnaire staff participants rated it at a relatively low level and considered it as not satisfactory when compared to the whole country, although they all believed it had the highest quality in the region.

Third, in terms of strategies taken to improve the quality, both sorts of participants viewed the system of "Outstanding lecturer" and the system of "Responsible Professor" as not useful.

Finally, it is of interest that three possible resolutions were shared by both interview and questionnaire staff participants, which included on-going English education reform, teacher career development and a more favourable learning environment.

Concerning student interview data and student questionnaire data, two aspects are worth noting. The first is that students' questionnaire responses mirror the complexities of English language education at Guangxi University presented in interviews. Although most student participants spent a moderate amount of time learning English at the university, they did not get what they expected and what they wanted from the English course. This pointed to one possible reason: the students' desires were largely overlooked. The second is concerned with ideal English learning. Both questionnaire and interview student participants called for teaching based on students' desires, practicability of the English course and creating a favourable and relaxed learning environment.

The questionnaire data thus provided supportive description to the interview data. Besides, it also complemented the interview data by highlighting the following issues.

The questionnaire data concurs with literature (Thune, 1997; Naidoo, 2005) that teachers need to meet different criteria set by different stakeholders. As discussed in section 6.2.2.6, teaching staff at Guangxi University have to meet rather distinct criteria set by stakeholders for the assessment of English language education.

Huang's study (2006) states that teachers of English in China's higher education find it urgent to further improve their professional development. In the study, the questionnaire data agrees with Huang that teachers strongly felt the need to update their knowledge and skills to deal with the challenges ahead. The data also found that although teaching staff participants embraced all the proposed refresher courses, they prioritized a course to understand English teaching worldwide in the context of globalization, indicating that they were becoming aware of how globalization might have profound impact upon their job.

Regarding the students' motivation to English learning suggested by Ying (2008), the questionnaire data agrees with the following reasons: passing examination and better employment. However, the data suggests another important reason for English learning: to better understand Western culture.

Finally, researchers (Shu, 2004; Liu, 2010; Zeng and Zhang, 2004) have examined the problems existing in China's English language education and pointed out that English courses should be based on social and individual needs. This study partly agrees with such comments. The data suggests that in Guangxi University, the desires of students of relatively higher proficient levels (in the study, level 2 and level 3) have been largely neglected. The data did show, however, that the needs of students of lowest level (level 1 in this study) have been successfully met.

In the following two chapters, an overview of the entire findings is presented. To be specific, first the main Research Question (RQ) and the Specific Research Questions (SRQs) are addressed and then possible remedies are suggested.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of four sections. It starts with a brief look at the purposes of the research project, followed by a summary of the research project by addressing the Specific Research Questions (SRQs) and the main Research Question (RQ). It then moves on to the theoretical and practical contribution of this research project as well as its generalisability and its limitations. The subsequent section outlines the implication of the research study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Although designed as a small-scale case study underpinned by interpretivism, the research project provided forceful evidence that there exists a variety of challenges to English language education at Guangxi University, as well as the different responsive strategies taken at different levels to cope with such an unprecedented situation in a global context.

7.2 Summary of the research project

This research project was carried out by means of a mixed methods approach. Specifically, it was designed to explore a complexity of perceptions and understanding of English language education at Guangxi University through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, with the former serving as primary description and the latter as supportive data. The main Research Question (RQ) of the research study was

(RQ) What are the challenges, responses and recommendations in improving English language education at Guangxi University, China?

To answer the main Research Question (RQ), four Specific Research Questions (SRQs) were needed as follows:

- (SRQ 1) What are the current global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?
- (SRQ 2) What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?
- (SRQ 3) What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?
- (SRQ 4) What possible strategies can be adopted to improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

Based on the literature review and findings discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the answer to each Specific Research Question is provided in line with the order listed above.

(SRQ 1) What are the current global and national contexts for English language education at Guangxi University?

This question was addressed at two levels: global and national. Based on the discussion in Chapter 2, the study found that the dominating trend of globalization is profoundly affecting the agenda of nation states (Scholte, 2000; Hopper, 2006), policies of higher education (Biggs and Tang, 2007) and daily practices in English language education worldwide (Kubota, 2002; Block and Cameron, 2002), creating dilemmas and challenges for educational practitioners (Block and Cameron, 2002). As illustrated in section 2.2, globalization is markedly different from any other trends that have occurred in human history, which is based on and driven by a powerful force—capitalism and the free market. The basic idea of capitalism is that success is and can only be measured by profits. Under the influence of such conception, a new global economy which features a global network of production, consumption and circulation

has been formed. However, globalization goes further. It has also extended into other domains and manifests its presence in different dimensions. For example, in a political sense, by weakening the power of a traditional “nation state” to exert influence on the domestic economy it challenges the legitimacy of nation states (Giddens, 2002). In a cultural sense, it promotes cultural homogeneity and highlights Western lifestyle together with the prevailing idea of Western capitalism and consumerism (Friedman, 1999; Cavanagh and Mander, 2002; Hopper, 2007). Another notable characteristic of globalization is its instability. Advanced information technology and transnational companies work hand in hand to exemplify this uncertainty and unpredictability. Consequently, as discussed in section 2.2.3, on the one hand, with an emphasis on what Bottery (2006) terms “economic functionality” globalization is exercising and continues to exercise tremendous influence upon the world; on the other hand, it unexpectedly generates increasing stress and creates tensions among all walks of life, including the public sector (Bisley, 2007).

Therefore, unsurprisingly, the powerful forces of globalization and its dominating ideologies gradually infiltrate into higher education, changing the nature of higher education and clothing it with new capitalism-based traits. The literature review reveals in section 2.3.3 that there are at least three areas in which such unforeseen changes have occurred, namely, changing assumptions towards HE (Hilton, 2003), managerialism in HE (Duke, 1992; Naidoo, 2005) and the trend of the internationalization of HE (Sadlak, 1998; Sidhu, 2006). Firstly, if higher education used to be a place in which academics were in search of knowledge, this is no longer the case now. Rather, under the pressure of a new form of economy—a knowledge economy, generated by globalization, knowledge has to be under control and well managed in the pursuit of maximum profit through management emphasizing efficiency, effectiveness and economy. This is certainly understandable since in capitalism-based globalization, success is only evaluated by being able to make a profit. Following this line of reasoning, then, it is perhaps hardly surprising that globalization further enhances the popularity of managerialism in higher education in the forms of standardized criteria and accountability. Last, rapid changes in the world, undoubtedly, have altered the way universities package themselves in order to meet the demands of a

global market. Under the global context, universities are all keen on the place in the international or national league tables in order to attract more enrollments both home and abroad so as to be in a better position in this competitive world (Sidhu, 2006).

In section 2.4, the literature review indicates that English language either serves as an instruction language in higher education institutions or as an access to knowledge and information in the unpredictably changing world thus is linguistically favoured in the global market (Truchot, 1997; Crystal, 2003). In a broad sense, English language helps promote engagement with a global world at both national and individual levels. Therefore, with the change of people's attitudes and expectations in the society for English proficiency, English language education is compelled to be reformed to meet the higher requirements of the international and national economic development. Thus, with the acute awareness of the role of English emphasized by the society and governments' increasing intervention into English language education, educational practitioners ultimately experience a number of tensions in terms of policy and practice (Block and Cameron, 2002).

At the national level, as discussed in section 2.5, China's entry into the WTO on November 11, 2001 significantly marked China's real reintegration into the global economy (Long, 2000). Nevertheless, the mediation of globalization in China never goes smoothly. On the one hand, by positively embracing globalization, China boasts the biggest new market in the world; on the other hand, tremendous conflicts and challenges have been felt in the Chinese economy, culture, and society as well (Wang, 2008; Lu, 1997; Su, 2008). To put it in a nutshell, different powerful global forces inextricably intertwine in China, which, in turn ultimately generate great pressures in the Chinese society. Higher education in China is no exception. First of all, facing the rapidly changing world and with ambitions to be an active player in the new global forces, the Chinese government reshaped its higher education in the 1990s, seeking to equip its people with international awareness and skills (Wang and Liu, 2009). Moreover, as a direct result of enjoying membership of WTO, China's higher education has to open up its domestic market, which has long been closed to the outside world, and be propelled to take part in the competition in the globe (Li and Xing, 2004). Last but not least, under the backdrop of economic globalization,

although probably less widely spread than those in Western society, prevailing ideologies and assumptions such as capitalism, consumerism and managerialism have also penetrated into higher education in China (Sun, 2002).

Based on the relevant official documents (Ministry of Education, 2004a; Ministry of Education, 2010a), the discussion in 2.7 shows that with the approaching of a global world, coupled with the Chinese government's firm determination to integrate into the world stage, English language has been seen as an effective linguistic strategy to promote economy development as well as cultivate internationally competitive talents with global horizon and English proficiency. Hence, English language education has been of the utmost importance in the Chinese government's agenda. As an increasing number of new interpretations have been attached to "English", English language has begun to fulfil multiple crucial roles in both government agendas and Chinese citizens' lives (Dong, 2000; Wu, 2006; Shen, 2006). Hence, globalization has dramatically changed the way Chinese people think and conceive of English as a language, which reciprocally has enormous implications for both English teaching and learning in Chinese higher education.

(SRQ 2) What is the current reality of English language education at Guangxi University?

This Specific Research Question was addressed in Chapter 3, namely, literature review (II).

As discussed in Chapter 3, English language education at Guangxi University is sharing the similar challenges and the need to reform to respond to the changing global context. However, although viewing such challenges at the global level is very beneficial, two other levels need to be addressed here. One is at the national level. Like many other universities in China, with the rapid increase of higher education enrollment and the strong aim of a better ranking at the national and regional university league, the enhancement of English education and the question of high quality in English teaching come very high on the agenda of the University, which has a direct impact upon the daily practice of teaching staff. The other is at the regional level.

Since the 1990s, a succession of national initiatives has been implemented in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, fueling a great boom in the local economy. In other words, the setting in which national development zones have been formed and China-ASEAN Expo (See Section 3.1 for details) is held on a yearly basis reveals much about the opportunities and challenges to various fields in the autonomous region, particularly to its higher education. However, although the cultural and economic events brought a budgetary benefit to Guangxi, they also brought great challenges and high aspiration for its higher education (Department of Education of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, 2010), particularly in the field of English language education. Undoubtedly, such a combination of various pressures heavily conditions the policy and practice of the University in terms of English language education, generating a number of tensions in the field. It is not, then, surprising that the College English Department at Guangxi University has been under very strong pressure since the late 1990's. On the one hand, teaching staff have to try their utmost to fulfil the expectations of a variety of stakeholders, such as students, the government, the university leadership, parents and so on. On the other hand, they have to face the shrinking of funds and excessive fragmentation of their work due to the managerialism applied to their profession.

Thus, being desperately pressed by the complex global trend, the fast growth of the national and local economy, the fierce competition among domestic universities and raised expectations for English language education, as discussed in 3.4, Guangxi University adopted a variety of strategies. These strategies involve: 1) strategies for centralized policy steering and fund-raising; 2) strategies for target-meeting and performance appraisal; 3) strategies for standardizing teaching practice; 4) strategies for meeting the needs of a variety of stakeholders; 5) strategies for improving learning efficiency.

As a result, with new forms of policy steering, quality assurance and assessment procedure successively developed in the university, there have been some improvements in the quality of teaching as well as great and surprising improvement in management and funding. These improvements include higher test scores in national

CET 4, standardization of teaching, modern learning resources and an emphasis on English listening and speaking ability.

(SRQ 3) What are the opinions of the major stakeholders in English language education at the present time?

This Specific Research Question was addressed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

The changing conceptions of English as a language in a globalizing context, the higher demand for language proficiency and the growing national and regional economy are profoundly affecting the English language education at Guangxi University in terms of policy and teaching practice. In general, the major stakeholders in English language education at Guangxi University include university administrators, teaching staff at the College English Department and undergraduates.

In terms of university administrators, their opinions were explored around three headings based on semi-structured individual interviews: challenges encountered in their administrative work, the quality of English language education at the University, and strategies taken to improve the quality of English language education. First, the study discovered that university administrative interviewees' challenges stem from both a macro-view and a micro-view. On the one hand, I-AS2 believed that his challenges mainly came from lack of favourable policy. I-AS1 stated that his challenges involve shortage of funds and lack of facilities; on the other hand, I-AS4 and I-AS5 believed that their challenge was heavy workload. Second, the interview data revealed that the quality of English language education at Guangxi University seemed to be far from outstanding. The data revealed that participants justified their evaluation with various reasons, including the shortage of teaching staff (I-AS1) and poor quality of staff (I-AS1), unfavorable institutional policies (I-AS4 and I-AS5), lack of learning environment (I-AS2) and the influence of CET 4 (I-AS4). Third, most participants showed a keen awareness of coping strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education, including annual performance review for teachers (I-AS5), evaluation by students (I-AS5), class observation (I-AS5), the system of

“Outstanding Lecturer”(I-AS3 , I-AS4 and I-AS5), heavy investment in Language Learning Center(I-AS2 and I-AS1), involvement in the national programme for exemplary institutions for College English Teaching Reform (I-AS3) and recruitment of teaching staff with a higher degree (I-AS2). However, sad to say, most strategies were seen by participants as failing to come up to expectation(I-AS3 and I-AS1), thus were marked by them as either “of little use” (I-AS5) or “problematic”(I-AS3).

With respect to teaching staff, their perceptions were investigated through both individual interviews with four teachers and a teacher-based questionnaire administered to 80 teaching staff participants.

In the light of interview data, three aspects need to be conceptualized. First is the variety of challenges and difficulties teaching staff experienced in their daily professional work, which included ongoing reform (I-TS2, I-TS3 and I-TS1), the influence of national curriculum and CET4 (I-TS1 and I-TS2), lack of teaching methods (I-TS4), neglect of students’ desires (I-TS4) and overwork (I-TS1 and I-TS2), with ongoing reform being the most prominent.

One further aspect is participants’ perception of the quality of English language education at the University. Surprisingly, not every member of the teaching participants who were interviewed felt confident to comment on the quality of English language education and there was a divergence of opinions. What is more, findings indicate that some participants such as I-TS3 and I-TS2 were clearly aware that English language education at the University took the lead within the region but has been considerably poorer compared to other universities within the country.

A third and final aspect of perceptions of teaching staff is to be seen in their opinions about the strategies taken to improve the quality of English language education. Such strategies included 1) the university’s support offered in terms of financial assistance and management(I-TS2, I-TS1 and I-TS3); 2) attention received from the Faculty(I-TS1); 3) teacher training (I-TS2), 4) academic lectures (I-TS2 and I-TS1); 5) blog communication between teachers and students (I-TS1); 6) English learning website (I-TS1); 7) teaching mode reform (I-TS2); 8) involvement in the national programme for exemplary institutions for College English Teaching Reform(I-TS2 and I-TS1); 9) the system of “Outstanding Lecturer” (I-TS1, I-TS2 and I-TS3) and the

system of “Responsible Professor” (I-TS1, I-TS2, I-TS4 and I-TS3).

In the teacher-based questionnaire, teaching staff’s perceptions of English language education were investigated in terms of teaching practices, beliefs and attitudes, career development and organizational management. In general, the prominent findings are summarized as follows.

First, questionnaire responses show that 87.5% of participants (70 out of 80) had been working as teachers of English at Guangxi University for more than five years, indicating the majority had gained considerable teaching experiences (see Figure 6.6 in Chapter 6).

Second, while there were some participants who believed they were in a relatively advantageous position at the university, there were others who held that their situation was far from favourable, thus indicating the complexity of perceptions of teaching staff at Guangxi University.

Third, to a great extent, questionnaire data show that challenges and pressures of teaching staff mainly derived from the different priorities given by different stakeholders in evaluation of English language education.

Fourth, they believed that their challenges also involved too much workload, being tied by the CET and course book, lack of research methodology, rushing to complete curriculum obligations and failing to exercise their own theory of practice.

Finally, there was a general agreement on the effectiveness of strategies, which included multimedia teaching, heavy investment in Language Learning Centre, introduction and emphasis on communicative teaching, the new College English curriculum and task-oriented management. On the other hand, it was also recognized that the system of “Outstanding Lecturer” and rewards for academic research were seen as not effective by the majority of participants.

Students’ perceptions were examined by means of three focus group interviews each of five participants and a student-based questionnaire with 100 participants. According to the focus group interviews, students’ perceptions of English language education stems from three perspectives, namely, challenges they had in English learning, quality of English language education they received at the University and strategies taken to improve the quality of English language education. First, while students of level 1 and

level 2 had to face a variety of challenges, the data shows that students of level 3 felt that they met no challenges at all, indicating the course contents may meet the needs of those who still need to learn the basics, but do not stretch those who are better at the language. Second, there was a wide range of rating of the quality of English courses they received among the participants, with the lowest one at 20 and the highest at 80 out of 100. Besides, it is of interest that the less able students tended to rate the English course more highly than the more able. Third, the interview data reveals that participants generally lacked knowledge of strategies taken to improve the quality of English language education, indicating partly that students were not well-informed and partly that the strategies were not student-centred.

As far as the student-based questionnaire is concerned, their perceptions were investigated based on three aspects: English learning experience, English learning evaluation, and strategies to improve English learning. First, questionnaire responses show that the top three major reasons for participants to learn English were graduation, well-paid job and understanding native culture, which indicates the utilitarian nature of their learning motivation. Second, the data reveals that student participants simply did not get what they wanted in the English course, which suggests that English language education in the university did not take students' wants into account. Third, however, unlike interview data, the questionnaire responses indicate that student participants showed relatively positive attitudes in the evaluation of English course they received. Fourth, the findings suggest a general agreement on the effectiveness of a number of strategies, including the introduction of communicative teaching, the new College English curriculum, multi-media teaching and so on.

(SRQ 4) What possible strategies can be adopted to improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University?

This question was also addressed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 through interviews questions and two open questions at the end of both the teacher-based questionnaire and the student-based questionnaire.

In terms of administrative staff interviews, a number of solutions were expressed by

participants, which included 1) English language education reform(I-AS1, I-AS3, I-AS4 and I-AS5); 2) promotion of academic research(I-AS3, I-AS4, I-AS5, I-AS1 and I-AS2); 3) promotion of quality of teaching staff (I-AS3 and I-AS1); 4)creating favorable learning environment (I-AS1 and I-AS5); 5)reduced teaching schedule(I-AS4); 6)introduction of various incentive systems (I-AS4 and I-AS5).

With regard to teaching staff interviews, potential remedies raised were centered on two aspects: teacher training and research guidance. To be specific, they suggested getting training abroad (I-TS2, I-TS4), getting training courses at the university (I-TS1), more research guidance (I-TS3 and I-TS4), reform of the assessment system, more transparent management, and more penalty systems (I-TS3).

With respect to student focus group interviews, they expressed a strong desire for changes in the following aspects: course design, learning environment and learning support. Specifically speaking, they suggested recruiting more foreign teachers (FII-ST5, FI-ST2), extra teaching hours (FII-ST5), instructing based on students' needs (FI-ST1), combination of the English course and their own specialism (FII-ST3), a favourable leaning environment (FIII-ST1) and more up-to-date books in the university library(FIII-ST4).

In the only open question in both questionnaires, data revealed that teaching staff participants identified the following possible remedies: 1) teaching based on students' needs; 2) lively and innovative learning atmosphere; 3) flexibility in curriculum and assessment system; 4) cooperation among teachers, students, university and government; 5) teachers' career development.

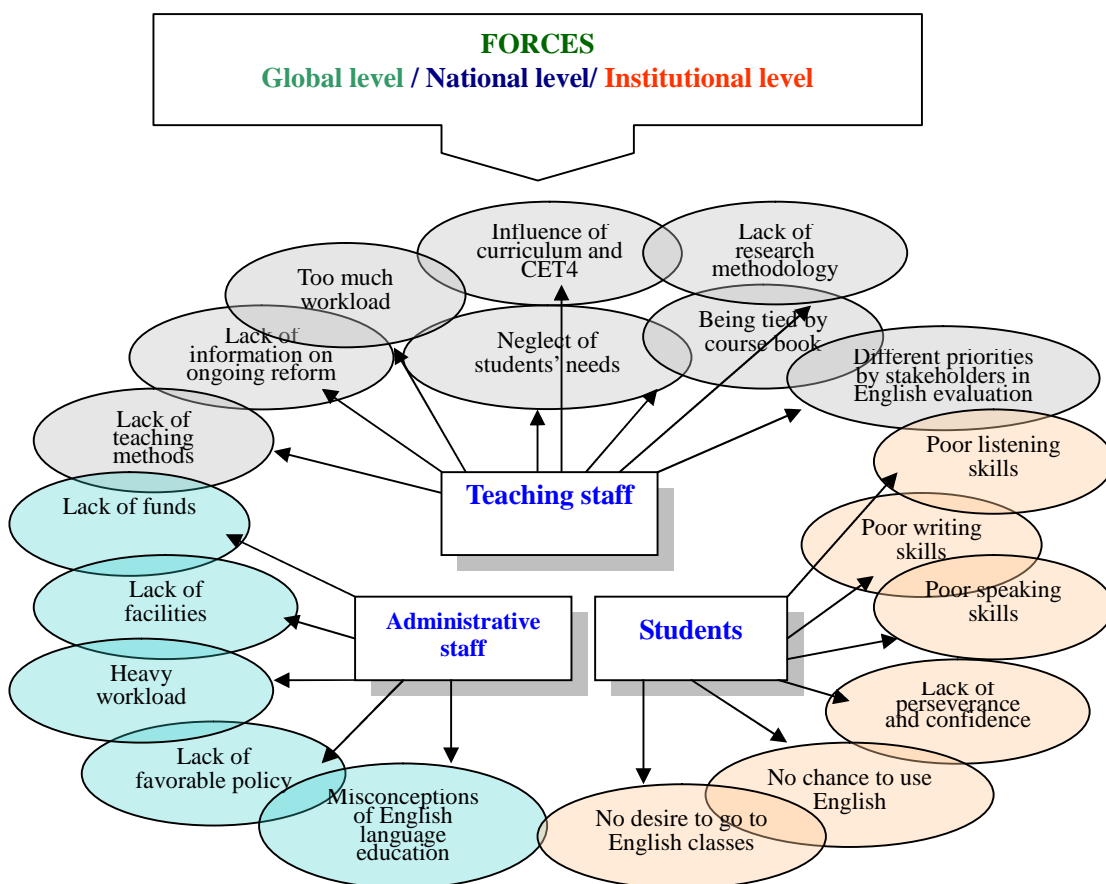
The student questionnaire participants suggested the following solutions: 1) more interaction in English class; 2) focus upon practicability of English; 3) improving the manner of learning and teaching; 4) more favourable learning atmosphere and learning facilities; 5) introduction to Western culture; 6) maintaining students' interest in English learning.

Hence, based on the answers to the four Specific Research Questions (SRQs), the main Research Question (RQ) is addressed as follows:

(RQ) What are the challenges, responses and recommendations in improving English language education at Guangxi University, China?

The study confirmed that facing the pressures coming from three levels, namely, at the global, national and institutional levels, like English language education worldwide, English language education at Guangxi University, China is confronting unprecedented challenges in terms of policy and daily practice. Based on the interview and questionnaire data, the study discovered that the challenges and stresses various stakeholders at Guangxi University constantly face are tremendous, which are clearly indicated in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Challenges of different stakeholders in terms of English language education

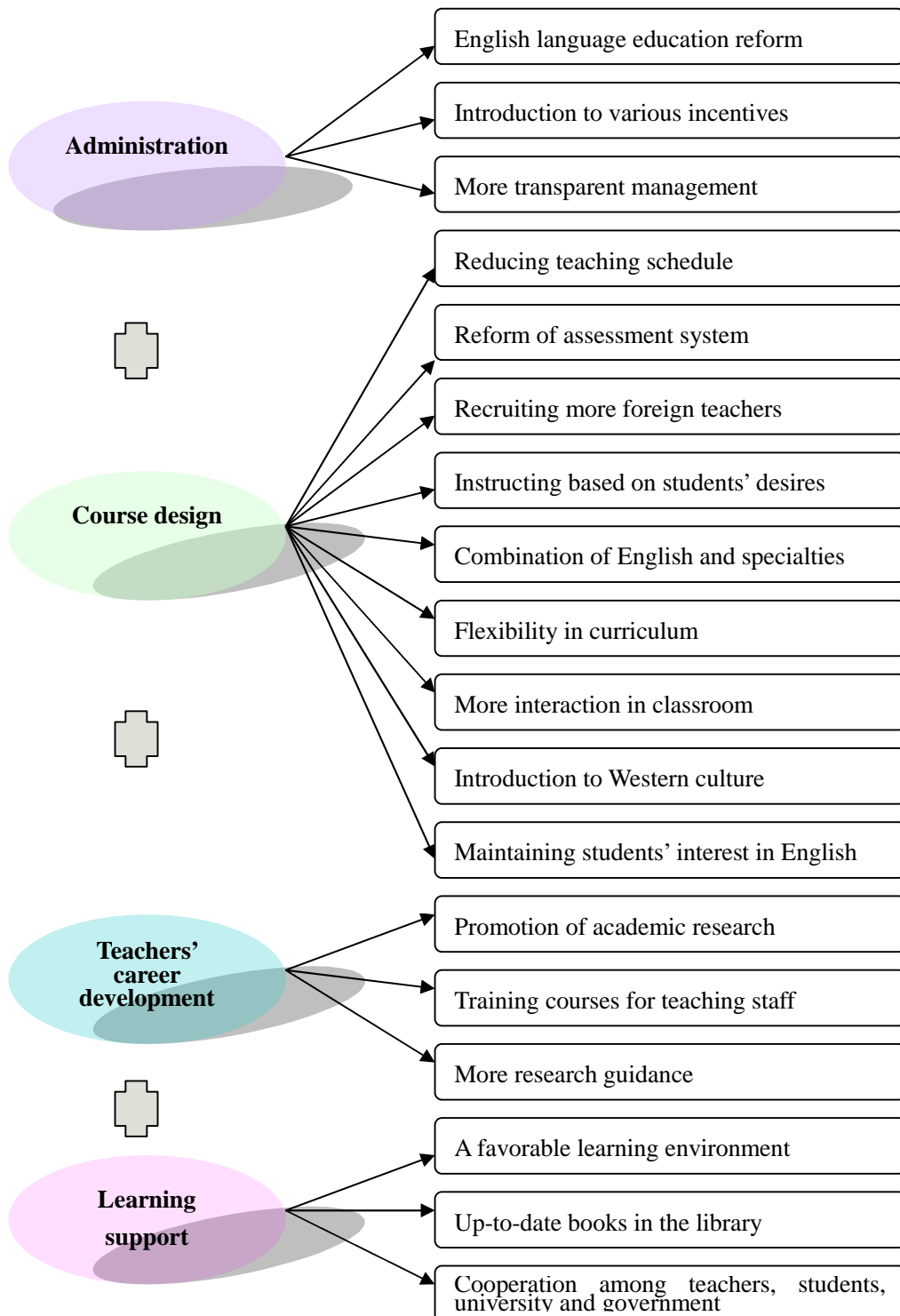


Previous research by Robertson(1992), Giddens (2002), Stiglitz (2002), Osterhammel and Peterson (2005), Bisley (2007), Biggs and Tang (2007) argued that globalization has become the most pressing issue over the past two decades and has penetrated into every sphere of social life causing unprecedented challenges in both private sectors and public sectors. By examining the relationship between global forces and educational restructuring, Lingard (2000) suggests that the recent educational restructuring can be actually understood as response to the increased global stress. This study concurred with such literature, with its data suggesting that challenges are caused by globalization although they have not been greatly visible among educational practitioners in China's higher education. Based on the interview and questionnaire data, this study also agreed with the study of Block and Cameron (2002), Crystal (2003), and Kubota (2002) on the tremendous challenges and tensions caused by powerful global forces in the field of English language education. The data collected for this study showed a wide variety of challenges that administrative staff, teaching staff, and the students at Guangxi University are currently confronted with either in their daily practice or in English learning experience. Evidence for these tremendous difficulties resides not only directly in the perceptions and experiences expressed during the semi-structured interviews but also in the questionnaire responses that indicate the wide diversity of perspectives. The study discovered that compared to administrative staff, teaching staff seemed to face more challenges. There may be two reasons for this. First, within the global context, teaching staff are expected to work better under greater stress. Second, it is apparent that they generally lack necessary skills and knowledge and thus fail sometimes to deal with the challenges in an effective way. Meanwhile, the research project produced some forceful evidence that heavy workload was felt by both administrators and teaching staff, in part because in general the workload of educational professionals has increased in the past decades and in part because they lack support in terms of policy and practice. The key challenges which emerge from the research findings are teachers' lack of timely career development training both academically and professionally and students' desires being mostly overlooked. Needless to say, these mainly explain why teaching staff and students are feeling frustrated and depressed in English teaching and learning at the

university.

Although there was a diversity of resolutions proposed by stakeholders based on different perspectives, there were shared concerns with regard to improvement of the quality of English language education at Guangxi University. In a broad sense, those solutions could be grouped into four domains: administration, course design, teacher career development and learning support (see Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Solutions proposed by stakeholders for improvement of English language education at Guangxi University



Much research have examined the possible solutions to improve English teaching in China's higher education in theoretical sense (Cai, 2006; Li and Hao, 2009; Wu, 2002,

Wang, 2009; Lu and Luo,2003; Luo *et al*, 2003), but little empirical research has been found on the issue. Based on the interview and questionnaire data, the study summarized four major aspects of remedial strategies to English language education in Guangxi University, China, which include administration, course design, teacher career development and learning support, each of them containing several specific measures. In the light of the findings of the research project, the study also suggested that as English language education in China is complex and full of dilemmas, it is apparent from Figure 7.2 that there are no simple remedies for its improvement. Rather, attention should be given to every facet of the situation to assure the quality of English language education.

7.3 Contribution, generalisability and limitations of the research project

7.3.1 Contribution of the research project

It is no exaggeration to say that currently the field of English language education in China is experiencing the most difficult and stressful time in the history (Norton and Wu, 2001; Lee, 2009; Ruan and James, 2009). This research study, which comes at an appropriate time, thus contributes to the field in the following aspects:

With regard to research perspective, the study investigated English language education in China by taking a multiple level of perspectives into account, namely, global level, national level and institutional level. It thus pointed out that the challenges and the stresses the major stakeholders of English language education are facing are not caused only by institutional pressure or national forces. Rather, it is the result of three hierarchical levels of forces: global, national and institutional, with the global level surprisingly being very largely the origin of those tensions and challenges. This unique blurring of perspectives provides a wider vision that a confluence of forces acts upon English language education in China. This is rarely how the previous studies on English language education in China's universities have been presented. Therefore, from a particular angle, the study contributes to the developing body of theory on the globalization in China's higher education.

In light of the research methodology, its attempt to employ a mixed methods approach underpinned by interpretivism contributes to the existing research methodology debate in the field of education. To be specific, it provides a useful confirmation of how triangulation can be tactfully exercised by means of a mixed methods approach in a case study and how a coherent and holistic picture can be eventually generated through a mixed methods approach in educational research.

Moreover, by inviting different stakeholders to participate in “dialogue”, the study provided real and rich first-hand evidence of perceptions and experiences of English language education at Guangxi University, which undoubtedly contributes to understanding and improving the current state of English language education in China’s universities. By offering diverse and different views and experiences about English language education at the university level, it contributes to the research tradition of language teaching in higher education in China.

Finally, the research project revealed the main challenges of stakeholders in English language education at Guangxi University, which sheds light on how global forces are being mediated at the institutional level and where the conflicts lie. This helps to better understand the multifaceted nature of the phenomena and to evaluate or reevaluate the issues currently stakeholders of English language education encounter, thus providing more room for shaping and reshaping the field.

7.3.2 Generalisability of the research project

Needless to say, the global world and Chinese government place great importance on English language education. Hence, the prevailing emphasis on “equipping citizens with global competence through English proficiency” presents educational practitioners with unique dilemmas and great stress. “In a case study, the focus attention is on the case in its idiosyncratic complexity, not on the whole population of cases” (Burns, 2000:460). In this sense, while it is true that the case study research project did not expect to produce generality to understand the whole complexity of English language education in China or to generate a general theory applicable to all universities in China, it provides reference for those universities with similar

backgrounds and in similar situations to understand the context of their daily practice and positively respond to the great pressure caused by the changing global world in order to provide a better service to their society.

Furthermore, by referring to the findings of the research project, policy makers at the national or institutional levels can gain in-depth understanding of English language education in China's universities, thus avoiding making hasty decisions that may lead to undesirable consequences.

Finally, by giving reflective thoughts on the findings of the research study, other universities in China can also benefit from it in the sense that they can review the decisions they have made and make adjustment if necessary concerning English language education.

7.3.3 Limitations of the research project

The research project was designed to be a small-scale case study and was confined to one university in China, with sampling involving only 24 interview participants and 180 questionnaire participants; thus it sought neither to represent the world nor to provide broad generalization. Due to the pressure of money and time, although carefully designed and conducted, the research project has limitations as follows:

As the main sampling method applied in the research study was purposive sampling, the research was not able to take different variables into consideration. Take questionnaires for instance. In both teacher-based and student-based questionnaires, perceptions or experiences caused by different genders were not considered, although as one can expect, it is highly likely that different genders might perceive English language education in different ways.

Differences among students from different departments were also not fully taken into consideration. The total number of programmes or majors offered at Guangxi University is 94, but the focus group interviews only covered 12 majors. While it is true that 45 students from different departments showed interest in taking part in a focus group interview via invitation letter attached to the questionnaire, not all students

from different departments were recruited due to the practical problems such as students' different time schedules and the time available for the research project.

In terms of the questionnaire sampling, the student participants were 100 out of about 10,000 undergraduates who currently registered on the English course at Guangxi University (English majors exclusive). Practically, it was impossible to investigate all undergraduates, therefore, the research project chose the most relevant ones, that is, those who were in their first or second year and were taking the English course at the university. If they had negative experiences, one could imagine that undergraduates who had not taken English courses might have even more problems – something to be investigated in later research. Hence, if more time had been available, and more participants had been involved, the research would certainly have produced firmer evidence for the trends concerning English language learning experience at the university.

7.4 Implications for policy and practice

The research project provided a snapshot of current English language education at Guangxi University, China. It has implications for individuals in three areas: policy makers, teaching staff and students.

7.4.1 Implications for policy makers

Over the past decades, the world has witnessed how multiple roles have been attached to English and how it has been at the centre of governments' agenda, either in Europe or Asia or at international conferences held by various regional organizations. The message is clear here: English has been seen as a linguistic capital which has the potential ability to produce benefits for economy growth at national level and financial security at individual levels. However, if policy makers fail to recognize the global context and national context of English language education in China, they indeed will risk ignoring the real impetus to the policy, thus being unable to set an appropriate agenda to fit English language education in the twenty-first century. In a similar vein,

as far as institutional policy makers are concerned, being able to see English language education beyond a university perspective deepens their understanding of the field, thus leading to the issuing of more sensible policies by taking all factors into consideration. Therefore, the research project, full of detailed discussion of how globalization is profoundly affecting English language education in China's higher education, could not only help policy makers understand the powerful influence of globalization but also raise their appreciation of such contexts in setting the agenda for English language education in China's higher education.

7.4.2 Implications for teaching staff

The research contains full description of various perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of English language education at Guangxi University, China. For teaching staff, by understanding how peers perceive the field and how students experienced their learning, they can be in a better position to do a number of things: to better understand their responsibility, to become aware of the need to change, to embrace the challenges positively and to redefine their profession to meet the expectations of society. Most importantly, with a global awareness, they can deeply appreciate their job and help produce in students the same global awareness through teaching English language.

7.4.3 Implications for students

Through questionnaire and focus group interviews, the research offers a vivid picture of students' English learning experiences in the global context. The students can benefit from the findings in the sense that they can compare their own learning experiences with those of the participants in the research, thus helping define their learning motivations. Meditating on the student participants' voices in the research, they can also form their own learning strategies and successfully overcome the challenges they encounter. Eventually, they can develop a positive and effective learning habit, which undoubtedly will help to promote their English proficiency.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

There are at least four further issues worth considering in the future research.

To start with, stress, excessive investment of time and effort, lack of funding, and higher demands for quality, along with pressure for academic publication—all these challenges have led concerned educational practitioners to ask: “Will professionals be able to cope with the difficult situation caused by global forces? If so, what are the ways to effectively tackle such issues? ” Hence, one issue future research could address is strategies professionals in the field of English language education employ to adjust to the challenges.

Another issue is closely linked with an in-depth inquiry of how professionals in English language education at China’s higher education experience ongoing reform and what physical, psychological and emotional influences the reform has on their daily work.

A further issue could be an investigation of how policies of English language education in China’s higher education are shaped and how they are implemented at different levels in practice.

And a final issue is concerned with students on different programmes. That is, do students on different programmes experience different problems in learning English and do different strategies have to be developed to meet different needs?

In the next chapter, recommendations for English language education at Guangxi University are presented, followed by an epilogue of critical reflection on the research project and the researcher’s personal reflection.

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, all the Specific Research Questions (SRQs) and Research Question (RQ) were addressed and the contribution and the limitations of the research study were presented. The last chapter of the thesis focuses on recommendations which will help improve the quality of English language education at Guangxi University. It also includes an epilogue which contains reflections on the research project as a whole and the researcher's personal reflections.

8.2 Recommendations

There seems little doubt that the increased and pressing challenges of English language education at Guangxi University, China reflects both the complex mediation of globalization occurring at the institutional level and the prevailing conviction that English education in higher education can help build a competitive workforce and better serve domestic economic development in the globalizing context. It is then understandable why educational professionals of English language education at Guangxi University are under a great number of stresses. Although similar processes of enhancing English education are well established elsewhere in this globalizing world, what appears unique to China is the government's strong policy steering English language education from primary school to university as well as Chinese society's obsession with English. Under such a specific backdrop, the policy and the implementation of English language education at Guangxi University, then, should be approached cautiously. Based on the research project, there are probably a number of issues to be considered in improving English language education at Guangxi University:

First, there is a need for both administrators and teaching staff to have a deep understanding of the current global context in which English teaching is practised. To put it another way, more relevant issues need to be taken into consideration, particularly the global and national driving forces and their dynamic mediation at different levels which eventually exert an increasingly powerful influence on the policy and practice of English language education at Guangxi University. Failure to address those issues consistently will undoubtedly lead to poor managerial strategies, unrewarding work efficiency and undesirable outcomes.

Second, a two-way policy is proposed, which would include both the top-down model of power deployed by the administrators and bottom-up model of involvement by teaching practitioners at the university to re-professionalize and de-professionalize English teaching in response to the higher demand for English proficiency. In other words, easy access to reform information should be provided to teaching staff, which includes the orientation of reform, the procedure of reform, the destination of reform and so on. Meanwhile, administrators should be able to develop more effective approaches to different stakeholders and ensure effective communication between them. Only when all parties engage in the process and wide participation is guaranteed in its implementation can English language reform at the University achieve the desired outcomes.

Third, there is a need for educational practitioners to redefine the concept of quality. The research findings revealed a striking fact that one of the major sources of stakeholders' challenges came from the different priority given in the evaluation of English language education, thus calling for a redefinition of the concept of quality. This definition should encapsulate the core purposes and values of English education. To put it another way, if the objective is to gain an informed understanding of quality it is necessary to apply a differentiating approach to the study of it, investigating the particular ways in which institutions and students and other stakeholders engage with quality assessment procedures. What is more, in defining quality emphasis should be given to recognizing that quality in English language education is a complex and

multifaceted set of processes, which can only be realized by identifying priorities and evolving different “targets’ or institutional goals.

Fourth, it is suggested that university administrators and teaching staff recognize the urgent need for the development of a wider range of English curricular options, thus satisfying different students’ desires. This involves giving students’ more freedom of option as well as encouragement of flexibility and creativity within the university curriculum based on the national curriculum.

Fifth, great emphasis should be given to teaching staff’s career development. This calls for a series of training courses offered to teaching staff either within the university or out of the university, ranging from a course to understand English teaching worldwide in the context of globalization to a course to improve their English proficiency, from a course to learn linguistic theory about second language acquisition to a course to improve computer skills. What matters most is to address the teaching staff’s needs for research guidance and research methodology training.

Sixth, a learner-friendly English environment should be encouraged and highlighted in the curriculum. The purpose of such an environment is to generate authentic and meaningful interaction in which students pay more attention to meanings and messages conveyed rather than vocabulary and grammar involved. Strategies could include a wider public access to English magazines, newspapers and movies and books, etc.

Seventh, flexibility should be introduced into the English language education assessment system to give priority to language competence rather than language knowledge, which in turn will enable effective teaching and learning to take place on university campus.

Finally, efforts should be made to build the learning institution and develop trust between the teaching staff and a variety of stakeholders. To be specific, the teaching staff should be encouraged to think in critical ways and be free to explore new ideas. By so doing, a culture of learning can be cultivated which in turn will rebuild the trust first among the teaching staff members and then among stakeholders in English

language education at Guangxi University.

8.3 Epilogue

8.3.1 Reflections on the research project

As a whole, while being carefully designed to explore the challenges which English language education at Guangxi University is currently faced with, the research project itself was a challenge. Four reasons account for this. To start with, the research subject, that is, English language education in China's higher education, undoubtedly calls for a variety of viewpoints, and ones that clearly have a diversity of views and interpretations. In this sense, the complexity displayed by the research might have been overwhelming. Besides, the research method employed in the thesis, namely, a mixed methods approach underpinned by interpretivism was also a great challenge for me as a researcher. To strike a balance between qualitative data and quantitative data and integrate them into one coherent approach instead of two separate sets of data brought about tremendous challenges. Such challenges came not only in practical procedures but in philosophical assumptions as well. Next, the access to various participants could also have been a big challenge due to the hierarchical system long-standing in Chinese culture and people's self-consciousness to protect themselves. Last but not least, as a researcher as well as an insider of the field, before I conducted the research project, I found my vision was tightly locked into and framed by the thorny and confusing situation. Hence, viewing it from a broad and new perspective posed the biggest challenge to me. Fortunately, I believe I have met the challenges, gone through them and reached a useful destination.

8.3.2 Researcher's personal reflections

This is never a simple and smooth journey. Working in the field for more than 15 years, to be honest, I have been committed to my professional work but never spared time thinking of the increasing challenges we as educational professionals are confronted

with: Where do the challenges come from? What direct or indirect impact do they have upon our daily practice? Why is it necessary to have a better understanding of the changing context in which we are working when we are already weighed down by a heavy workload? What is the relationship between educational policy and its practice at global, national and institutional levels? Why has it happened so often that the policy was never implemented as it was planned to be? What main factors are involved in the mediation of the policies at different levels? How can educational staff become aware that they should redefine their professional work in the new unprecedented context? In what ways can educational staff effectively tackle the thorny situation they face and work out a way to success? Perhaps most importantly, going through the research study, I became more and more sensitive to these questions and accustomed to being more reflective and critical about my professional work. Therefore, symbolically, the research project is a present for me as it has aroused and enhanced my awareness of how the cluster of larger contexts has affected daily practice in China's HEIs. It also figuratively indicates a point of departure for a new journey for me. And it is in these senses that at the end of this journey I begin to perceive the existing trouble that leads to hope and see the light in the darkness.

REFERENCES

(Note: With regard to the sources written in Chinese, I will be using the Harvard system with English first followed by original sources in traditional Chinese.)

- Ai, J. (2006) Change in higher education expansion: perceptions by three constituencies at Hebei University of Technology in China. EdD thesis, University of Hull.
- Ashcroft, K. (with contributions from Foreman-Peck, L.) (1995) *The lecturer's guide to quality and standards in colleges and universities*. London: Falmer.
- Barnett, R. (1990) *The idea of higher education*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press (cited in Duke, C. (1992) *The learning university: towards a new paradigm?* Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.)
- Bassey, M. (1999) *Case study research in educational settings*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bell, J. (1993) *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bello, W. F. (1990) *Brave new Third World: strategies for survival in the global economy*. London: Earthscan.
- Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1966) *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Bhagwati, J. (2004) *In defense of globalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does* (3rd edition.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Bisley, N. (2007) *Rethinking globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Block, D. and Cameron, D. (eds). (2002) *Globalization and language teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Bottery, M. (2001) 'Globalisation and the UK competition state: no room for transformational leadership in education?', *School Leadership and Management*, 21(2): 199-218.

- Bottery, M. (2006) 'Education and globalization: redefining the role of the educational professional', *Education Review*. 58(1): 95-113.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, edited and introduced by Thomson, J.B., Translated by G. Raymond and M. Adamson, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brennan, J. 1997. (eds.) *Standards and quality in higher education*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Bruch, T. and Barty, A. (1998) Internationalizing British higher education: students and institutions. In Scott, P. (ed.) *The globalization of higher education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education: 18-31.
- Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and quality in social research*. London: Routledge.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods* (2nd edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burns, R.B. (2000) *Introduction to research methods* (4th edition). London: Sage.
- Cai, J. G. (2006) *ELT at tertiary level in China: review, reflection and research*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press. (蔡基刚, (2006) 大学英语教学: 回顾、反思和研究, 上海: 复旦大学出版社.)
- Cai, T. (1997) 'Economic globalization and political globalization', *Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy*. (5):14-15. (蔡拓, (1997) 经济的全球化与政治的全球化, 文史哲, (5):14-15.)
- Cai, T. (2008) Globalization in China. In Wang, Y. Z. (ed.) *The transforming 30 years in China's foreign relations (1978-2008)*. Beijing: Social Science Documents Press: 266-305. (蔡拓, (2008) 全球化观念在中国, 收录于王逸舟主编, 中国对外关系转型 30 年 (1978-2008), 北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 第 266-305 页.)
- Cavanagh, J. and Mander, J. (2002) *Alternatives to economic globalization: a better world is possible*. San Francisco, Calif: Berrett-Koehler.
- Chen, B. S. (1995) 'Economic globalization: opportunities for and challenges to China', *World Economy & China*, (4):47-52,66. (陈宝森, (1995) 经济全球化对中国的机遇和挑战, 世界经济与中国, (4): 47-52, 66.)
- Chen, H.; Cai, C. H. and Dai, Z. J. (2009) *College English course teaching and research: development and transformation*. Zhenjiang: Jiangsu University Press. (陈红, 蔡朝辉, 戴祝君, (2009) 大学英语课程教学研究: 演进与变革. 镇江: 江苏大学出版社.)

- Chen, J. L. (2000) *The arrangement and administration of English teaching*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. (陈坚林, (2000) 英语教学组织与管理, 上海: 上海外语教育出版社.)
- China Daily*, (22/07/2009, page 4) 'Bringing equal education to the west', by Tan, Y. Z. online-http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-07/22/content_8456430.htm-accessed 09/03/11.
- CJFD (Chinese Journal Full-text Database), 2011 online-<http://dlib.cnki.net/kns50/>-accessed 05/05/2011.
- Clark, B.R. (1983) *The higher education system: academic organization in cross-national perspective*. Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press.
- College English Curriculum Requirements*, (2007) online-<http://www.hrexam.com/exam/2008/1103/4379.html>-accessed 25 /03/2011.
- College English Syllabus (modified)*, (1999) Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. (大学英语教学大纲修订本, (1999)上海: 上海教育出版社.)
- College English Teaching Reform Bulletin (13) (excerpt) (2008) online-http://www.ahgj.gov.cn/news/list.asp?news_id=185-accessed 15/03/11.
- Committee of College English Syllabus (CSCE). (1985) *College English Syllabus (for Science and Engineering students)*. Beijing: Higher Education Press. (大学英语教学大纲修订工作组, (1985) 大学英语教学大纲 (高等学校理工科本科用), 北京: 高等教育出版社.)
- Committee of College English Syllabus (CSCE). (1986) *College English Syllabus (for Arts students)*. Beijing: Higher Education Press. (大学英语教学大纲修订工作组, (1986) 大学英语教学大纲 (高等学校理文科本科用), 上海: 上海教育出版社.)
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. (3rd edition). London: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2010) Mapping the developing landscape of mixed methods research. In Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (eds.). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 45-68.

- Cronin, M. (2003) *Translation and globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Cross, G. (2000) *An all-consuming century: why commercialism won in modern America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2003) *English as a global language* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, M. B. (2007) *Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978) *The research act: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N. K. (1983) Interpretive interactionism. In Morgan, G. (ed.) *Beyond method: strategies for social research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage: 129-146.
- Department of Education of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, (2010) Speech on Regional Educational Work Conference by Guo Shengkun, online-<http://www.gxedu.gov.cn/UploadFiles/rdzt/2010/9/201098105356.doc>-accessed 25/03/2011.
- Department of Teaching Affairs of Guangxi University, (2005) The implementation measures of responsible professor system and outstanding lecturer system in foundation programmes at Guangxi University, online-<http://www.gxu.edu.cn/administration/jwc/jxwj/jxjs/23.doc>-accessed 27/03/2011.
- Department of Teaching Affairs of Guangxi University, (2005) The interim provisions of teaching management of level-based teaching in *College English*, online-<http://www.gxu.edu.cn/administration/jwc/jxwj/jxjs/17.doc>-accessed 27/03/2011.
- Ding, X.; Yue, C. and Sun, Y. (2009) 'The influence of China's entry into the WTO on its education system', *European Journal of Education*, 44(1):9-19.
- Dobbert, M. L. (1982) *Ethnographic research: theory and application for modern schools and societies*. New York: Praeger.
- Dong, Y. F. (2000) Revising *College English* and contributing to the development of teaching of College English. In Shanghai Foreign Education Press (ed.) *Solid language foundation is the key to English learning: college English teaching and research*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Education Press. (董亚芬, (2000) 修订《大学英语》为大学英语教学上新台阶作贡献, 收录于上海外语教育出版社主编, 扎实的语

言基础是学好英语的根本：大学英语教学研究，上海上海外语教育出版社。）

- Du, L. (2010) 'Modern transformation of Confucianism under the context of globalization', *Eastern Forum*. (4):36-39. (杜仑, (2010) 全球化视角下的儒家现代性转型, 东方论坛, (4): 36-39.)
- Duan, P. and Gu, W. P. (2005) 'Technical communication and English for specific purpose: the development of technical communication in China's universities', *Technical Communication*. 52(4):434-448.
- Duke, C. (1992) *The learning university: towards a new paradigm?* Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Dunning, J.H. (2003) The moral imperatives of global capitalism: an overview. In Dunning, J. H. (ed.) *Making globalization good: the moral challenges of global capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 11-40.
- Fallahi, M.; Korenman, T. and Zhao, L. (2010) 'Education experienced by foreign-born faculty whose native countries have undergone major socio-economical changes', Online Submission, *US-China Education Review*. (2):45-54.
- Fan, Y. W. (2006) *Marketization reform in higher education and the equal opportunities*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press. (范元伟, 2006, 高等教育市场化改革与机会均等, 上海: 上海教育出版社.)
- Feng, Z. J. and Ke, S. (eds.) (2003) *Bilingual education and Comprehensive English*. Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press. (冯增俊, 柯森主编, 2003, 双语教育与综合英语, 广州: 中山大学出版社.)
- Friedman, T. L. (1999) *The lexus and the olive tree*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Griroux.
- Gao, F. (2010) 'What's wrong with current Chinese College English Assessment System? Reform or Not?', *International Education Studies*. 3 (1):34-37.
- Gao, T. M. (2002) WTO and globalization of Chinese education. In Feng, Z. J. and Tang. Z. L. (eds.) *WTO and Chinese education*. Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press:29-37. (高天明, (2002) WTO 与中国教育全球化, 收录于冯增俊, 唐兆良主编, WTO 与中国教育, 广州: 中山大学出版社:29-37.)
- Gibbons, M. (1998) A commonwealth perspective on the globalization of higher education. In Scott, P. (ed.) *The globalization of higher education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education: 70-87.
- Giddens, A. (2002) *Runaway world: how globalization is reshaping our lives*. London: Profile.

- Gillham, B. (2000) *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum.
- Gilpin, R. (2000) *The challenge of global capitalism: the world economy in the 21st century*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Greene, J.C. (1990) Three views on the nature and role of knowledge in social science. In Guba, E. G. (ed). *The paradigm dialog*. London: Sage: 227-245.
- Greene, J. C. (2007) *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hammersley, M. (2011) *Methodology: who needs it?* London: Sage.
- Harris, R.; Leung, C. and Rampton, B. (2002) Globalization, diaspora and language education in England. In Block, D. and Cameron, D. (eds.) *Globalization and language teaching*. London: Routledge: 29-46.
- Hayton, A. and Paczuska, A. (eds.) (2002) *Access, participation and higher education: policy and practice*. London: Kogan Page.
- Held, D. (2007) *Globalization/anti-globalization: beyond the great divide* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Polity.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. and Leavy, P. (2006) *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hilton, M. (2003) *Consumerism in 20th century Britain: the search for a historical movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobbs, D. (1988) *Doing the business: entrepreneurship, the working class and detectives in the East-end of London*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hopper, P. (2006) *Living with globalization*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hopper, P. (2007) *Understanding Cultural Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hoy, C., Colin, B and Wood, M. (2000) *Improving quality in education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Hu, W. Z. (2001) 'On the gain and loss of foreign language educational policies in China', *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 33(4): 245-251. (胡文仲, (2001) 我国外语教育规划的得与失, 外语教学与研究, 33 (4): 245-251.)
- Huang, B. L. (2006) An evaluative analysis of the opinions of policy-makers, employers, teachers & students on college English education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, China. Ed D thesis, University of

Hull.

Jenkins, J. (2003) *World Englishes: a resource book for students*. London: Routledge.

Ji, B. C. (2010) http://club.china.com/data/thread/1011/2711/29/36/1_1.html-accessed 02/11/11.

Johnson, B. and Gray, R. (2010) A history of philosophical and theoretical issues for mixed methods research. In Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (eds.) (2nd edition). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 69-94.

Kachru, B. (1988) 'The sacred cows of English', *English Today*, 16:3-8 (cited in Crystal, D. (2003) *English as a global language* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

Kachru, Y. (1997) 'Cultural meaning and contrastive rhetoric in English education', *World Englishes*, 16:337-50.

KOF Index of Globalization, online-
<http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/aggregation/display>-accessed 12/04/2011.

Kubota, R. (2002) The impact of globalization on language teaching in Japan. In Block, D. and Cameron, D. (eds). *Globalization and language teaching*. London: Routledge: 13-28.

Lauder, H., Brown, P., Dillabough, J. A., and Halsey, A. H. (2006) Introduction: the prospects for education: individualization, globalization, and social change. In Lauder, H., Brown, P., Dillabough, J. A., and Halsey, A. H. (eds.) (2006) *Education, globalization, and social change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1-70

LeCompte, M. and Goetz, J. (1982) 'Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research', *Review of Educational Research*, 52(1): 31-60.

Lee, J. F. (2009) 'Perceptions of ELT among English language teachers in China', *Chinese University Education Journal*. 37(1/2):137-154.

Li, L. Q. (1997) 'A speech made at foreign language teaching meeting', *Jiangsu Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. (2): 53. (李岚清, (1997) 李岚清副总理在外语教学座谈会上的讲话. 江苏外语教学与研究, (2): 53.)

Li, S. Z. (1993) 'Globalization: main tendency in the 21st century', *Science & Technology Review*, (6): 3-5. (李慎之, (1993) 全球化: 21世纪的大趋势, 科技导报, (6): 3-5.)

Li, W. Y. and Xing, Y. F. (2004) *The research on frontier issues of Chinese education*

under the context of WTO. Taiyuan: Shanxi Education Press. (李五一, 邢永富, (2004) 入世背景下中国教育前沿问题研究, 太原: 山西教育出版社.)

Li, Z. Q. and Hao, H. Z. (2009) *Research on English language teacher training and development in a Chinese context*. Baoding: Hebei University Press. (李正栓, 郝惠珍, (2009) 中国语境下英语教师教育与发展研究, 保定: 河北大学出版社.)

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (2000) Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emergent confluences, In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd edititon). London: Sage: 163-188.

Lingard, B. (2000) It is and it isn't: vernacular globalization, educational policy, and restructuring. In Burbules, N. C. and Torres, C. A. (eds.) *Globalization and education: critical perspectives*. N.Y.: Routledge: 79-108.

Lisbon European Council (2000) Presidency Conclusions, 23/24 March. online-http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/service/docs/2000/jan-march/doc_00_8_en.html. (cited in Footitt, H. (2003) Hunting the snark: international perspectives on language policies. In Head, D.; Jones, E.; Kelly, M. and Tinsley, T. (eds.) *Setting the Agenda for Languages in Higher Education*. London: CILT: 76-88.

Liu, C. and Tan, Y. G. (2003) 'The problems and remedies in current College English teaching in China', *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*. 174(9):25-27. (刘成, 谈玉光, (2003) 当前我国大学英语教学面临的问题及其对策, 外语与外语教学, 174(9):25-27.)

Liu, R. Q. (2002) 'On reform of English education curriculum—from discrete syllabus to unified syllabus', *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 34(6): 403-404. (刘润清, (2002) 关于英语教学大纲改革——从分离式教学大纲到统一的标准, 外语教学与研究, 34(6):403-404.)

Liu, Y. M.. (2010) 'Reflection on College English teaching mode', *Read and Write Periodical*. 7(3): 37-38 (刘余梅, (2010) 对大学英语教育模式的反思, 读与写杂志, 7(3):37-38.)

LoCastro, V. (1996) English language education in Japan. In Coleman, H. (ed.) *Society and the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Long, Y. T. (2000) 'Coping strategies in China's participation in globalization', *Theories Review*. (5): 2-5.(龙永图, (2000) 中国参与经济全球化的应对策略, 理论导报, (5):2-5.)

Lu, R. Z. (1997) 'Economic globalization and Chinese culture', *World Economy and Politics*, (11):5-7, 40. (陆仁柱, (1997) 经济全球化与中国文化, 世界经济与政治, (11):5-7, 40.)

- Lu, X. M. and Luo, H. X. (2003) 'An exploration of the innovation in EFL education within higher education in China in the context of workplace globalization', *Journal of Guilin University of Electronic Technology*, 23(2):87-90. (陆小明, 罗华夏, (2003) 就业市场全球化背景下大学英语教育改革探索, 桂林电子工业学院学报 23(2):87-90.)
- Lu, Z. F. and Fan, X. H. (2007) 'The impact of economical globalization on College English teaching', *China Adult Education*, (2):173-174. (卢振飞, 范小红, (2007) 经济全球化对大学英语教学的影响, 中国成人教育 (2):173-174.)
- Luo, W. H.; Tong, D. M. And Wang, P. (2003) 'Globalization and practice-oriented ELT', *Journal of Dalian Maritime University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2(3):73-76. (罗卫华, 佟大明, 王平, (2003) 全球化与实用性大学英语教学, 大连海事大学学报, 2(3):73-76.)
- MacDonald, K. (2006) *Global Movements: Action and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Macnaghten, P. and Myers, G. (2004) Focus groups, In Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. (eds.). *Qualitative Research Practice*. London:Sage: 65-79.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (2011) *Designing qualitative research* (5th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matthews, B. and Ross, L. (2010) *Research methods: a practical guide for the social sciences*. Harlow: Longman.
- May, T. (1997) *Social research: issues, methods and process* (2nd edition.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998) *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Middlehurst, R. and Kennie, T. (1997) Leading professionals: towards new concepts of professionalism. In Broadbent, J.; Dietrich, M. and Roberts, J. (eds.) *The end of the professions?: the restructuring of professional work*. London: Routledge: 50-68.
- Miller, R. L. and Brewer, J. D. (eds.) (2003) *The A-Z of social research: a dictionary of key social science research concepts*. London: Sage.
- Ministry of Education (2003) *HEIS' Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project*, [Online-http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_183/200304/2059.html01/11/11](http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_183/200304/2059.html01/11/11).
- Ministry of Education (2004a) *2003-2007 Educational Action Plan for Revitation*,

online-http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-03/31/content_1393111.htm-accessed 01/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2004b) *The influence of China's entry into WTO upon education and its resolutions* by Chen Zhili, http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_176/200412/4957.html-accessed 08/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2004c) *The speech made at a video conference of College English Teaching Reform Pilot Work* by Wu Qidi online-http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_176/200412/4915.html-accessed 01/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2004d) *WTO and China Higher Education* by Zhang Xinsheng, online-http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_176/200412/3086.html-accessed 08/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2010a) *Memo of China's College English Teaching Reform Research Conference*, online-<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s3857/201011/110828.html>-accessed 08/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2010b) *Speech at the National Educational Work Conference* by Hu Jintao, online-http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_176/201009/97450.html-accessed 08/11/11.

Ministry of Education (2010c) *The National Development Plan Outline for Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010—2020)*, online-http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_177/201008/93785.html-accessed 08/11/11

Morgan, D. L. (1988) *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. L. (1996) 'Focus groups', *Annual Review of Sociology*. 22:129-52.

Moynagh, M. and Worsley, R. (2008) *Going global: key questions for the twenty-first economy*. London: A&C Black.

Naidoo, R. (2005) *Universities in the marketplace: the distortion of teaching and research*. In Barnett, R. (ed.). *Reshaping the university: new relationships between research, scholarship and teaching*. Maidenhead: Open University Press: 27-36.

Neave, G. (2002) *The stakeholder perspective historically explored*. In Enders, J. and

- Fulton, O. (eds.) *Higher education in a globalizing world: international trends and mutual observations*. (A Festschrift in honour of Ulrich Teichler). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 17-38.
- Norton, B. and Wu, Y. A. (2001) 'English language teaching in China: trends and challenges', *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(1): 191-194.
- OECD (2006) *Education at a glance: OECD indicators* (2006 edition).
- OECD (2008) *OECD thematic review of tertiary education: synthesis report*.
- OECD (2010) Secretary-General's report to ministers. Online-
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/12/45342482.pdf>– accessed on 25 March, 2011
- Osterhammel, J. and Peterson, N. P. (2005) *Globalization: a short history*. Translated by Geyer, Dona. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Pang, Z. Y. (1994) 'The far-reaching influence and significance of market-oriented economic globalization', *World Economy and Politics*, (9): 30-34. (庞中英, (1994) 市场经济全球化的深远影响与重大意义, 世界经济与政治, (9):30-34.)
- Patten, M. L. (2005) *Understanding research methods: an overview of the essentials* (5th edition). Glendale: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Payne, G. and Payne, J. (2004) *Key concepts in social research*. London: Sage.
- Payne, S. (1997) Nursing research: a social research? In Mckenzie, G. and Powell, J. and Usher, R. (eds). *Understanding social research: perspectives on methodology and practice*. London: Falmer: 101-111.
- Peng, X. E. (2006) *The reflective teaching: an efficient approach to the professional development of College English teachers*, MA dissertation, The South-central University. (彭晓娥, (2006) 反思性教学: 大学英语教师专业发展的有效途径, 中南大学, 硕士论文.)
- Pennycook, A. (1994) *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Punch, K. F. (2005) *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd edition). London: Sage.
- Punch, K. F. (2009) *Introduction to research methods in education*. London: Sage.

- Quirk, R. (1990) 'Language varieties and standard language', *English Today*, 21:3-10.
- Reeves, M. (1988) *The crisis in higher education: competence, delight and the common good*. Milton Keynes: Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Richards, J. C. (1985) *The context of language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. (eds.) (2003) *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage.
- Ritzer, G. (1993). *The MacDonalidization of society*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: social theory and global culture*. London: Sage.
- Robson, C. (1993) *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Roddick, A. (2003) *Take it personally: an action guide for conscious consumers*. London: Element.
- Rodrik, D. (1997) *Has globalization gone too far?* Washington D.C.: Institute for International Economics.
- Rothblatt, S. (2000) A connecticut yankee? an unlikely historical scenario. In Scott, P. (ed.) *Higher education reformed*. London and New York: Falmer Press: 3-26.
- Roulston, K. (2010) *Reflective interviewing: a guide to theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Ruan, Y. H. and James Jacob, W. (2009) 'The transformation of College English in China', *Frontiers of Education in China*. 4(3):466-487.
- Sadlak, J. (1998) Globalization and concurrent challenges for higher education. In Scott, P. (ed.) *The globalization of higher education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education: 100-107.
- Sale, J. M., Lohfeld, L. H. and Brazil, K. (2002) 'Revisiting the quantitative-qualitative debate: implications for mixed-methods research', *Quality & Quantity*, 36(1): 43-53.
- Scholte, J. A. (2000) *Globalization: a critical introduction*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Seidman, I. (2006) *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in*

- education and the social sciences*. (3rd edition). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shen, L. J. (2008) 'The roles of teachers in College English reflective teaching', *Science and Technology Innovation Herald*. (9): 223-224. (申丽娟, (2008) 大学英语反思性教学中的教师角色定位, 科技创新导报, (9):223-224.)
- Shen, Y. Z. (2006) *Multi-culture and Temporary English Teaching*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press. (沈银珍, (2006) 多元文化与当代英语教学. 杭州: 浙江大学出版社.)
- Shu, D. F. (2004) *EFL in China: problems and suggested solution*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. (束定芳, (2004) 外语教学改革: 问题与对策, 上海: 上海外语教育出版社.)
- Sidhu, R. K. (2006) *Universities & globalization: to market, to market*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Smith, J. K. (1990) Alternative research paradigms and the problem of criteria. In Guba, E.G. (ed.). *The paradigm dialog*. London: Sage: 167-187.
- Stiglitz, J. (2002) *Globalization and its discontents*. London: Penguin.
- Sturman, A. (1999) Case study methods. In Kieve, J. P. and Lakomski, G. (eds.) *Issues in educational research*. Oxford: Elsevier Science: 103-12.
- Su, C. H. (2008) The internationalization of local regions in China, In Wang, Y. Z. (ed.) *The transforming 30 years in China's foreign relations(1978-2008)*. Beijing: Social Science Documents Press: 240-65. (苏长和, (2008), 中国地方的国际化, 收录于王逸舟主编, 中国对外关系转型 30 年 (1978-2008), 北京: 社会科学文献出版社: 240-265.)
- Sun, J. (2002) Entering WTO: new challenges to Chinese education. In Feng, Z. J. and Tang, Z. L. (eds.) *WTO and Chinese education*. Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press:38-42. (孙捷, (2002) 加入 WTO: 中国教育发展的新挑战, 收录于冯增俊, 唐兆良主编, WTO 与中国教育, 广州: 中山大学出版社:38-42.)
- Sun, J. M. (1996) 'The development of globalization and its challenges to China's modernization', *Fudan Journal(social science)*. (6): 34-38. (孙嘉明, (1996) 全球化的发展趋势及其对我国现代化的挑战, 复旦学报, (6):34-48.)
- Tang, R. Q. (2000) 'Some thoughts on economic globalization', *Social and Technological Information in Universities*, (3):1-5. (汤润千, (2000) 关于经济全球化的几点思考, 高校社科信息, (3):1-5.)
- Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (2010) (eds.). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in*

social & behavioral research (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Teichler, U. (1998) The role of the European Union in the internationalization of higher education. In Scott, P. (ed.) *The globalization of higher education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education: 88-99.

The South China Morning Post, (19/01/2011, page 21) 'Foreign direct investment surpassed \$1000 billion.. (南国早报 (19/01/2011, 第 21 版), 去年我国吸收外资突破千亿美元。)

The teaching reform of College English, (2007) Internal document of the College English Department, Guangxi University.

Thune, C. (1997) The balance between accountability and improvement. In Brennan, J and Vries, P and Williams, R (eds.) *Standards and Quality in Higher Education*. London and Bristol: Jessica Kingsley Publishers: 87-103.

Times Higher Education Supplement (8 October 2009: xii, xv)

Trochim, W. M. K. and Donnelly, J. P. (2007) *The research methods knowledge base* (3rd edition). Mason, Ohio: Thomson/Atomic Dog.

Truchot, C. (1997) 'The spread of English: from France to a more general perspective', *World Englishes*, 16(1):65-76.

Usher, R. (1997) Introduction. In Mckenzie, G., Powell, J. and Usher, R. (eds). *Understanding social research: perspectives on methodology and practice*. London: Falmer : 1-7.

Walsh, M. (2001). *Research made real: a guide for students*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Wang, T. (2009) 'English globalization and college English education', *Journal of Suzhou University of Science and Technology (social sciences)*, 26(3):113-115. (王恬, (2009) 英语全球化与大学英语教育, 苏州科技学院学报, 26(3):113-115.)

Wang, X. F. (2003) *Education in China since 1976*. London: McFarland.

Wang, Y. C. and Liu, B. C. (2009) *Chinese educational reform in the past three decades: higher education*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press. (王英杰, 刘宝存, (2009) 中国教育改革 30 年: 高等教育卷, 北京: 北京师范大学出版社.)

Wang, Y. Z. (ed.) (2008) *The transforming 30 years in China's foreign relations (1978-2008)*. Beijing: Social Science Documents Press. (王逸舟主编, (2008) 中国对外关系转型 30 年 (1978-2008), 北京: 社会科学文献出版社.)

- Waters, M. (1995) *Globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research methods in education: an introduction*. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon.
- Williams, M. and May, T. (1996) *Introduction to the philosophy of social research*. London: UCL Press.
- Wu, H. X. translated (1989) 'Factors in the globalization of Financial Market', *Zhejiang Finance*. (7):48. (邬慧祥译, (1989) 金融市场全球化诸因素, 浙江金融, (7): 48.)
- Wu, P. (2009) 'The five problems in College English curriculum reform', *Chinese Educaiton Daily* (20/07/2009, Page 6). (吴鹏, (2009) 大学英语课程改革需要正视的五个问题, 中国教育报(20/07/2009, 第6版.)
- Wu, Q. D. (2006) A speech at the meeting on Pilot Programme for College English Reform, online-<http://www.cflo.com.cn/w/wznr.aspx?id=1651&items=47>-accessed 10/03/11.
- Wu, Y. A. (2002) 'Extricating from misunderstanding in the studies of English teaching', *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. (6): (吴一安, (2002) 走出英语教学的误区, 外语教学与研究, (6): 407-408.)
- Xiang, X. M. (2008) 'An overview of education globalization: dimensions, forces and tensions', *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)*, (1): 5-13. (项贤明, (2008) 教育全球化全景透视: 维度、影响与张力, 北京师范大学学报, (1): 5-13.)
- Xiong, Z. Q. (2003) 'The ways to participate in globalization and Chinese strategic choice', *Economy Forum*, (9): 18-19. (熊自权, (2003) 参与全球化的方式与我国的战略选择, 经济论坛, (9): 18-19.)
- Xu, S. H. (2006) How are economic and cultural changes impacting on the teaching, research, and morale of teachers of English: a study on teachers of English in 4 HEIs in Jiangsu province in China. EdD thesis, University of Hull.
- Yin, R. K. (1994) *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd edition). London: Sage.
- Ying, J. F. (2008) 'A critical analysis of current College English education', *Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education*, 169(5): 183-185. (应建芬, (2008) 大学英语教育现状的批判性探析, 黑龙江高教研究 169(5): 183-185.)
- Yu, D. L. (1993) 'The globalization of world economy', *Foreign Social Sciences*,

(2):1-6. (于东林, (1993) 世界经济的全球化, 国外社会科学, (2):1-6.)

Yu, K. P. (1999) 'Look at globalization research from the angle of China', *Strategy and Management*, (3):96-102. (俞可平, (1999) 全球化研究的中国视角, 战略与管理, (3):96-102.)

Yu, K. P. (2002) 'Dispute on globalization among Chinese scholars', *Theory Reference*. (3):29-30. (俞可平, (2002) 中国学者关于全球化的论争, 理论参考, (3):29-30.)

Yue, J. L. (2004) The relationship between higher education and government in mainland China in the trend of education marketization, In Dai, X.X.; Mo, J. H. and Xie, A. B. (eds.) *The marketization of higher education*. Beijing: Peking University Press: 205-227. (岳经纶, (2004) 教育市场化趋势下中国大陆高等教育与政府关系, 收录于戴晓霞, 莫家豪, 谢安帮主编, 高等教育市场化, 北京: 北大出版社:205-227.)

Zeng, Z. L. and Zhang, J. L. (2004) 'On globalization and quality constitution of English teachers', *Journal of Shanghai University of Electric Power*, 20(2):97-100 (曾兆令, 张金亮, (2004) 论全球化与英语教师的素质, 上海电力学院学报 20(2):97-100.)

Zhang, M. M. (2009) 'Educational globalization and localization of China's education', *Temporary Education Forum*, (1):13-14. (张敏敏, (2009) 论教育全球化与我国教育本土化, 当代教育论坛, (1):13-14.)

Zhang, Y. X. (2002) 'Enhancing practicality in English teaching, promote students' English comprehensive ability', *China Higher Education*. (8):37-40. (张尧学, (2002) 加强实用性英语教学, 提高大学生英语综合能力, 中国高等教育, (8):37-40.)

Zhou, X. F. (2006) 'English globalization and English teaching in China', *Journal of Changchun Teachers College*. 22(3): 37-40. (周晓凤, (2006) 英语全球化与中国英语教学, 长春教育学院学报, 22(3):37-40.)

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1** **Individual interview schedule for administrative staff and teaching staff**
- Appendix 2** **Focus group interview schedule for students**
- Appendix 3** **Questionnaire on the teaching of English at Guangxi University (Teacher-based)**
- Appendix 4** **Questionnaire on the teaching and the learning of English at Guangxi University (Student-based)**
- Appendix 5** **A copy of the approved proforma of ethical consideration by Faculty of Education, University of Hull**

Appendix 1— Individual interview schedule for administrative staff and teaching staff

Part I *First of all, please tell me a little about your background.*

Q1: Can you briefly describe the personal journey you have taken in becoming vice Chancellor/ dean/ responsible professor/ professor/ associate professor/ lecturer/ teaching assistant in this university?

Q2: How did this background help you to appreciate the quality of English language education here?

Part II *Now let us talk about your daily practice.*

Q3: Would you briefly describe your daily practice concerning the teaching of English here?

Q4: Can you describe any situations where you have encountered challenges in English language education in this university? How did you solve them or respond to them?

Part III *Next I want to know a little about the quality of English language education in this university.*

Q5: What is your view of the current quality of the teaching of English in this university?

Q6: What are the possible factors do you think help shape the current state of the teaching of English in this university?

Part IV *Now let us move on to strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education in the university.*

Q7: What measures have you identified taken by both the university and department to improve English language education in this university?

Q8: How useful do you think they have been in helping to improve the quality of English language education here?

Part V *Last, I would like to talk about strategies that could be taken in the future.*

Q9: What things would help improve your management/teaching concerning English language education in the university?

Q10: What new strategies, if any, at both university and department level do you think might be introduced to improve English language education in the university?

Part VI

Q11: Is there anything further you wish to add?

Appendix 2— Focus group interview schedule for students

Part I *First of all, please tell me a little bit about your background.*

Q1: Would you please briefly introduce your name, and what subject you are studying so that we get to know about each other?

Part II *Now let us talk about your learning experience..*

Q2: Would each of you briefly describe your English leaning experience in this university?

Q3: Can you describe any situations where you had difficulties in the learning of English in this university? How did you solve them?

Part III *Next I want to know a little about the quality of English language education in this university.*

Q4: What is your view of the current quality of the teaching of English in this university?

Q5: What are the possible factors do you think help shape the current state of the teaching of English in this university?

Part IV *Now let us move on to strategies taken to enhance the quality of English language education in the university.*

Q6: What measures have you identified taken by both the university and your English teachers to improve English language education in this university?

Q7: How useful do you think they have been in helping to improve the quality of English language education here?

Part V *Last, I would like to talk about strategies that could be taken in the future.*

Q8: What things would help you to improve your learning of English?

Q9: What new strategies, if any, at the university do you think might be introduced to improve the quality of teaching?

Part VI

Q10: Is there anything further you wish to add?

Appendix 3—Questionnaire on the teaching of English at
Guangxi University (Teacher-based)

This is an anonymous questionnaire. Please ensure that you do not write your name, or any other comments that will make you identifiable on the attached questionnaire. By completing the questionnaire you are consenting to take part in this research. You are advised to first read the beginning part of the questionnaire carefully as it explains the intention of this project.

Questionnaire on the Teaching of English at Guangxi University (Teacher-based)

This questionnaire, which asks for information about English language education and policy matters at Guangxi University, is part of a doctoral research program at the University of Hull, the United Kingdom. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. Participation in this survey is voluntary and any individual may withdraw at any time.

This questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

I. Demographic Information

These questions are about you, your education and your status as an English teacher in the University. Please mark with a tick in appropriate box.

1. What is your gender?

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Female | Male |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |

2. How old are you?

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Under 25 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

3. What is the highest level of general education that you have completed?

- 1 <Bachelor degree >
- 2 <Master certificate but not master degree >
- 3 <Master degree>
- 4 <Doctorate degree>

4. What is the highest level of English qualification that you have received?

- 1 <Bachelor degree >
- 2 <Master certificate but not master degree >
- 3 <Master degree>
- 4 <Doctorate degree>

5. What is your professional status at the moment?

- 1 <Teaching assistant >
- 2 <Lecturer >
- 3 <Associate professor >
- 4 <Professor >

II. Teaching Practices, Beliefs and Attitudes

This section contains questions about your teaching beliefs and daily practice.

6. How long have you been working as a teacher of English in this university?

Where possible, exclude extended periods of absence (e.g. career breaks).

This is my

first year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	more than 20 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

7. In a typical academic week, how many teaching hours on average do you teach (all courses inclusive)?

Less than 10 hours	10-15 hours	16-20 hours	More than 20 hours
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

8. In a typical academic semester, estimate the time that you spend on the following in this university.

Please mark one choice in each row.

	A large amount of time	A moderate amount of time	A small amount of time	Next to nothing
a) Teaching of students at the university (either whole class, in groups or individually)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) Teaching in training classes run by the Faculty	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) Planning or preparation of lessons either at the University or out of the University (including marking of student work)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) Attending staff meetings and team meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) Observing other teacher's classes and providing feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Conducting research project tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) Administrative duties either at the University or out of the University (including university administrative duties, paperwork undertaken in your job as a teacher of English)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about yourself as a teacher of English in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

- | | Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) I find I have enough time to prepare my work. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| b) I find I have a reasonable amount of work to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| c) All in all, I am satisfied with my job. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| d) I am frequently thinking about changing of my job. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| e) I am usually given a fair assessment of the quality of my work. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| f) As a teacher of English in this university I am well respected. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the quality of teaching of English in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

- | | Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) In general, the quality of teaching of English in this university is satisfactory. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| b) There is an appropriate number of students in one class. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| c) There is enough time to discuss issues with individual students. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
d) There is a rich and stimulating environment of English teaching at this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) The content of English course book at this university is adequate to help students acquire communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Teachers ensure that students are aware of their learning objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) There is an institutional climate that rewards excellence in teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) Teachers are given choice over course content.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
i) There is variety in assessments of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
j) The objective of national curriculum for English teaching is well understood by teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
k) The teachers adapt well to the ongoing English education reform.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

11. In your opinion, what are the top three aspects considered respectively by different stakeholders in evaluation of the teaching of English in this university?

Please mark with a tick in appropriate box.

Factors	Evaluated by teachers	Evaluated by senior staff	Evaluated by university administrators	Evaluated by the government
a) Student term-based test scores				
b) Retention and CET pass rates of students				
c) Student feedback on the teaching they receive				
d) Feedback from parents				
e) How well teachers work with their colleagues				
f) Direct appraisal of classroom teaching				
g) Innovative teaching practices				
h) Relations between teachers and students				
i) Academic publications by teachers				
j) Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field				
k) Extra-curricular activities in English with students (e.g. English plays and contests)				

III. Career Development

This section entails questions about your career development.

12. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the challenges you may encounter as an English teacher in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I find I don't have enough computer skills to adapt to new teaching models.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) I find I am tied by the CET and the textbook.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) I find I have too much workload to do.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) I feel I am not able to exercise my own theory of practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) I feel I always have to rush to complete curriculum obligation.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) I feel I lack research methodology and skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) I find I fail to identify the students' needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) I feel I fail to live up to existing evaluation system of teaching of English.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
i) I find the English materials in library are not sufficient and out-of-date.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
j) Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

13. To what extent do you think the following refresher courses are necessary in improving your teaching of English?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Very necessary	necessary	Not necessary	I do not know
a) Course to improve computer skills to teach.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) Course to better understand national English education reform.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) Course to learn linguistic theory about second language acquisition.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) Course to improve personal English proficiency.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) Course to learn English teaching worldwide in the context of globalization.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

14. Which of the following best describes your view of the relationship between teaching and research?

Please mark ONLY one choice.

- a) University English language teaching and research should go hand in hand with each other to achieve harmonious effect. 1
- b) University English language teaching alone is enough for College English teachers. 2
- c) English language teachers should give priority to research than teaching as teaching is rarely counted in professional assessment. 3
- d) There is no direct relationship between research ability and teaching ability. 4

IV. Organizational management

15. Below are statements about the management of your department. Please indicate your perceptions of the frequency with which these activities took place during the current academic year.

Please mark one choice in each row.

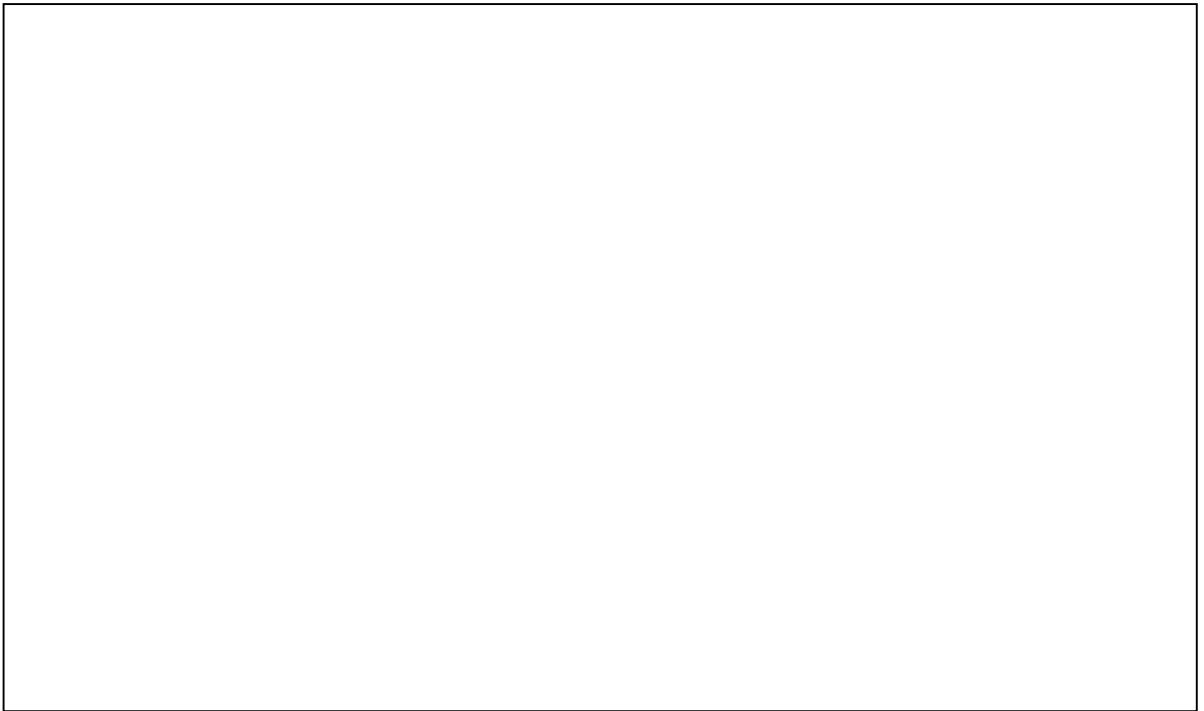
	Never	Seldom	Quite often	Very often
a) In meetings, the dean discusses department English educational goals with teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) The dean ensures that teachers work according to the department's educational goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) The dean or someone else in the management team observes teaching in classes.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) The dean or senior teacher gives teachers suggestions as to how they can improve their teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) The management team ensures that teachers are informed about possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) The dean compliments teachers for special effort or accomplishments.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) The dean ensures that teachers are well-informed of the on-going College English reform.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) The management team defines goals to be accomplished by teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
i) The dean ensures that a task-oriented atmosphere is fostered in this department.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
j) In this department, the dean and teachers act to ensure that quality of English teaching is a collective responsibility.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

16. In your opinion, how effective were the following strategies taken to improve the quality of teaching of English in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Very effective	Effective	Not effective	I don't know
a) The current assessment system involving both CET scores and final exam scores	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) The policy of teaching based on students' proficiency level	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) The system of 'Outstanding Lecturer'	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) Task-oriented management	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) Rewards for academic research	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Multimedia teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) Successful involvement in a national program for exemplary university for College English teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) External evaluation of English teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
i) Heavy investment in Language Learning Centre	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
j) New College English curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
k) Introduction and emphasis on communicative teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
l) Increasing teaching hours for English courses	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
m) Introduction of <i>Teachers' handbook to keep record of daily teaching practice</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
n) Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

17. In your opinion, what is ideal teaching of English? Please comment either in Chinese or in English.



This is the end of questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix 4 —Questionnaire on the teaching and learning of English at
Guangxi University (Student-based)

This is an anonymous questionnaire. Please ensure that you do not write your name, or any other comments that will make you identifiable on the attached questionnaire. By completing the questionnaire you are consenting to take part in this research. You are advised to first read the beginning part of the questionnaire carefully as it explains the intention of this project.

Questionnaire on the Teaching and Learning of English at Guangxi University (Student-based)

This questionnaire, which asks for information about English language teaching and learning at Guangxi University, is part of a doctoral research program at the University of Hull, the United Kingdom. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. Participation in this survey is voluntary and any individual may withdraw at any time.

This questionnaire should take approximately **10 minutes** to complete.

1. Demographic Information

These questions are about you and your position as a student in the university. Please mark appropriate box.

1. What is your gender?

Female

1

Male

2

2. What is your position in this university?

Freshman

1

Sophomore

2

2. English Learning Experience

This section contains questions about your English learning experience in this university.

3. In your opinion, which of the following are the reasons for you to learn English?

Please tick the top **three** ones.

- 1 <Behave like native speakers >
- 2 <Understand native culture>
- 3 <Appreciate English literature >
- 4 < Learn English for graduation >
- 5 <Learn English for higher studies >
- 6 <Learn English for a well-paying job >
- 7 <Learn English to receive people's respect >
- 8 <Study abroad >
- 9 <Be able to write academic abstract >
- 10 Other (Please specify) _____

4. In a typical academic week, how many hours on average do you spend on English learning?

Please mark ONLY one choice.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Less than 1 hour | 1-2 hours | 3-5 hours | 6-10 hours | More than 10 hour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

5. What did you expect from a University English course before you entered this university?

Multiple choices are acceptable.

- 1 English grammar instruction
- 2 Communicative skill training
- 3 Reading skill training
- 4 Writing skill training
- 5 Western Culture introduction
- 6 Increased English vocabulary
- 7 English movies and songs
- 8 Speaking English with confidence
- 9 Other (Please specify) _____

6. What did you actually get from a University English course in this university?

Multiple choices are acceptable.

- 1 English grammar
- 2 Communicative skill
- 3 Reading skill
- 4 Writing skill
- 5 Western Culture
- 6 Increased English vocabulary
- 7 English movies and songs

- 8 Speaking English with confidence
- 9 Other (Please specify) _____

7. Which of the following teaching mode do you prefer?

Please mark ONLY one choice.

- a) Traditional teaching (blackboard+chalk) 1
- b) Multimedia teaching 2
- c) Traditional teaching + multimedia teaching 3
- d) Internet-based teaching 4
- e) Traditional teaching + internet-based teaching 5
- f) Other (Please specify) _____ 6

8. What did you enjoy most in your English course?

Please mark ONLY one choice.

- 1 English teacher's pronunciation
- 2 English teacher's way of teaching
- 3 English course books
- 4 Authentic movies and songs
- 5 Communication with other students
- 6 Good relationship with the teacher
- 7 Classroom activities
- 8 Relaxed atmosphere during the course
- 9 Being able to express myself in English
- 10 Teacher's respect to students
- 11 Introduction of western culture
- 12 Teacher's encouragement
- 13 Other (Please specify) _____

9. What did you enjoy least in your English course?

Please mark ONLY one choice.

- 1 English teacher's pronunciation
- 2 English teacher's way of teaching
- 3 English course books
- 4 English movies and songs
- 5 Communication with other students
- 6 Classroom activities
- 7 Atmosphere during the course
- 8 Being asked question during the class
- 9 Teacher's showing no respect to students
- 10 Teacher's poor preparation for the course
- 11 Other (Please specify) _____

10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about learning support available in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I can always get help from my English teacher whenever I have problems with my study.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) I can easily get access to English learning materials at the library.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) I am satisfied with the support I need from other service staff concerning English learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) I like to go to Language Learning Centre to learn English.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) Language Learning Center helps me make great progress in my English learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

3. English Learning Evaluation

This section contains questions about your English learning evaluation in this university.

11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the English course you attend in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) The content of the English course matches my expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) The learning and teaching methods used on the course are appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) The workload for the course is appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) The teacher has made English learning interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) The criteria used for marking have been made clear in advance.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) The module is well organised and runs smoothly.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) The Library resources and services available for the module are good enough.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
i) Within the course, I am encouraged to make contributions to class discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
j) The course has made me more confident in speaking and using English.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
k) Feedback on my work has been prompt.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
l) Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the English course.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

4. Strategies to improve English Learning

12. How useful do you think are the following policies to improve your English learning in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Very useful	a little bit useful	useful	Not useful at all
a) The current assessment system involving both CET(College English Test) scores and final exam scores	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) The policy of teaching based on students' proficiency level	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) National or provincial English Contests (like national English spoken contest, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) Multimedia teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) Compulsory English learning at Language learning centre	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) New College English curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) Introduction and emphasis on communicative teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) Increasing teaching hours for English courses	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

13. How much consideration, in your opinion, needs to be given to the following issues to ensure the quality of the English course in this university?

Please mark one choice in each row.

	Not considered	some considered	highly considered	essential
a) Teaching method	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
b) Learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
c) Textbooks	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
d) Subject expertise of English teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
e) ICT facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
f) Learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
g) The method of assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
h) The approachability of English teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

14. What is ideal English teaching or learning in your mind? Please make your comments.

This is the end of questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your participation!

NOTE: This is the first phase of the research project. In the second phase, students from different levels of English proficiency will be invited to join group discussion on English learning, which will provide a fantastic opportunity for you to communicate and share English learning experiences with students on different programmes. If you are interested in the discussion, please leave us your contact details. We will contact you timely.

Programme:

Email:

Mobile phone:

Appendix 5 —A copy of the approved proforma of ethical
consideration by Faculty of Education,
University of Hull

**ETHICAL PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING
IN THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

PERMISSION TO PROCEED WITH RESEARCH: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Reference Number: 10/015

Name: Yanhua Liang

Programme of Study: EdD

Research Area/Title: Challenges and resolutions in improving the teaching of English in Guangxi University, China

Image Permission Form Received (or N/A if no images)

Name of Supervisor: Mike Bottery

Date Approved by Supervisor: 15 November 2010

Date Approved by Ethics Committee: 18 November 2010





10/015

A PROFORMA FOR

STAFF AND STUDENTS BEGINNING A RESEARCH PROJECT

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Research Proposer(s): Yanhua Liang

Programme of Study: Education Policy and Values

Research (Working Dissertation/Thesis) Title:

CHALLENGES AND RESOLUTIONS IN IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN GUANGXI
UNIVERSITY, CHINA

.....
Description of research (please include (a) aims of the research; (b) principal research question(s) (c) methodology or methodologies to be used (d) who are the participants in this research, and how are they to be selected.

The research aims to explore what the challenges and resolutions are in improving the teaching of English at Guangxi University, China. To be specific, it examines what challenges the faculty and teaching staff encounter and what responsive strategies are being taken and what the potential remedies are for the improvement of the teaching of English at Guangxi University.

The major research question for the research is: What are the challenges and resolutions in improving the teaching of English in Guangxi University, China?

The research design is a case study and the research project draws insight from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data are collected through interviews with the university administrators and teaching staff and students, questionnaires with teaching staff and students, as well as documents reading.

With regard to interview, 7 individual interviews and 3 focus group interviews are conducted. The individual interview participants are selected based on the layers of administrative staff and the hierarchically professional status of teaching staff in the university. The participants include vice president of university in charge of teaching affairs, head of faculty of Foreign Languages responsible for English teaching and learning, dean of College English Department in charge of daily English teaching practice, one professor at College English Department, one associate professor at College English Department, one lecturer at College English Department and one teaching assistant at College English Department. In choosing the teaching staff participants for the individual interview, factors such as age, gender, teaching experience and so on are also taken into consideration. Three focus group interviewees with 6 members for each group are selected according to the three different levels of English course offered by the university. The access will be done through an invitation at the end of questionnaires.

In terms of questionnaires, there are two questionnaires being conducted, one for teaching staff in the college English Department and one for one-English major undergraduates. The teacher questionnaire will be conducted among all the teaching staff at College English Department via an invitation letter. The questionnaire for undergraduates will be undertaken via email and face-to-face invitation in university. Both questionnaires are not compulsory and take the subjects' willingness into consideration.

Proforma Completion Date: 22 October 2010

This proforma should be read in conjunction with the Faculty of Education research principles, and the Faculty of Education flow chart of ethical considerations. It should be completed by the researchers. If it raises problems, it should be sent on completion, together with a brief (maximum one page) summary of the problems in the research, or in the module preparation, for approval to the Chair of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee prior to the beginning of any research.

Part A

1. Does your research/teaching involve animal experimentation? Y/N

If the answer is 'YES' then the research/teaching proposal should be sent direct to the University Ethics Committee to be assessed.

2. Does your research involve human participants? Y/N

If the answer is 'NO', there is no need to proceed further with this proforma, and research may proceed now. If the answer is 'YES' please answer all further relevant questions in part B.

Part B

3. Is the research population under 18 years of age? Y/N
If yes, will you taking the following or similar measures to deal with this issue?
- (i) Informed the participants of the research? Y/N
 - (ii) Ensured their understanding? Y/N
 - (iii) Gained the non-coerced consent of their parents/guardians? Y/N

4. Will you obtain written informed consent from the participants? Y/N
If yes, please include a copy of the information letters and forms requesting consent
If no, what measures will you take to deal with obtaining consent?

5. Has there been any withholding of disclosure of information regarding the research to the participants? Y/N
If yes, please describe the measures you have taken to deal with this.

6. Issues for participants. Please answer the following and state how you will manage perceived risks:
- a) Do any aspects of the study pose a possible risk to participants' physical well-being (e.g. use of substances such as alcohol or extreme situations such as sleep deprivation)? YES NO

- b) Are there any aspects of the study that participants might find

humiliating, embarrassing, ego-threatening, in conflict with their values, or be otherwise emotionally upsetting?*	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
c) Are there any aspects of the study that might threaten participants' privacy (e.g. questions of a very personal nature; observation of individuals in situations which are not obviously 'public')?*	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
d) Does the study require access to confidential sources of information (e.g. medical records)?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
e) Could the intended participants for the study be expected to be more than usually emotionally vulnerable (e.g. medical patients, bereaved individuals)?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
f) Will the study take place in a setting other than the University campus or residential buildings?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
g) Will the intended participants of the study be individuals who are not members of the University community?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO

*Note: if the intended participants are of a different social, racial, cultural, age or sex group to the researcher(s) and there is **any** doubt about the possible impact of the planned procedures, then opinion should be sought from members of the relevant group.

7. Might conducting the study expose the researcher to any risks (e.g. collecting data in potentially dangerous environments)? Y/N
8. Is the research being conducted on a group culturally different from the researcher/student/supervisors? Y/N
If yes, are sensitivities and problems likely to arise? Y/N?
If yes, please describe how you have addressed/will address them.
9. Does the research/teaching conflict with any of the Faculty of Education's research principles? Y/N
 (please see attached list).
If yes, describe what action you have taken to address this?
10. Are you conducting research in the organisation within which you work? Y/N
11. If yes, are there any issues arising from this .e.g. ones of confidentiality, anonymity or power, because of your role in the organisation Y/N
 If there are, what actions have you taken to address these?
12. If the research/teaching requires the consent of any organisation, will you obtaining it? Y/N
If no, describe what action you have taken to overcome this problem.

13. Have you needed to discuss the likelihood of ethical problems with this research, with an informed colleague?
If yes, please name the colleague, and provide the date and results of the discussion.

Y/N.

If you have now completed the proforma, before sending it in, just check:

- a. Have I included a letter to participants for gaining informed consent?
- b. If I needed any organisational consent for this research, have I included evidence of this with the proforma?
- c. If I needed consent from the participants, have I included evidence for the different kinds that were required?
- d. If I am taking images, have I completed the Image Permission Form

Lack of proof of consent attached to proformas has been the major reason why proformas have been returned to their authors.

This form must be signed by your supervisor and the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee representative for your area. Once signed, copies of this form, and your proposal must be sent to Mrs Jackie Lison, Centre for Educational Studies (see flow chart), including examples of letters describing the purposes and implications of the research, and any Consent Forms (see appendices).

Name of Student/Researcher : **Yanhua Liang**

Signature *Yanhua Liang* Date : 22 October 2010

Name of Supervisor/Colleague *MP Bailey*

Signature *MPB* Date *15/11/10*

Name of Ethics Committee member *Dr. Kiki Merriam*

Signature *KMerriam* Date *18/11/2010*

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM: SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES

I, _____ of _____

Hereby agree to participate in this study to be undertaken in Guangxi University, China by Yanhua Liang at the Faculty of Education in University of Hull, the United Kingdom, and I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the challenges which the teaching of English in Guangxi University is currently faced with and to suggest remedies by which the teaching of English in Guangxi University can be improved.

I understand that

1. Upon receipt, my questionnaire will be coded and my name and address kept separately from it.
2. Any information that I provide will not be made public in any form that could reveal my identity to an outside party ie. that I will remain fully anonymous.
3. Aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results **will not** be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.
5. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The contact details of the researcher are: Yanhua Liang, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: yanhua.liang@2009.hull.ac.uk

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are Mrs J.Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988.

In some cases, consent will need to be witnessed eg. where the subject is blind/intellectually disabled. A witness must be independent of the project and may only sign a certification to the level of his/her involvement. A suggested format for witness certification is included with the sample consent forms. The form should also record the witnesses' signature, printed name and occupation. For particularly sensitive or exceptional research, further information can be obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee Secretary, eg, absence of parental consent, use of pseudonyms, etc)

NOTE:

In the event of a minor's consent, or person under legal liability, please complete the Ethics Committee's "Form of Consent on Behalf of a Minor or Dependent Person".

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM – For Institutions/Organisations

I, _____ of _____.

Hereby give permission for all the teaching staff at the College English Department of Faculty of Foreign Languages in Guangxi University, Guangxi, China to be involved in a research study being undertaken by Yanhua Liang at the Faculty of Education in University of Hull, the United Kingdom. I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the challenges which the teaching of English in Guangxi University is currently faced with and to suggest remedies by which the teaching of English in Guangxi University can be improved and that involvement for the institution means the following: 1) selected teaching staff participate in individual interviews, each of which should last approximately one and a half hours and will be recorded with participant's consent; 2) all the teaching staff are involved in a questionnaire survey which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. 3) departmental documents are utilized as one of the data sources for the research project.

I understand that

1. the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent for the institution/organisation to participate in the above research study.
5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through this institution/organisation will not be used if I so request.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

I agree that

4. The institution/organisation MAY / MAY NOT be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.
5. ***I / We DO / DO NOT require an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the research findings related to the institution/organisation.***

6. ***I / We EXPECT / DO NOT EXPECT to receive a copy of the research findings or publications.***

Signature:

Date:

The contact details of the researcher are: Yanhua Liang, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: yanhua.liang@2009.hull.ac.uk

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are Mrs J Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988.

In some cases, consent will need to be witnessed eg. where the subject is blind/intellectually disabled. A witness must be independent of the project and may only sign a certification to the level of his/her involvement. A suggested format for witness certification is included with the sample consent forms. The form should also record the witnesses' signature, printed name and occupation. For particularly sensitive or exceptional research, further information can be obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee Secretary, eg, absence of parental consent, use of pseudonyms, etc)

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM: (INTERVIEWS)

I, _____ of _____

Hereby agree to be a participant in this study to be undertaken in Guangxi University, China by Yanhua, Liang, at the Faculty of Education in University of Hull, the United Kingdom and I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the challenges which the teaching of English in Guangxi University is currently faced with and to suggest remedies by which the teaching of English in Guangxi University can be improved.

I understand that

1. the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.
5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The contact details of the researcher are: Ms Yanhua Liang, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: yanhua.liang@2009.hull.ac.uk

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are Mrs J.Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988.

In some cases, consent will need to be witnessed eg. where the subject is blind/intellectually disabled. A witness must be independent of the project and may only sign a certification to the level of his/her involvement. A suggested format for witness certification is included with the sample consent forms. The form should also record the witnesses' signature, printed name and occupation. For particularly sensitive or exceptional research, further information can be obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee Secretary, eg, absence of parental consent, use of pseudonyms, etc)

NOTE: In the event of a minor's consent, or person under legal liability, please complete the Ethics Committee's "Form of Consent on Behalf of a Minor or Dependent Person".

Yanhua Liang
Educational Policy and Values EdD Student
Centre for Educational Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Hull
Hull; HU67RX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (01482) 465031
Fax: +44 (01482) 466133

Dear participant,

This research project is to explore the challenges which the teaching of English in Guangxi University, China is currently faced with and to suggest remedies by which the teaching of English in Guangxi University can be improved. As a major stakeholder, you are sincerely invited to participate in the study. The research data are collected through both interview and questionnaires. The interview should last for approximately one and a half hours and will be recorded with your consent. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

All information that is collected in both the interview and questionnaire will be treated confidentially. You are formally guaranteed that your name will not be identified in any report of the results of the study. You are free to withdraw at any time during the interview and without adverse consequences.

The contact details of the researcher are: Yanhua Liang, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: yanhua.liang@2009.hull.ac.uk.

The contact details of the supervisor of the researcher are: Mike Bottery, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, HU6 7RX. Tel: (+44)(0)1482 465378; Email: m.p.bottery@hull.ac.uk.

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please feel free to contact the Secretary, Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX; Tel No: (+44)(0)1482 465988; Fax: (+44)(0)1482 466137.

Yours sincerely

Yanhua Liang