

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**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**

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Abstract

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

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With China's increasingly active involvement in the process of economic globalisation and international cooperation, college English education has played a more and more important role in developing high-quality talents for China's fast integration into the global economy. China's firm belief in its "open-door" policy, its fast economic development, its successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics Games and its access to the WTO further strengthen its requirement of large numbers of high-quality talents or *Guojixing Rencai* who possess not only rich specialised knowledge but also strong competence in English. Guangxi, one of the less developed minority regions in China, is in great shortage of such talents. However, little is known about how people, particularly policy-makers, employers, teachers and students perceive college English education in improving the region's economic development.

This research provides an exploratory investigation into the perceptions of policy-makers, employers, teachers and students of Guangxi on college English education in improving the region's economic development. Data were collected during the two-year study among policy-makers, employers, teachers and students. They consisted of 20 semi-structured

interviews with four different groups of respondents, together with evidence from other scholastic work and official documents. Data were subsequently analysed within the theoretical framework of economic globalisation, the economic value of English as a global language, and the role of college English education in promoting regional economic development.

The data suggested that the respondents were positive towards the economic value of English, which is in conformity with the theoretical and conceptual discussions. It was clear from the data that English as a global language has had great impact upon regional economic development, language planning and policy-making, and college English education had played a key role in developing *Guojixing Rencai* for the region's economic development. Their perceptions had clear impact on their own practical work, which offered insights into the development of the current college English education of Guangxi. It was found, however, that the standards of the current college English education were still too low to meet the needs of the region's economic development and quite a number of problems still existed.

The thesis concludes by recommending a series of solutions to the existing problems of the region's college English education and offers some suggestions for future research.

Declaration

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participating in my interviews. Their cooperation, support and advice greatly facilitated the empirical research. However, because of the ethical issue of preserving their anonymity and because of their relatively large number, I could not give their names here.

A List of Abbreviations

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CBEI = Content-based English Instruction

CET4/6 = College English Test 4/6

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

E-C bilingual teaching = bilingual teaching using Chinese and English as the medium of instruction

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ELT = English Language Teaching

HEIs = Institutions of Higher Education

L2 = Second Language

TNCs = Transnational Corporations

WTO = World Trade Organisations

Table of Contents

	Pages
Abstract	(ii)
Declaration	(iv)
Statement of copyright	(iv)
Acknowledgement	(v)
A list of Abbreviations	(vi)
Chapter One Introduction	(1)
1.0 <u>Introduction to the research</u>	
1.1 <u>The background of the study</u>	
1.2 <u>The importance of the study</u>	
1.3 <u>The purpose of the study and research focus</u>	
1.4 <u>The research questions and the aims of the study</u>	
1.5 <u>The structure of the thesis</u>	
Chapter Two Literature Review	(10)
2.1 <u>Introduction</u>	
2.2 <u>The definition of globalisation</u>	
2.3 <u>Globalisation and the global economy</u>	
2.4 <u>The impact of globalisation on China</u>	

- 2.5 The worldwide spread of English
- 2.6 The economic value of English
- 2.7 Bilingualism and bilingual education
- 2.8 Mediation in policy in Chinese English language education
- 2.9 Measures taken in Chinese English language education
 - 2.9.1 Infrastructural resources
 - 2.9.2 Teaching and learning materials
 - 2.9.3 Professional training and competence of teachers
 - 2.9.4 Sociocultural aspect
 - 2.9.5 Curricular and pedagogical practice
 - 2.9.6 Mediation and policy changes in college bilingual teaching
- 2.10 Challenges
 - 2.10.1 Lack of planning
 - 2.10.2 Challenges in E-C bilingual teaching
 - 2.10.3 Chinese-English interface
 - 2.10.4 Examination-oriented education
 - 2.10.5 Inferior situation of ethnic groups in education
 - 2.10.6 Lack of investment in education
- 2.11 A summary so far
- 2.12 The context of Guangxi
 - 2.12.1 The background of Guangxi
 - 2.12.2 Globalisation and mediation in Guangxi's English language education

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Fieldwork Design – Quantitative or Qualitative Approaches?

3.3 The research interview

3.4 Criteria of assessing qualitative research

3.4.1 Reliability and validity

3.4.2 Triangulation

3.4.3 Relevance

3.4.4 A summary

3.5 Data collection procedures

3.5.1 Interview schedules

3.5.2 Pilot study

3.5.3 The research sample

3.5.4 Weakness of the procedures

3.6 Ethical issues

3.6.1 Informed consent

3.6.2 Trust and confidentiality

3.6.3 Reciprocity

3.7 A summary of the chapter

Chapter Four Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Methods of data analysis

4.3 The process of data analysis

4.4 Analysing the qualitative data

4.4.1 The informants' perceptions of economic globalisation and English as a global language

4.4.2 The impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy-making

4.4.3 English language education in improving the regional economic development

4.4.4 Impact of the informants' Perceptions of English language education on their own practical work

4.4.5 The standards of the current college English language education and the needs of the region's economic development

4.4.6 Existing problems of the present college English language education, and solutions

4.5 A summary of the chapter

Chapter Five Discussion of Results and Recommendations

(129)

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Results and discussion

5.2.1 How do the informants' perceive economic globalisation and English as a global Language?

5.2.2 To what extent has the emergence of English as a global language influenced the regional language planning and policy-making? If so, in what ways has this influence manifested itself?

5.2.3 What are the informants' perceptions of English language education in improving the region's economic development?

Bibliography	(177)
Appendix I A Pre-interview Letter	(198)
Appendix I Sample Questions and Triggers for Interviews	(200)

Chapter One Introduction

1.0 Introduction to the research

This chapter provides the background and context to the research. The first part of the chapter briefly outlines the background of the research and establishes the context for the present study. The second part considers the importance of developing college English language education in improving the regional economic development and specifies the main reasons for undertaking the research. The third part states the purpose of the study and the research focus. The fourth part is an outline of the research questions. The fifth part identifies the general aims of the research, providing a clear identification of the primary research objectives. The sixth part is a layout of the thesis.

1.1 The background of the study

Globalisation, an on-going process, is impacting on nation states economically, culturally, politically, environmentally, and demographically. Under the impact of globalization, many countries in the world are rapidly integrating into the global community through a shared medium of communication, mainly English. English, a second language for most of the people of the world, dominates international exchanges of knowledge, is central to technological development, and has become the international language for business and commerce, science and

technology, international relations and diplomacy, and sports. Other professional intercourse, such as the proceedings of meetings of health practitioners or educators from many different parts of the world, is often conducted in English, a second language for many of the participants. English is the primary language of the global economy (Watson, 1999; Crystal, 1997; Barton, 1994; Spring, 1998; Brock-Utne, 1997; Phillipson, 1992). It is also the language of the Internet. More importantly, English is likely to continue in this position of dominance in the foreseeable future.

The number of global speakers of English is impressive. It is estimated that about 1.5 billion people speak the language and that about 3 billion, more than one-third of the world's population, are exposed to it (Watson, 1999). Of this figure (3 billion) about 1.5 billion possess reasonable competence, with many others having a working knowledge of the language. In addition, students worldwide are keen to learn English. They believe that their ability to communicate in it will facilitate access into the labor market. Furthermore, there are some negative consequences of not knowing English. Burchfield contends that English has become a *lingua franca* 'to the point that any literate educated person is in a very real sense deprived if he does not know English' (Burchfield, 1985: 81).

With China's increasingly active involvement in the process of economic globalisation and international cooperation, it comes as no surprise that English has assumed a position of unprecedented importance in China's education. Mr. Li Lanqing, former China's Vice Premier of the State Council, asserted that the urgent improvement of English proficiency of Chinese people in general was not merely an educational issue per se but an issue associated with the

modernization of the country. In colleges and universities in China, English is a compulsory course that all students are required to take for the first two years. For senior students, from the year 2001 onwards every college and university was required to open 5%-10% E-C bilingual teaching (using both Chinese and English as medium of instruction) courses of its curriculum within 3-5 years and introduce authentic teaching materials (Ministry of Education, 2003), in order to develop human resources such as *Guojixing Rencai* (international personnel) or *Zhuanye Waiyu Fuhexing Rencai* (all-rounded talents who possess both specialized knowledge and strong competence in foreign languages) for China's economy. Catalytic factors, such as China's firm belief in its "open-door" policy, its fast economic development, its successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics Games and its access to the WTO, have played key roles in promoting E-C bilingual teaching which looks almost certain to reshape China's education system as a whole (Feng, 2005).

Guangxi, located in southwest China and one of the least developed provinces, is now opening its door wider to integrate into the global economy. However, the shortage of high quality talents with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English has become an obstructing barrier to its economic development. To develop high quality talents for the local economic development, colleges and universities in Guangxi have assumed the responsibility for and been taking pains in enhancing their English language education. Then how do students, teachers, employers and policy-makers perceive the role of English language education in training high quality talents with rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English, thereby promoting the region's economic development? Their perceptions warrant attention from government administrators at provincial and state levels. Their opinions are often ignored in

decision-making about educational matters.

In order for their perceptions to be taken into account, that is, before any decision about educational matters is made, we need to discover what they are. One way of getting their voices heard is for researchers to gather data and to report their findings in an accessible form to those who have the power to make final decisions about policy and its implementation. This study is one example of this process.

Decisions with regard to language-in-education policy should take into account the wishes and attitudes of parents, teachers and students. Obviously, teachers and students in schools are an integral part of the learning/teaching process: they are the ones who sit in classes day after day typically on the receiving end of decisions made about what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and why in the first place it should be taught. Although they have an insider's view of what is going on, their perceptions of what they observe and experience are seldom taken into account. On the other hand, the views and attitudes of policy-makers and employers have a decisive impact on the learning and teaching in educational domains. If language planners and administrators are aware of how students/teachers approach language learning/teaching, their attitudes to the languages they learn/teach, what they feel about their language learning/teaching experiences, and how they act upon these feelings, they will better be able to facilitate desired learning/teaching outcomes in the classroom. If language planners and administrators have a clear idea of what outcomes employers in the market think language learning/teaching should reach, what sort of students are needed for the society and economy, what impacts globalised English and the new idea of developing talents have on their thinking and decision-making, the

tasks of language-in-education will be more effectively implemented, thus serving the society and economy better.

Accordingly, the focus of this study is to explore and analyse how people, particularly policy makers, employers, university teachers and students in Guangxi, perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, P.R. China.

1.2 Importance of the study

Historically speaking, language planning was probably the first of the language sciences to address how questions of language status and standardization might influence socioeconomic development (see Fox, 1975; Rubin and Jernudd, 1971). Furthermore, the planning perspective of this early work provides a useful intellectual and methodological context that can connect English, especially ESP (English for Specific Purpose), with wider societal concerns (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Kennedy, 1982; Markee, 1989). The role of English as a resource for development is highly appreciated. Many educators and applied linguists see English in development in neutral terms, suggesting the inevitability of the spread of English and noting the value English holds for individuals and societies in need of development. Around the world, English is spoken and heard on various occasions even though the setting may be Belgium or Brazil and none of the participants may be native speakers of the language (Luo et al, 2003: 75). As witnessed by the abrupt displacement of Russian by English as the dominant L2 in Central and Eastern Europe, this demand for English language education is widely seen as motivated by a desire to break with past deprivations and to share in the fruits of globalisation (Laitin, 1996;

Petzold & Berns, 2000). Warschauer (2000) predicts that “the shift toward a global informational economy will intensify ..., integrating more countries and regions into the global market and further spurring the need for workers worldwide in diverse occupations, from Webmaster to food server, to learn English” (p. 529). In principle, English language education has the potential to facilitate communication between commercial operators, large or small, thereby contributing to wealth creation and poverty reduction.

As the biggest developing country in the world, China’s primary task is to develop its economy to satisfy the increasing needs of its people. However, the biggest challenge for China is that high quality talents, especially *Guojixing Rencai*, are in great shortage, which has proved to be an obstructive barrier to its integration into the globalised economy. College education, the final stop to produce such talents for the society, should take into account how people perceive its English language education in producing such talents and in promoting its economy now that English has become a global language, which has proved to be of great economic value and plays a vital role in producing high quality talents for the ever growing economy. The above short review of literature implies great significance of this study.

1.3 The purpose of the study and research focus

According to the relevant literature, the economic development of a region has much to do with its English language education, since English as the shared medium in international exchanges plays such a crucial role in raising people’s ability for development, and in attracting foreign capital, and thereby contributing to the improvement of the regional human capital and economy.

However, little empirical data has been gathered on how people in Guangxi, China perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development. The purpose of this research is to explore and analyze how policy-makers, employers, and university teachers and students in Guangxi perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, P.R. China.

1.4 The research questions and the aims of the study

The core research questions of this study are as follows:

1. To what extent has the emergence of English as a global language influenced the regional language planning and policy-making? If so, in what ways has this influence manifested itself?
2. What are the perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development among policy-makers, employers, university teachers and students?
3. How do their perceptions affect language policy-making (policy-makers), the selection criteria of employees (employers), and the teaching and learning of the English language at tertiary institutions (teachers and students)?
4. To what extent do informants feel that the standards of English language education at tertiary institutions can meet the needs of the region's economic development at present?
5. What problems do informants consider exist in the present college English language

education of Guangxi with regard to regional economic prosperity?

Based on the core research questions mentioned above, this study aims to:

- explore the impact of English as a global language on the attitudes of the informants towards regional language planning and policy -making, and the region's economic development;
- evaluate and analyze the opinions of the informants on using English to improve regional economic development;
- evaluate and analyze whether the perceptions of the informants affect the practice of their work: language policy-making, selection criteria of employees, and teaching and learning of the English language;
- identify whether the present English language education can meet the needs of the region's economic development;
- find out what problems exist in the present college English language education of Guangxi with regard to the region's economic prosperity;
- find solutions to the existing problems and make recommendations to improve the current situation by addressing issues identified in the empirical study with regard to the

contextual factors at both local and global levels.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter One serves as an introduction. The importance of the English language education in raising people's ability for development and attracting foreign capital, and thereby contributing to the improvement of the regional human capital and economy is presented first, followed by a brief account of the purpose of the present study, the research questions, the aims of the study and the layout of the thesis.

The aims of Chapter Two will be to conduct a survey of the literature to date, which deals with the definition of globalisation and the impact of global forces on education, an area where national policies of the world mediate the global forces, and examines the impact of economic globalisation and the economic value of English as a global language, which serves as the theoretical frame of the thesis. It then describes how China mediates itself in its education, in particular its English language education, so as to produce high quality talents with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English, facilitating its integration into the global economy. Then a presentation of the existing problems in China's English language education is given. At the end of this chapter are a brief introduction to the educational context and mediation in English language education of Guangxi, the conceptual framework of the thesis.

Chapter Three will discuss theoretical and methodological problems raised by research in this area. Methodology, research questions and objectives, the rationale for adopting the qualitative

research method, the main features of qualitative and quantitative methods, the reasons why the qualitative semi-structured interview was adopted as the main tool for collecting the data and the interview process including the research samples, the methods of data collection and analysis, interview schedules, pilot study, ethical issues, strengths and weaknesses of the research are all included in this chapter.

Chapter Four will provide an analysis and presentation of the empirical data collected in the process of conducting the semi-structured interviews, with examples taken from transcriptions of the interviews, and comments and analysis relating to the theoretical framework.

Chapter Five will interpret the results of the empirical study followed by a discussion about the results, and some practical implications and recommendations to solve the existing problems in the current college English language education of Guangxi.

In the final Chapter conclusions will be drawn from the empirical study. This chapter will give a general summary of the study, with reference to the literature in the field which proved to be particularly helpful, and the contribution of this study. The limitations of the study will be discussed. There will also be some suggestions for possible future research at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this second chapter is to examine the way in which the literature in the field of economic globalisation and English as a global language has contributed to the theoretical standpoint behind the research project described in Chapter One, and its subsequent design and execution.

To meet the trend of globalisation and to face the challenges of the global society in the new century, we have already mentioned in Chapter One that English, the shared communication language of the world community, plays a crucial role in producing high quality talents who should be able to possess specialised knowledge and use English competently as an international language for international communication, therefore the aims of the thesis are as follows:

- To explore the impact of English as a global language on the attitudes of the informants towards the regional language planning and policy -making, and the regional economic development;
- To evaluate and analyze the opinions of the informants on using English to improve the regional economic development;

- To evaluate and analyze whether the perceptions of the informants affect the practice of their work: language policy-making, selection criteria of employees, and teaching and learning of the English language;
- To identify whether the present college English language education can meet the needs of the region's economic development;
- To find out what problems exist in the present college English language education of Guangxi with regard to the region's economic prosperity;
- To find solutions to the existing problems and make recommendations to improve the current situation by addressing issues identified in the empirical study with regard to the contextual factors at both local and global levels.

To resolve these aims, we must first of all take the context of the study, i.e., various specific contextual factors concerned with economic globalisation and the economic value of globalised English, China and Guangxi's mediation in this increasingly global world and English language education, into serious account. For example: What impact does globalisation have on China and its education, in particular its English language education? How does China mediate itself in face of globalisation and in its English language education? What is the present situation of China's and Guangxi's college English language education? How does the situation evolve from yesterday? What are the existing problems in China's, particularly Guangxi's present college

English language education?

First we will give a brief account of the definition of globalisation. Then the relationship between globalisation and economic globalisation is highlighted. We will explore and evaluate the impact of globalisation on China, followed by a discussion of the worldwide spread of English and the economic value of English. Then we will make an investigation of the historical development of China's international/intercultural exchanges with their effects on the foreign language education. Then the present development and situation of China's English language education, China's mediation in policy in its English language education and the relevant measures that have been taken will be presented. Finally, some problems that exist in China's present English language education, and the specific context of Guangxi will be discussed.

2.2 The definition of globalisation

Globalisation is "a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly" (Waters, 2001: 5). Based on Waters' (2001) division of globalisation into economic globalisation, political globalisation, cultural globalisation, Bottery (2000, 2004) developed the paradigm by adding three other dimensions: environmental globalisation, demographic globalisation, and American globalisation. Of these six dimensions, economic globalisation is the most influential, which has resulted in an increased need for a global language for people to get integrated into the world. English is seen as a requirement imposed by globalisation and a global market. Thus the focus of the study is on the

relationship between global economy and globalised English, people's perception of English language education in improving the local economic development being highlighted.

2.3 Globalisation and the global economy

Globalisation has a long history, dating back to 'more than a century ago' (Burbules and Torres, 2000:12). Spring (1998) believes that the global economy of today has its roots in European colonisation, but argues that the phenomenon has accelerated in the contemporary age with differential impact on nation states. The historical specificity of the process, Burbules and Torres (2000:13) argue, "does not however guarantee a symmetrical or homogenous impact worldwide" and the resulting cultural products, largely Western in origin, have been received in different locations around the world in different ways. In the process, the artifacts became domesticated within local traditions.

Arguments in favor of colonialism as the touchstone for the present global economy appear to be convincing, and some ways in which this global entity may interface with education have been suggested. Burbules and Torres (2000:4) argue that:

The origins, nature, and dynamics of the process of globalisation are ... a focus of concern for educational philosophers, sociologists, curriculum workers, teachers, policy makers, politicians, parents and many others involved with the educational endeavor. The process of globalisation, however defined, seems to have serious consequences for transforming teaching and learning as they have been understood within the context of educational practices and public policies that are highly national in character.

Globalisation is not merely an ‘imaginary process’, but incorporates a component of ‘facticity’ as well— plans, intentions, strategies etc. (Smith 1999). Globalisation is an inexorable trend that has affected the political economy of countries and in turn their cultures. The resulting global economy is characterized by certain features, among which is the neo-capitalist’s concern with maintaining free markets through government intervention. Major players support the model, and these include the World Bank, the European Union, the United Nations and powerful governments such as those of the USA, the UK and Japan. The global economy is ‘associated with the current expansion of neo-liberal economic thinking and practices across the globe. It is suggestive of the increasing interdependence of regional and national economies and the spread of global trading agreements and relationships’ (Rizvi, 2000:207).

However, as Spring (1998) remarks, there are winners and losers too, and he predicts that globalisation will lead to an increase in unemployment. Inequality and economic poverty, he argues, will be inevitable outcomes. In the circumstance, enhancing human capital by preparing people to contribute to economic growth and thereby increase their standard of living is proposed as a panacea. This is a social investment which is likely to become an imperative, triggered by the global economy. The demands, however, go beyond mere acquisition of general knowledge and incorporate some specifics. Thus, according to Spring (1998), not only a knowledge of how to communicate across international borders, but a knowledge of English as the medium for doing so is critical. English in other words has become an economic imperative and a valuable asset. English was, and still is today, an important lubricant in the wheels that turn the global economy.

2.4 The impact of globalisation on China

The concept of globalisation, as in Western countries, generated both expectation and suspicion in China. According to its supporters, globalisation is the cornerstone of the future world structure, the all-conquering force of change, and the last train to modernisation that China should not miss. They emphasize the necessity of joining the globalisation trend, catching the momentum of a new era. However, others hold a more cautious and sometimes judicious attitude toward this mysterious term. They ask if there are really such things as a genuinely global economy or global governance. As the concept was borrowed from the works of futurists such as Alvin Toffler and Peter Drucker, it is so ambiguous that it is not up to the task of characterizing the present state of the international political economy, at least until its contents and features have been clearly redefined.

After years of discussion, most Chinese analysts or researchers, such as Wang & Xue (1998), Zhang (2002), Cai (2003) and Luo et al (2003), tend to use the word *globalisation* in a limited and narrow sense. Only three interpretations are widely accepted. First, the process of economic globalisation is underway in the post-Cold War world. It is the general consensus that markets, production, and capital became truly global in the 1990s. Foreign direct investment casts its influence on various regions of China, while shrewd Chinese enterprises try to gain more profit from international trade. To some fledgling industries, Transnational Corporations (TNCs) still represent an unwelcome threat. But many others emphasize the prospect of development brought by TNCs and have prepared to tackle these giants. There has been widespread support for government efforts to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and promote regional

cooperation through Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Second, various global issues have emerged in the past decade that could only be solved via international cooperation. Though the term *ecopolitics* is scarcely used, many researchers of international relations admit that global issues such as the environment, immigration, and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons are essential parts of the international system. Some researchers such as Wang and Xue (1998) and Zhang (2002) even argue “economy as well as ecology will be the main theme of international relations in the next century. The country that takes the lead in solving such issues would gain more say in world affairs.” (Zhang, 2002: 58)

According to Wang and Xue (1998), the emergence of global issues is portrayed as the expansion of the diplomatic arena. As these new challenges are able to penetrate national borders, the solutions will also be transnational. For example, local officials suddenly find they can use funds offered by other states or international organizations to stop pollution and population explosion. However, the meanings and influence of global actions are argued to be carefully confined to the technical level (Wang and Xue, 1998; Zhang, 2002).

Third, the information revolution is the most important component of the globalisation trend. The rapid extension of the information highway has created a space beyond geographical boundaries. It encourages innovation, decentralization, and diversity. However, after the original enthusiasm of embracing the technical breakthrough, the Chinese have stopped describing it as fair and secure. Many worry about the dominance of English resources on the Internet and the danger of monopoly in establishing software standards. The lack of regulation in the so-called Internet

economy is also criticized.

In sum, the Chinese admit the globalisation of economic activities, ecological issues, and information techniques. Meanwhile, they are somewhat suspicious of the argument that there are also globalisation trends in social, political, and cultural areas. In Chinese assessment, when Westerners talk about the homology of behavior, customs, and values, they are describing the overwhelming trend in popular culture. But the marrow of civilizations, represented by the value orientation of elites, goes in the opposite direction. Obviously, foreign policies of developing countries would be decided by the latter. Most opinion leaders in China regard the argument as ridiculous that while individuals have more choices in the era of globalisation, nation-states have to accept one unique structure.

2.5 The worldwide spread of English

The global dominance of English is a universal consensus. In a survey of the use of English in 20 countries, Fishman (1996: 628) concludes that “the world of large scale commerce, industry, technology, and banking, like the world of certain human sciences and professions, is an international world and it is linguistically dominated by English almost everywhere, regardless of how well established and well-protected local cultures, languages, and identities may otherwise be.”

The important features of English are what may be called *hybridity* and *permeability*, which helped it to expand quickly as a world language. English has changed substantially in its 1,500

years of history, reflecting contact with other languages and freely borrowing from them – in its early days, from indigenous Celtic and Latin, later from Scandinavian Norse and Norman French, and more recently from languages spoken in the British colonies. Today English has spread globally among second-language users and those who use it as a foreign language.

It is predictable that in areas where English is a second language, English will develop in ways which reflect local indigenous cultures and languages, diverging from the variety of English spoken in Britain or North America. The close relationship between language, territory and cultural identity is being challenged by globalizing forces. Graddol (1997: 2-3) predicted that within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language would exceed the number of native speakers, and, therefore, the center of authority regarding the language would shift from native speakers. This numerical majority of “nonnatives” has already been reached.

The shift of power over the language will not take place just because the number of non-native speakers far exceeds that of native speakers. It has to do with who those speakers are. Crystal (1997: 5-8) explains why Latin became an international language throughout the Roman Empire. It was not because the Romans were more numerous than the peoples they subjected; they were simply more powerful militarily, technologically, and economically. It takes military power to establish an international language, but it takes economic power to maintain and expand it. The histories of the British Empire and the United States illustrate this. After implementing colonial policies ruthlessly by military power, Britain became the world’s leading industrial and trading country by the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, English was

maintained and promoted as a powerful international language through the economic supremacy of the new American superpower.

It is true that the economics of developing countries are gradually achieving productivity levels typical of developed countries, facilitated by technology and skills transfer from richer countries. Graddol (1997: 28) cites the statistics that Britain took 58 years to double its per capital income, but countries benefiting from flows of knowledge, expertise and technology transferred from the West have been able to double their income in reduced time scales – the US 47 years, Japan 37 years, Brazil 18 years, Indonesia 16 years, South Korea 12 years, and China 8 years. The world's 'Big Three' trading blocs – North America, the European Union and Japan – produced and circulated 55 percent of the world's wealth (total \$25 trillion) within them in 1990. He estimates, however, that the share of world wealth in 2050 (total \$250 trillion, average world growth at 4%) of the Big Three blocs will drop to a mere 12 percent. In contrast, Asia will have a 60 percent share and the rest 28 percent.

What effect will this shift in economic relations have on the use of English as global language? A general rule of thumb in international trade is that selling must be carried out in the customer's language. The linguistic implication of this is that language popularity will follow markets. In the United States, universities saw a sudden rise in the number of students enrolling in Chinese studies when then President Nixon normalized US-China diplomatic relations in 1972. The worldwide increase in student enrollment in courses in Japanese as a foreign language closely reflected a rise in the value of the Japanese yen against the US dollar during the period 1982 to 1989 (Coulmas, 1992: 78). However, because the multilateral nature of international trade brings

with it a greater reliance on lingua franca, international trading among Asian countries is expected to increasingly rely on Asian varieties of English, rather than on Asian languages themselves. For example, ASEAN member countries use English as a common language rather than Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Malaysia.

2.6 The economic value of English

The economic value of languages has, in just a few years, acquired a surprising visibility in the public debate and in scientific research. This evolution is particularly manifest in China, in contrast to what can be observed in the United States and Canada. In the North American context, some of the connections between ‘economic’ and ‘linguistic’ issues had been receiving some attention since the mid sixties. In China, however, research on language matters as well as public debate about them were clearly assigned to the realm of linguistics, language education, cultural issues in general, or politics.

Within a remarkable short time, this situation has changed. At almost any conference on language-in-society, particularly when language policies are addressed, the question of the economic dimensions of language is now brought up in some way or other. The substance of the issues raised can vary. Grin (2001:21) lists the following six issues that are most frequently mentioned:

- “1. the relevance of language as a defining element of economic processes such as production, distribution or consumption;*

2. *the relevance of language as an element of human capital, in the acquisition of which individual actors may have a good reason to invest;*
3. *language teaching as a social investment, yielding net benefits (market-related or not);*
4. *the economic implications (costs and benefits) of language policies, whether these costs and benefits are market-related or not;*
5. *language-based income inequality, particularly through wage discrimination against groups of people defined by their language attributes;*
6. *language-related work (translation, interpretation, teaching, etc.) as an economic sector."*

The possible explanation of why language matters have and are increasingly being considered in relation with economic dimensions of human experience is that linguistic diversity in society is an issue now taking on increasing relevance for an increasing number of people, since the occurrence of contact between people with different language attributes is on the rise. This can, in turn, be traced back to the following trends stated by Grin (2001:22):

- "1. the reassertion of local and regional identities, including the linguistic dimensions of these identities;*
- 2. the diversification of migration trends, in terms of the various combination of the countries of origin and countries of destination linked by migration;*
- 3. the development of supra-national entities;*
- 4. the rising international integration of the production, exchange and consumption of goods and services on the one hand, and production factors (capital and labour) on the other hand – a phenomenon with which 'globalization' is often equated."*

For all the above reasons, people speaking language X (living in a traditionally X-defined linguistic environment) are increasingly (and ever more ‘normally’) in contact with people speaking language Y; moreover, this evolution is affecting, on the whole, a growing range of aspects of life. As a result, linguistic diversity is a reality of increasing importance, affecting most aspects of human life, including economic activity. Of the various trends that attribute to the increasing relevance of diversity, some are embedded in economic activity, thereby establishing direct links between language and economy, and prompting interest in those links.

The increased presence of Y in an X-defined environment is particularly manifest when Y stands for English, and X for just about any other language. For example, educated native speakers of German or French living in a mainly German- or French-speaking part of western Europe are no longer confronted with English only because they may choose to read a book in English from time to time, but also because they are increasingly expected to demonstrate professional mobility, sometimes on the international plane; more often than not, this mobility implies a command of English. Even among people who are not expected to compete individually on international labor markets, the presence of English makes itself felt because they consume goods branded or advertised in English, and are exposed to music with English lyrics. These trends are increasingly analyzed and documented (Phillipson, 1992; Ammon, 1994; Pennycook, 1994; Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997). Economic forces are regularly singled out as one of the chief reasons explaining the spread of English, which also stimulates interest in the language-economy links (Francois Grin, 2001).

In China, the need for English is inextricably bound up with China's socioeconomic development, which is reflected in the case of the president of China, who, like many other government officials, needs English to participate in meetings, negotiate with his counterparts, and voice the interest of the country. In particular, he needs English to help explain China's concern to the outside world; encourage participation in the country's socioeconomic development; and participate in conferences and meetings about politics, economy in countries under development, agricultural and land reform, and rural development.

Many people in China covet knowledge of the English language. In rural as well as in urban China, English knowledge is seen as a door to better employment and higher social status for younger generations, as a way to gain prestige and as a sign of "distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984). English has become a valued linguistic currency, a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). But most of all, English is seen as a requirement imposed by globalisation and a global market. Massey (1999:27) states that learning English has become a component of an "imagined global citizenship," one of the many ways of "imagining globalisation." "Global" is one of the "most powerful terms in our geographical and social imagination" (Massey, 1999: 33). Because it is seen as the linguistic currency that makes one a potential actor in the global marketplace, English has acquired special – perhaps inflated – standing among forms of cultural capital. Many people would say that "English is like the dollar" when asked how they judged the importance of learning English.

The above perception of the English language as the strongest linguistic currency in today's society, or as an equivalent of the American Dollar, as something that needs to be attained in

order to participate as a consumer in the global market, has transformed the study of English from an instructional activity, a tool for learning, into an object of consumption. Consuming English by watching movies, using the Internet, listening to the Voice of America or reading any kind of literature in English has become a sign of sophistication, “distinction,” an accumulation of a particular form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990: 22).

2.7 Bilingualism and bilingual education

Bilingualism is often used to designate the capability of using two or more languages. The use of a language can range from native speaker competence through to minimal ability to survive in simple transactions and encounters. Weinreich (1968: 1), one of the founding fathers of bilingual studies, offers one of the shortest definitions: “the practice of alternatively using two languages will be called bilingualism.” Mackey (1970: 555) offers a definition that incorporates and expands Weinreich’s definition of bilingualism: “we should therefore consider bilingualism as the alternative use of two or more languages by the same individual.” However, bilingualism as a concept has an open-ended semantics. Earlier definitions tended to restrict bilingualism to equal mastery of two languages while later ones have allowed much variation in competence (Edwards, 1997).

Bilingual education refers to instruction in two languages and the use of two languages as mediums of instruction for part or all of the school curriculum (Edwards, 1994). Jacobson (1990: 4) argues that the notion of bilingual education can be expanded to mean instruction of bilingual students where a bilingual is interpreted as the home language dominant and limited foreign

language competent. Teaching such bilingual students in their weaker language has recently been viewed as a means of upgrading their skills in the target language. Byram (1997a) thinks that this distinct and different kind of bilingual education is to be found in the majority language education as opposed to bilingual education for linguistic minorities that has dominated the literature in the past decades. In this kind of bilingual education, the use of another language as the medium of instruction has a different purpose from the traditional bilingual education for linguistic minorities where the purpose of bilingual education is either to train minority language speakers to master the majority language or to keep the minority language from extinction (Baker, 1996). According to Byram (1997a), Ferguson et al (1977), the purpose of this kind of bilingual education with the dominance of the home language and limited foreign language competence is (1) to develop competence in a second or foreign language in young people who would otherwise remain monolingual; (2) to enable students to communicate with the outside world and to assimilate them into the mainstream of a global society and to socialize them for full participation into it; (3) to provide language skills which are marketable, aiding trade and professional development; (4) to preserve their different linguistic and cultural communities so as to deepen understanding of language and culture; (5) to spread the use of foreign languages into the greater population but also to strengthen elite groups and their positions in society.

In China, bilingual teaching has acquired quite high profile. E-C bilingual teaching (using both Chinese and English as mediums of instruction), part of the English language education for non-English majors in tertiary institutions in China, is now receiving more and more attention. The rationale is that the implementation of E-C bilingual teaching helps upgrading the general quality of university graduates, thus contributing to the economic development. Accordingly,

E-C bilingual teaching is regarded as a strategic measure for China to develop its human resources such as *Guojixing Rencai (international personnel)* or *Zhuanye Waiyu Fuhexing Rencai (all-rounded talents who possess both specialized knowledge and strong competence in foreign languages)* for its socioeconomic development, which is a mediation for China to integrate itself into the global economy.

2.8 Mediation in policy in Chinese English language education

The impact of globalisation on China's language policies has been tremendous in the last half century. Since the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the policies implemented include the propagation of Putonghua, the standardisation and use of a simplified form of the Chinese script and the linguistic description of minority languages. Along with these developments, there have also been measures to promote foreign language education. While Russian was the preferred language in the 1950s, from around 1957 and certainly by 1960, English regained its supremacy as the main foreign language, its status suffering a setback only during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). After the Cultural Revolution ended, the emphasis on learning English has continued unabated.

In research (e.g., Scovel, 1995) tracing the development of foreign language education in China, three periods are recognized: the first period (1949-65), the second period (1966-76) and the third period (from 1977 onwards). This division is a historical recognition of the upheaval caused by the Cultural Revolution (the second period) with the first period being the time before it and the third, the time after it. Within this broad demarcation, further sub-divisions are possible (Table

Table 2.1 Six phases in foreign-language education in China

Historical period Time	Phase in foreign language education
Before the Cultural Revolution	
Early 1950s	1. The interlude with Russian
1957-65	2. The back-to-English movement
During the Cultural Revolution	
1966-70	3. Repudiation of foreign learning
1971-76	4. English for renewing ties with the West
After the Cultural Revolution	
1977-90	5. English for modernization
From 1991	6. English for international stature

The interlude with Russian: early 1950s

Because China's initial vision was alignment with the communist nations, the foreign language that received much attention in the 1950s was Russian (Xu, 1990: 3; Scovel, 1995: 3). The dream of finding an ally in the Soviet Union was soon shattered because the Soviet Union did not treat China as an equal and did not provide the aid in the manner as promised (Lynch, 1998: 115). So in the late 1950s, the teaching of other foreign languages, especially English, resumed. In 1956, draft syllabi for teaching Russian and English in senior secondary school were distributed.

The back-to-English movement: 1957-65

As Sino-Soviet relations tensed in the late 1950s, China began to look to the West for economic ties. As early as 1957, a draft syllabus for teaching English in junior secondary school was distributed. Around 1961, English began to displace Russian as the main foreign language in China (see Pride and Liu, 1988: 43, who also identify the time around 1960 for this policy shift). In 1961, the syllabus for English majors at university and college level was defined. Another significant step was extending the learning of English to science and technology university students with the first syllabus for them distributed in 1962. From 1960 to 1965, some foreign-language schools were also established. Though small in number, they constitute an interesting tradition in foreign language learning in China.

Repudiation of foreign learning: 1966-70

From 1966 to 1976, the Cultural Revolution swept throughout China, making the learning of anything foreign condemnable. That was a time when farmers and workers were honoured and traditional scholars were distrusted. Foreign language learning suffered the same fate as scholarly studies in Chinese. Yet, even during those dark years for foreign language education, Zhou Enlai, late premier of China, managed to save a remnant of the foreign-language majors and deployed them to jobs requiring foreign languages.

English for renewing ties with the West: 1971-6

In 1971, the United States formally recognized China as a member of the United Nations, taking Taiwan's place. Further diplomatic talks between Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger proved fruitful. In February 1972, Richard Nixon visited China, resulting in Sino-American discourse towards commercial, cultural and educational exchange (Lynch, 1998: 93). The slogan of "Red and expert", meaning "learning foreign matters to serve the people as an expert", was revived in the same year. But in 1974, the slogan of "Not learning ABC can still bring about revolution" became widespread again. Only after Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 could China realize its strategic intentions to open its door to the West.

English for modernization: 1977-90

In 1977, the reinstatement of admission to higher education was announced and enrolment resumed in 1978. In the same year, English in primary and secondary education and English for non-English majors received more attention. Also in 1978 came the announcement of Deng Xiaoping's Policy of the Four Modernizations: to modernize agriculture, industry, science and technology and defense. This policy soon evolved into the Reform and Opening Policy (Dillon, 1998: 109), making it vital for the Chinese to learn English and other foreign languages. In 1982, English was announced as the main foreign language in secondary education. In 1985, the first international conference on English Language Teaching (ELT) was held in Guangzhou. Throughout the 1980s, policy directions from the State met with support in terms of syllabus design and materials development from ELT professionals in China.

English for international stature: from 1991

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the balance of power in the global arena made it possible for China to adopt a more international stance. This orientation was articulated, for example, in China's endeavour to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Beijing's bid to host the Olympic Games. Both dreams were realized in 2001. China joined the WTO on 11 December 2001 and will host the Olympics in 2008. Such an international outlook requires further openness to foreign language learning. Throughout the 1990s, syllabi and materials from primary school to adult education were designed or revised. Collections of essays and papers from various conferences in China were published; examples were Li (1990), Xu (1996) and Chen & Yang (1997). A chronology of events in Foreign Language Teaching in China by the Sichuan Foreign Language Institute was published in 1993. Publications outside China included: Dzau (1990), Ross (1993) and Cortazzi and Jin (1996). From this brief account, it is evident that the policy emphasis on Russian was short-lived. Around 1960, English regained its supremacy as the pre-eminent foreign language in China. It has maintained that position ever since.

China's present development of business and trade and the status of English

To understand why there have been so great changes in China's foreign language policy-making and the high status of English in the country, it is necessary to get a glimpse of the nation's development of business and trade.

The implementation of the country's Open Door Policy over the past two decades has been

accompanied by a prolonged economic boom, which has raised the living standards of millions of Chinese people. It has also transformed China into a global economic and trading power. China, as of the end of 2005, had the fourth largest economy in the world, behind the US, Japan, Germany, and ahead of the UK (<http://finance.sina.com.cn>). China in 2004 and 2005 ranked third in volume of foreign trade, just behind the US and Germany (<http://news.sohu.com/20050918/n226987822.shtml>; <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/4715230.html>; <http://finance.sina.com.cn>).

In the next decade, it is predicted that the country's economy will maintain an annual growth rate of 7 percent, and the accumulated value of imported products will exceed US\$2.5 trillion (Shi, 2000: 8). The rapid development of international trade will certainly provide ample opportunities for countries in the Asian-Pacific region and the rest of the world to conduct business and trade cooperation with China. Thus, the nation's accession to the WTO will increase not only China's prosperity but also its interdependence with the rest of the world.

Within this general context of the country's increasingly active involvement in the process of economic globalisation and international cooperation, it comes as no surprise that English has assumed a position of unprecedented importance in Chinese education. Mr. Li Lanqing, former Vice Premier of the State Council, asserted that the urgent improvement of English proficiency of Chinese people in general was not merely an educational issue per se but an issue associated with the modernization of the country. In colleges and universities in China, English is a compulsory course which all students are required to follow for the first two years. The National College English Test (CET4 and CET6), which began in 1987 to assess the implementation of the College English Syllabus and to promote English language learning, is one of the most important tests

nationwide with candidates now reaching 6 million annually (source: The CET National Committee). The certificate of CET4/6 has attained such a high social value that it is believed to be a passport to better-paid employment in business trading firms or joint-venture companies in China's increasingly competitive job market.

The above description of the present status of English in a general sociological perspective may help to provide a glimpse of the importance of English in the nation's endeavour to participate in the process of economic globalisation. For most Chinese people, English is now learnt not for the prestige of knowing a foreign language or appreciating the cultural heritage of Anglo-American societies, but for patriotic and utilitarian reasons, and for national modernization as well as personal advancement and material gain.

2.9 Measures taken in Chinese English language education

In the last 25 years or so, English language education in the People's Republic of China has been gaining importance at an accelerated rate. Not only has the language been regarded as a valuable resource for China's modernization drive but it has also had great impacts on Chinese people's pursuit of personal welfare (Cotazzi & Jin, 1996b; Ross, 1993). The Modernization program initiated in the late 1970's and subsequent transformations in political, economic, and social domains have brought about rapid economic development and an escalation of commercial, technological, and cultural exchanges with other parts of the world. English has contributed to those changes and developments by serving as a vital link between China and the outside world (Maley, 1995; Ministry of Education, 2000c). With China's increasing presence in international

affairs and growing importance in global economy, there has been an unprecedented demand for proficiency in English (Wu, 2001). Just as proficiency in English is perceived as a cornerstone of further development for the nation, so it is seen as a valuable asset to individuals (Gao et al, 2002). It is the key to a host of opportunities, such as a university education at home and abroad, a desirable job in a public or private sector, and eligibility for professional promotion (Cotazzi & Jin, 1996b; Ng & Tang, 1997). Because of the superior national, social and economic prestige that proficiency in English has accrued, English language teaching (ELT) has received a great deal of attention from the government, the educational sector, students, parents and society at large (Hu, 2002a; Ross, 1993).

There has been a massive drive to expand and improve ELT in the formal education system, especially at the primary and secondary levels (Hu, 2002a). Since foreign language study was made a core subject on the junior and senior secondary curriculums in the early 1980s, millions of students have received formal instruction in English, at least four hours a week for six or more years. Based on the statistics released by the Ministry of Education (2003), currently there are more than 80 million fulltime secondary students learning a foreign language nationwide. Of these students, more than 95% are studying English as a compulsory school subject (Adamson, 2001; British Council, 1995). Although English was not a required subject on the nationally prescribed primary curriculum until 2001, primary schools in large cities and economically advanced areas started to teach English years back (Wu, 2001). Between 1994 and 2001, there was an annual increase of more than one million primary English learners (Jiu, 2001). In tandem with the expansion of ELT in the school system, there has been an impressive top-down movement on revamping curriculums, updating English syllabuses, producing new English

textbooks, developing skills-oriented examinations, and upgrading teachers' professional competence (Hu, 2002a). As a result, the quality of ELT has been considerably improved. As noted by Hertling (1996), China is gaining English proficiency much faster than any other country in the region. The central government, local governments and schools and universities have been mediating themselves in all aspects concerning ELT, the following aspects being highlighted:

2.9.1 Infrastructural resources

In the 1980s, to implement and push forward social and economic reform and development, limited national resources were first channeled strategically into transforming the coastal regions, and the effort was subsequently sustained to speed up the progress already taking place. The top-down reform has been of paramount importance and sped up educational development in many respects (Cheng, 2000; Su, 1991). The decentralization of educational administration, introduced as a major component of the reform, has made local governments increasingly responsible for implementing basic education (Yin, 1993). While the central government continues to allocate education funds to local governments, an increasing proportion of the financial resources needed for running and improving the conditions of the schools has been raised by local governments and provided out of local revenues. Of course, because of the differing economic prosperity enjoyed by different areas, financial resources for education are more easily raised and more generous in the economically more developed coastal and urban areas than in the inland rural areas. Many schools in the developed areas are now provided with a whole range of modern instructional technologies from basic equipment such as overhead

projectors and tape-recorders to highly advanced facilities such as state-of-the-art multimedia language labs (Ross, 2000).

2.9.2 Teaching and learning materials

With regard to English language learning materials, in line with the decentralization policy and in response to the widening differences in the pace of social and economic development between different areas, the Ministry of Education has allowed some economically developed coastal provinces and municipalities to trial in developing their own textbooks. This means that schools in the coastal and urban areas have a much greater range of textbooks to choose from. More importantly, textbooks produced for these areas show a greater willingness to incorporate new conceptions of education and international education developments (Hu, 2002a). Take the English textbooks produced in Shanghai for example. Shanghai developed its *New Primary and Secondary English* series, which was written in the spirit of CLT, a language teaching and learning approach new to most parts of China then (Hu, 2002a; Ng & Tang, 1997). More recently, the Shanghai Education Commission has collaborated with Oxford University Press on a new series of English textbooks, which has incorporated some of the latest developments in foreign language education, for example, learner-centeredness and task-based instruction. Besides locally developed English textbooks, textbooks produced overseas are also increasingly available, especially in the economically developed areas (China Internet Information Center, 2000; Cotazzi & Jin, 1996b).

English materials which are not specially prepared for language teaching are also readily

available in China now, for example, English newspapers and magazines, English TV programs, English websites, videos of English movies, English pop music, and English 'canonical' literary texts (Bolton, 2002; British Council, 1995; China Internet Information Center, 2000; Guo & Huang, 2002). These materials cater for the different needs of English learners, provide them with greater exposure to authentic use of English, and create a condition for them to learn the language experientially and communicatively.

2.9.3 Professional training and competence of teachers

Teachers play a vital role in improving the quality of English teaching and learning, so great attention has also been paid to this issue. According to some statistics, for example, about 15% of the primary and secondary schools in Shanghai have recruited at least one native English-speaking teacher on their staff. In-service teacher training has gained great attention. Some local governments sponsor an increasing number of teachers for in-service training both at home and abroad. Shanghai, for example, has been sending groups of secondary English teachers to Lancaster University in the UK for short-term training in the past few years. Through such in-service training, many English teachers have got the necessary subject knowledge, communicative competence in English, and professional skills to adopt a more communicative approach to ELT. The number of English teachers sent abroad for further study at tertiary institutions is even larger, though there still remain great differences between developed and underdeveloped areas or regions. According to the Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission (College English syllabus Revising Committee, 2000), by the end of 2003, about 11,000 teachers of English in Shanghai will have

participated in refresher courses, and between 1500 and 1800 core teachers will have received ELT training in overseas institutions. For the various reasons given above, the contingent of teachers in the developed areas has been greatly strengthened. Again take Shanghai as an illustration. More than 98% of the junior and 87% of the senior secondary English teachers had the required qualifications in 2000 (Hu, 2002c), while the percentage of college English teachers holding the Master degrees and the Doctoral degrees is the highest in the country. Because of their good professional competence, these teachers are more capable of implementing pedagogies such as skills-oriented, task-based, communicative approaches (Ng & Tang, 1997), leading to the students' strong competence in English.

2.9.4 Sociocultural aspect

The most striking feature of traditional Chinese culture of learning (set of expectations, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviors) is the conceptualization of education more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a practical process of knowledge construction and use. Because of this conceptualization, the traditional Chinese mode of teaching is a mimetic one that emphasizes the transmission of knowledge (Paine, 1991, 1992). The favored teaching methods are expository, and learning process is teacher-dominated (Biggs, 1996; Scollon, 1999). A teacher's paramount responsibility is to select, mediate, and transmit authoritative knowledge whose immediate use may not be transparent to students. It is believed that to internalise such carefully selected knowledge is essential for further understanding, reflection, and discrimination to occur. The educational philosophy embodied in such an approach can be summarised as 'learn to use' rather than 'learn by using'. However, due to the

greater openness to the outside world, the Chinese people have been constantly exposed to foreign sociocultural influences via movies, music, literature, textbooks, the Internet, and the contact with foreign tourists and expatriates living in China (British Council, 1995). To some extent, the traditional Chinese culture of learning is weakened in its influence, especially in the developed areas. Consequently, the people there have developed greater amenability to such influences. They mediate themselves by adapting the advanced teaching and learning theories and approaches in foreign languages.

The perceived value and social uses of English are also important in promoting English learning in China. Since the 1980s, the differing speed in economic reform and development has resulted in varying demands for English proficiency in different regions. The rapid economic growth in the coastal and urban regions, for example, has brought with it the influx of foreign companies, technological transfers, joint business ventures, English speaking expatriates, overseas tourists, and cultural and commercial imports (Maley, 1995). All these changes have contributed to an escalating demand for proficiency in English from a whole range of professions, businesses, workplaces and enterprises. As a result, there has been a growing awareness of the importance and utility of English among people in these economically developed places. English has acquired high social and economic value, and ELT has attracted not only attention from individuals but also considerable investment from the local governments and various sectors of the economy. The increasing opportunity to use English for social and vocational purposes has resulted in a growing recognition of the importance of intercultural communicative competence in the language. Accordingly, intercultural communicative language learning activities and pedagogical efforts directed at enhancing language skills have begun to feature in classroom

teaching and learning.

2.9.5 Curricular and pedagogical practice

In the mid-1980s, the Ministry of Education allowed some economically developed coastal provinces and large cities to develop their own curriculums and textbooks. One important outcome of this policy has been the introduction of English into the primary curriculums and the increased prominence given to English in junior and senior secondary curriculums in these coastal and urban areas. Since the early 1990s, many primary schools in urban centers have been offering English classes, first at Primary Five, then at Primary Three, and now at Primary One (Hu, 2002a). English is taught even at many kindergartens (Cotazzi & Jin, 1996a). The popularisation of primary ELT in the coastal and urban areas provides students with a reasonably good foundation to build on when they move on to study English at both the secondary level and the tertiary level. Most primary schools in inland rural areas started to teach English in 2001 due to a recent directive issued by the Ministry of Education (2000a) that required all primary schools nationwide to start English teaching at Primary Three.

A growing number of primary and secondary schools in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Tianjin have begun to experiment with content-based English instruction (CBEI). CBEI integrates English teaching with the study of other school subjects. For example, in a number of well-resourced schools in Shanghai, English is used to teach mathematics, science, biology, computer science and few other subjects. For subjects that are not taught in English (e.g. physics, chemistry, history and politics), technical terms, formulas and definitions are presented

in both Chinese and English. Although there are a number of problems with the implementation of CBEI in China (Hu, 2002a), such instruction has clear advantages over other forms of language instruction (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). One advantage is the maximisation of students' exposure to the target language. A related advantage is students' exposure to contextualised language use, that is, relevant, meaningful, and authentic language use. A third advantage is the repeated use of the target language for problem-solving and communicative purposes, which is necessary for developing a high level of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Still another advantage is students' strong motivation to learn the target language well in order to succeed in subject learning. Because of these advantages, CBEI is an effective way to develop high proficiency in the language. This has been borne out by the results of experimental CBEI programmes in Shanghai (Hu, 2002a).

The central government has recently shifted its attention to the underdeveloped regions and drawn up a blueprint for transforming these regions (Huang, 2000). Important measures taken to realize the blueprint include reallocating national resources to improve the infrastructure of the underdeveloped regions and staging favorable policies to attract foreign investment to these regions. As the quality of education in general and ELT in particular is regarded as having a key role to play in the process of development, the central government has greatly increased its investment in the educational sector of the underdeveloped regions. It is predicted that great changes will be taken place in ELT in these regions.

China's joining the World Trade Organization and the awarding of the 2008 Olympic Games to Beijing have had great influence on China. The Degree Committee of the State Council has

approved 45 Sino-foreign joint programs, which can grant degrees from foreign universities in China. All programs are taught bilingually (Chinese and English). In September 2001, all colleges and universities under the control of the Ministry of Education were instructed to use English as the main teaching language in the following courses: information technology, biotechnology, new-material technology, finance, foreign trade, economics, and law. Other courses would be added as resources become available. Criteria for selecting courses are that they facilitate entry to the WTO, and that they are not “politically sensitive.”

The latest syllabi across the board are based on a functional/notional view of English and refer frequently to concepts such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and learner-centeredness. The latest university syllabi also refer to interdisciplinary support between English and other areas, such as law and commerce. At the end of the year 2003, fundamental reform and changes were made on the national English curriculum for the non-English majors. The focus of the curriculum has been shifted from reading on to listening and speaking, which reflects China’s urgent need of professionals with communicative competence in English to meet its political, economic and social needs in the globalised world.

2.9.6 Mediation and policy changes in college bilingual teaching

Due to China’s increasing integration into the world, bilingual education has become a necessity for China’s education to face the world, the future and the modernizations. E-C bilingual teaching (using both English and Chinese as medium of instruction) has become a strategic means for China to develop human resources and to integrate into the global economy.

Accordingly, great importance has been attached to it. Within the last few years it has acquired quite a high profile in China owing to the fast development of its economy, its successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics Games and its access to the WTO.

The concept of bilingualism in China has long been associated with the minority groups.

Bilingual education for linguistic minorities has dominated the literature in the past decades, the purpose of which is either to keep the minority language from extinction, or to train minority language speakers to master the majority language, namely Mandarin, to communicate with the outside world, to assimilate them into the mainstream society and to socialize them for full participation into it. To the Han majority that comprises about 92% of the total population, it remained largely a remote notion until nearing the turn of the century. In the last few years, however, bilingualism has been rapidly embraced by the Han majority as a useful tool for improving foreign language education, particularly English language teaching, and for developing human resources using such notions as *Guojixing Rencai* (*international personnel*) or *Zhuanye Waiyu Fuhexing Rencai* (*all-rounded talents who possess both specialized knowledge and strong competence in foreign languages*). In the whole country, particularly in major cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and special economic zones like Shenzhen, a school system is being rapidly developed in which English as well as standard Chinese are used as the medium of instructions. From nurseries to tertiary institutions, bilingual schooling has become part of the everyday vocabulary not only of educationists but also ordinary people. Catalytic factors, such as China's firm belief in its "open-door" policy, its fast economic development, its successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics Games and its access to the WTO, have played key roles in promoting English and Chinese bilingual schooling which looks almost certain to reshape

China's education system as a whole.

To adopt to the rapid change of the society, China's Ministry of Education advanced 12 items in 2001 for enhancing its college education, among which every college and university is required to open 5%-10% bilingual teaching courses of its curriculum (key universities are required to open as many as 30%) within 3-5 years and introduce original editions of teaching materials and improve teachers' professional level as well (China's Ministry of Education, 2000c). This is the first formal official document of policy concerning content subject bilingual teaching of colleges and universities. Thereby, bilingual teaching becomes one of the important criteria to evaluate the teaching level of colleges and universities.

Since then, E-C bilingual teaching has been initiated and implemented in most colleges and universities in China. Key universities, such as Beijing University, Tsinghua University, etc. took the lead in bilingual teaching. According to Huang and Wang (2003), in 2001, 54 out of 1440 courses of Tsinghua University used English as medium of instruction, covering courses for the first-year undergraduate students to post-graduate students. And Tsinghua has advanced a plan to adopt the original editions of teaching materials for as many as 500 core courses within three years. As to Beijing University, over 20% of its content subjects have adopted the original editions of teaching materials. In Central China Science and Technology University, bilingual teaching has been implemented for nearly half of its courses. In 2001 alone, Shanghai Communication University selected from its colleges and departments 25 bilingual teachers and sent them abroad for training on bilingual teaching. Due to regional differences in teaching specialized knowledge and competence in English, there exist roughly four models of E-C

bilingual teaching in China (see Table 2.2 for details).

Table 2.2 Models of bilingual teaching adopted at China’s tertiary institutions

Model	Instruction Medium	Edition of teaching materials	Teaching Method	Ways of Evaluation
1	Basically in Chinese	Chinese edition or English edition with Chinese translation	Some English phrases/ expressions on board, or a summary of the text in English, or some English books/articles assigned for complementary reading after class	Exam in Chinese, or assignment in Chinese with an English abstract
2	10%-20% in English	English edition with Chinese translation Or self-compiled materials in English	Some key points written in English on board, or teaching software or PowerPoint in English, but explanation mostly in Chinese	Exam in English with some difficult items or points in Chinese, and students could deal with it either in Chinese or English, or assignment in Chinese with an English abstract
3	20%-40% in English	English edition published either at home or abroad, or self-compiled materials in English	Simple items/points explained in English, key points written in English on board, with English software or PowerPoint, but difficult items/points taught in Chinese	Exam in English, and students could deal with it either in Chinese or in English
4	40%-70% in English	Original edition published abroad	Much written on board in English, and lesson taught mostly in English, but with difficult items/ points explained in Chinese	Exam in English, and students deal with it in English, or assignment in English

2.10 Challenges

The impact of globalisation on China's foreign language education has been tremendous. There is evidence that the economic value of English in China has received great attention. However, the ideal and satisfactory bilingual phenomenon as Chinese leaders expect that "English may become the world *lingua franca*, a language that everyone everywhere whoever has any sort of white collar prospect has adequate amount of" has not come to China yet. It is still not the case as Edwards (1994: 59) says that 'with the right social conditions, then bilingualism becomes just as natural as monolinguals and is a capacity available to any one of normal talents.'" China still urgently lacks EFL speakers who could conduct appropriate international communication in various contexts for its economic development. There is a great gap between China's urgent demand and the sufficient supply of competent bilingual speakers with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence of English. Then why cannot China train a sufficient supply of qualified bilingual speakers and *Guojixing Rencai* to meet its needs? The reasons could be various and far from simple. Some of them may result from China's social, cultural, economic and political system as we have described above. Others may come from China's EFL education itself. Some of the problems that exist in China's EFL education are listed below, which deserve our research and attention. These problems are partly based on my own observations and reflections as a university teacher in China since there is little academic discussion or research on these matters at present.

2.10.1 Lack of planning

There is a great conflict of between China's rapid economic development and the lack of the overall, consistent and long-term planning for the English language teaching profession. China has a specific plan for its economic development, for example, the tenth five-year plan for the development of its national economy (Huang, 2000), but there is no such specific long-term or even short-term plan for the development of the EFL education in its national curriculum or within the plan for the development of China's national economy.

2.10.2 Challenges in E-C bilingual teaching

English is still being taught as a subject at all levels. How to integrate students' English language learning with their academic study and future vocational and professional needs, i.e., the integration of content subjects into English language education had not much importance attached to it in the various levels of the national English syllabuses (see Shanghai Foreign Languages Teaching Press, 1986 and Higher Education Press, 1989, 1995 for various syllabuses) Although in the past three years, E-C bilingual teaching at tertiary institutions has been developing at a pace faster than ever expected, there is still a long way to go before E-C bilingual teaching could satisfy the needs of China's modernizations and its social and economic development. E-C bilingual teaching at some colleges and universities is still at the preparatory stage while at some others it is not going smoothly. According to Huang and Wang's (2004) statistics from a questionnaire conducted between September and October of 2002 on Liaoning's (a province in northeastern China) college E-C bilingual teaching, 42 out of its 71 colleges and universities

hadn't implemented bilingual teaching for lack of teachers and students' motivation, and other necessary teaching conditions. At some colleges and universities in China, E-C bilingual teaching has been discontinued temporarily due to the large number of dropouts or lack of teachers. Take Tsinghua as an example. In 2001, more than 130 students attended at first the E-C bilingual teaching of physics, a compulsory course for four departments. However, the number of attendants dropped to 102 two weeks later. In Xi'an Communication University, E-C bilingual teaching was implemented for mathematics and approximately 200 students selected the course at the beginning, but only 54 students kept up to the end (Huang and Wang, 2004). The same situation is also found at Guangxi University where the study is conducted. However, as this large-scale E-C bilingual schooling is quite a new phenomenon, it is natural that China's tertiary institutions, especially those in central and western China, have encountered many problems in implementing E-C bilingual teaching. Attention and research are badly needed in dealing with these problems emerged in English language education.

2.10.3 Chinese-English interface

Another challenge is the "Chinese-English interface" throughout China and the world. As McArthur has pointed out, in terms of numbers of speakers and a range of other factors, English and Chinese represent two of the most important language traditions and cultures in the world today (McArthur, 2000). A recent study by Dalby (2001) places Chinese as the most widely-spoken language in the world, with 1,155 million speakers worldwide, 800 million speaking Mandarin as a first language, and 200 million speaking the language as a second language. In addition, it is estimated that there are 85 million speakers of Wu dialects

(Shanghainese, etc.) and 70 million speakers of Yue dialects (Cantonese, etc.). English is in second place with a total of 1 billion speakers. Of these, 400 million are first-language speakers, and 600 million are second-language speakers. Much more could be said, and doubtless will be said and written, about the linguistic and cultural contacts between these two traditions, and the growing “interface” between them (McArthur, 2000).

2.10.4 Examination-oriented education

The influence of language tests on language teaching is overwhelming in China. Language teaching is characterized as “test-centered, teacher-centered, and textbook-centered” (Cotazzi and Jin, 1996b). The Confucian ideology such as the textbook and teacher-centered, examination dominated pedagogy still inherently exists in the teachers’ thinking process and teaching practice. Assessment appears to be the driving force behind curricular innovations. In many settings, demands for accountability along with a positivistic stance that one cannot teach which cannot be described and measured by a common yardstick continue to influence program content and goals. Irrespective of their own needs or interests, learners prepare for the tests they will be required to pass. High stakes language tests often determine future access to education and opportunity.

Moreover, traditional Chinese EFL teaching pays too much attention to accuracy. Students are required to be correct in everything they listen to, speak, read or write. A student who makes few grammar mistakes in an English examination is considered a very good English learner, even though he or she is very poor in communication. Intercultural communicative and interactive language practice is still rare in the foreign language-teaching classroom.

2.10.5 Inferior situation of ethnic groups in education

Chinese society also has other marginalized groups, such as minorities. With the exception of Korean-Chinese, minorities usually have higher rates of illiteracy than the Han. The illiteracy rate among minority groups is two to four times higher than that of the Han residing in the same region. When taking gender and minority status into consideration simultaneously, statistics (Huang and Wang, 2004; Wu, 1994) show that Han males were twice as likely to finish junior high and high school as were minority females, and three times as likely to have college education as were minority females. In Tibet and other southwestern provinces such as Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan, illiteracy rates among women of the ethnic minority groups are extremely high: eight out of 10 such women were illiterate in 1990. The low illiteracy rate has brought harm to the development of the regional economy, making these southwestern provinces or regions economically poorer.

The above figures show a serious situation for ethnic groups in education. Because of their low literacy both in basic education and in foreign language education, these groups in general are much less competent in both the domestic and foreign markets, which is a disadvantage for them to participate in global exchanges.

2.10.6 Lack of investment in education

By any standing, expenditure on education in China has been far too low for too long. According

to Huang and Wang (2004), Wu (1994), for many years only about 2.5% of China's GDP has been dedicated to education—one of the lowest rates of educational expenditure in the world. At 2.5% of GNP in 1990, China ranked 114th in the world, far lower even than most other developing countries. Figures from these researchers show that annual Chinese educational expenditures were lower than 2.4% of GDP in the 1990s: 2.4% in 1993, 2.0% in 1994, 2.1% in 1995, and 2.4% in 1996, compared with the world average of 5.2% and 4.5% for Asian countries. As a result, most educational institutions do not have enough financial resources to provide the audio-visual equipment, photocopiers or sources (such as a wide range of authentic print materials) that are required to support the dynamic teaching necessitated by EFL communicative methods. And with insufficient amount of money invested into the EFL education, insufficient amount of systematic academic research has been conducted in the field as to how to push forward the theoretical level of China's foreign language teaching, raise its quality and guarantee its effectiveness.

To make matters even worse, there was a widespread disparity among regions and provinces in terms of educational expenditure (Huang and Wang, 2004). Current government policies have ignored issues of class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as changing times in Chinese society. Educators and others concerned about education (Huang and Wang, 2004; Wu, 1994; Yang, 2001; Hu, 2002b) found many apparent contradictions in current educational policies, such as fiscal decentralization versus accountability, local control versus legitimation, priority versus equality, quality versus quantity, and privatization versus government control of schools.

2.11 A summary so far

So far, the theoretical frame of the study has been presented based on the various specific contextual factors concerned with the definition of globalization, the relationship between globalisation and economic globalisation, the impact of globalisation on China, the necessity of a shared medium of communication, mainly English, for the integration into the global community, the worldwide spread of English and the economic value of English, the historical development of China's international/intercultural exchanges with their effects on the foreign language education, the present development and situation of China's English language education, China's mediation in policy in its English language education and the relevant measures that have been taken, and some problems that exist in China's present English language education. In the next section, the specific context of Guangxi will be highlighted for this study.

2.12 The context of Guangxi

2.12.1 The background of Guangxi

Guangxi is chosen for this study for the following reasons. First, Guangxi is the biggest Zhuang Autonomous Region in P.R. China, containing the largest population density of Zhuang language speaking people from the Zhuang nationality, accounting for over 38% of its population, the total population of the region being 46.55 millions (Party Committee of Guangxi, 2005). And Guangxi is one of the five autonomous regions empowered by the central government with some sort of special right or power to make or adjust their policies appropriate for their local social, economic

development. Besides, Guangxi, though having certain favorable rights or power, is among one of the least developed provinces or regions in China due to some historical reasons. Finally, Guangxi, like Guangdong, one of the most developed provinces in China, is also bordering the sea, and close to Hong Kong. However, Guangxi is far more slowly integrating itself into the global world, and its economic development is far more backward compared with that of Guangdong. The researcher intends to investigate whether the poor economy of Guangxi has anything to do with its English language education, since English is assumed as playing a crucial role in its opening to the outside world, in raising people's ability for development, in developing *Guojixing Rencai*, and in attracting foreign capital, thereby contributing to the improvement of the regional human capital and economy. Therefore, it is of great relevance and significance to do empirical studies on the opinions of policy-makers, employers, and university teachers and students on the role of English language education in improving the regional economy of Guangxi.

2.12.2 Globalisation and mediation in Guangxi's English language education

Guangxi has a borderline of 1020 kilometers with Vietnam (Party Committee of Guangxi, 2005). Before the 1980s, frequent border conflicts occurred and a war broke out between China and Vietnam in the late 1980s. Due to such historical reasons as this, Guangxi's development in society, economy, culture and education, etc. had been greatly affected. It has taken Guangxi quite a long time to recover from the border conflicts and the war with Vietnam, though it is also a coastal region close to Hong Kong, with a coastline of 1595 kilometers. Actually it now is among one of the last five least economically developed provinces or autonomous regions among

China's thirty-one provinces, autonomous regions and administrative cities. Guangxi has followed roughly the same centralized policies in social, cultural, economic, political and educational development as other provinces, autonomous regions and cities in the countries. However, when the developed provinces and cities implemented more open policies to the outside world and carried out their own reforms in various fields to integrate themselves into the global economy according to their relevant situations, the issues of globalisation and global economy seem to be slowly emerging in Guangxi. Education, especially English education, is backward. High quality professional talents competent in specialised knowledge and proficient in foreign languages are in great shortage and can hardly meet the requirements of the region's socioeconomic development according to reports issued by the local government (The People's Government of Guangxi, 2005), which has hindered Guangxi's participation in and integration into the global economy. However, research from the angle of English language education in promoting the region's economic development is hardly available in academic literature.

People in Guangxi now seem to be realizing the importance of integrating into the global economy for development, and both the government and individuals are trying to mediate themselves in this globalised world. Certain policies of promoting the English language education have been implemented. For example, all primary schools, either in the cities or in the rural areas, are required to teach English from primary one or at least from primary three. Besides, students at colleges and universities are required to pass the national college English Test of Band 4 after two years' study of English, and bilingual teaching for 5-10% content subjects instructed in both English and Chinese are required to be implemented (Guangxi Education Commission, 2000). These measures aim to enhance students' overall quality of their professional knowledge

and English competence. Meanwhile, people's awareness of improving their own and their children's English to meet the growing needs for participation in the globalised economy has been raised gradually. It is now common to see parents sending their children to various after-school or private-school English courses. English corners have been set up on the campus of universities and colleges, at the centers of the cities, or even in some small towns and counties. English has come to be considered, as in other places, to be the key to success both in both academic study and careers. According to some statistics (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Hu, 2002b), the biggest expenditure of a family in China as well as in Guangxi is on English education for the family members, especially children.

As mentioned above, almost nothing is known about the general perceptions and attitudes of the people in Guangxi on economic globalisation and the role of English in promoting the region's economic development and on how the government and the people mediate themselves. And little research has been done to investigate whether its backward economic development has anything to do with its backward education, especially its English language education. Therefore, research on the problems mentioned will be of great social significance and economic value, which is closely linked with the prosperity of the region's economy and with the individual success both in academic and career promotion. Empirical evidence needs to be provided on how the regional people mediate themselves in the global world, and how the region's economic development can be promoted with the help of the international language—English.

Chapter Three Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

So far, I have dwelt on the conceptual analysis of the globalisation and the economic value of globalised English, as well as the impacts of the global economy and English on China's economic and EFL education, followed with a discussion of the mediation in China's foreign language education, particularly its English language education as a whole and Guangxi as a specific context for the study. In addition, I want to collect the views of people who play a crucial role or have great impact on the English language education in Guangxi to see if they can throw more light on the relationship between the English language education and the region's economic prosperity. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explain how I decided to collect the views and what data collection methods I decided on and why I chose the methods. To be more specific, in this chapter on the research methodology, the following questions will be answered:

1. Why was a qualitative method chosen to conduct the study in preference to a quantitative one?
2. Was the research interview the appropriate tool for the investigation?
3. What criteria should be considered in assessing the qualitative research?
4. What techniques or procedures were used to conduct the research?
5. What ethical issues should be considered in this research?

Each question will correspond to one section of discussion. Section 3.2 will introduce the main features of qualitative and quantitative methods and explain why the qualitative research method was chosen to conduct the empirical study of the thesis. Section 3.3 will point out the reasons why the research interview was adopted as the main tool of conducting the empirical investigation. Section 3.4 will probe the main issues that should be considered in conducting qualitative research. They include issues such as reliability, validity, triangulation and relevance. Section 3.5 will introduce the techniques that were used in the process of conducting the empirical study. They include the interview schedules, pilot study, research samples, strengths and weaknesses of the research. Section 3.6 will deal with the ethical issues that were considered in doing the present research. Finally, a summary of the main content of the chapter will be given at the end of the chapter.

3.2 Fieldwork Design – Quantitative or Qualitative Approaches?

Choosing a methodological approach or approaches, which will be appropriate for the task is the first problem the researcher faces. Before attempting to point out some differences between qualitative and quantitative research, it seems necessary and useful to clarify some terms that are commonly used in doing research and that are relevant to our discussion of the present section so that we could make some distinction between the terms like ‘paradigm’, ‘method’ and ‘methodology’. In educational research, generally speaking, a paradigm or a model refers to an overall framework for looking at reality, an explanation of social phenomena. A method is just a specific research technique or procedure. Methodology is an umbrella word describing the

different methods used in any research. It refers to knowledge about methods and a very general approach to studying research topics (see Cohen et al, 2000:22; Silverman, 2000:77 for further explanation).

Within social sciences, there are two seemingly competing research paradigms: the quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research is aimed at assessing the strength of relationships between variables and is based on the experimental method that aims to control and manipulate (see Campbell and Stanley, 1966; Hopkins et al, 1996). Qualitative research seeks understanding by observing phenomena in their natural settings rather than those set up specifically for the purpose of research and can provide insights not available through research such as an experiment or a test (Hammersley, 1998; Cohen et al, 2000). In recent years, increasing numbers of researchers have argued that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is simplistic and naive and that the two traditions are complementary in research and even indistinguishable in many respects (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989, Silverman, 2000). Nevertheless, the distinction continues to be observed and debated.

The quantitative scientific paradigm rests upon the creation of theoretical frameworks that can be tested by experimentation, replication and refinement. The qualitative paradigm seeks to understand and interpret the world in its actors' own terms and consequently as interpretative and subjective (see Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). Quantitative research is criticized for failing to capture the true nature of human social behavior, as Hammersley (1998:10) points out:

because it relies on the study of artificial settings; because it seeks to reduce meanings to what is 'observable' and because it reifies social phenomena by treating them as

more clearly defined and static than they are and as mechanical products of social and psychological factors.

As far as methodology is concerned, the qualitative method is employed in this study to probe the informants' perceptions and understanding of the English language education in promoting the regional economic prosperity. The decision to use the qualitative method for the research was governed by several factors of its appropriateness. As already stated, qualitative research focuses on discovering truth and understanding meanings and depth and patterns of relationships whereas a quantitative method emphasizes causes and relationships demonstrated statistically (Babbie, 1983:537). The choice of qualitative methods seemed appropriate to the conditions of the present research. In a criticism of the overuse of quantitative methods in education, Spindler (1982:3) states that:

... experimental and correlational approaches that isolate variables from context and overlook the all-important dimensions of meaning in human behaviour have been overworked.

Therefore, it seemed that for a study which focused on context and seeking significant meaning and contribution, the qualitative paradigm was more suitable. One of the rationales for qualitative research has been that it can capture the nature of human social life more accurately than quantitative methods (Cohen et al, 2000; Silverman, 2000). Ethnographic/qualitative writing takes into account the 'native or insider point of view' by including quotations from informants, but maintains the primacy of the researcher's interpretation. The central goal of qualitative research is often conceptualized as providing analytic, theoretical or in-depth description.

As the aim of the thesis is to evaluate and analyze how the respondents perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, China, it represents human reality and phenomena that only in-depth, intensive and semi-structured interview studies in the fieldwork could provide new insights for understanding, perceiving and reflecting on the present conditions of College English language education in Guangxi. Besides, as the informants' perceptions on the relationship between English language education and the region's economic prosperity are to be explored and evaluated, it has to begin with qualitative research. At a later stage, we will use some statistic evidence from official documents. Actually the two paradigms could be usefully integrated to have complementary strengths and weaknesses. As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) say, alternative and necessary use of both quantitative and qualitative research in fieldwork is an ideal cyclic process.

3.3 The research interview

The research interview is used as the main tool of empirical study in the thesis. It is not just that the research interview is regarded as the gold standard of qualitative research and has become one of the most widely used procedures in social research as a method of serious data collection (Silverman, 2000:292). The central value of the interview as a research procedure is that the interview allows both parties to 'explore the meaning of the questions and answers involved' (Brenner et al, 1985:3).

As Cohen et al (2000:267) remark, an interview is an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge

production and emphasises the social situatedness of research data. Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. The research interview involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals and has been defined as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information and focused by him/her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation’ (Cannell and Kahn, 1968:527).

The discussion of the features of the research interview mentioned above shows that the research interview may serve the purpose of this study as an appropriate tool. It can be used as the principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives already stated in 4.2. The research interview in the present investigation is just as Tuckman (1972) describes, ‘by providing access to what is inside a person’s head, it makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge and information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)’ (Cohen et al, 2000:268). Thus, the value of the interview lies in its ability to obtain information about people’s knowledge, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and expectations. It allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection. Oppenheim (1992:82) suggests that interviews enable more to be said about the research than is usually mentioned in a covering letter to a questionnaire, and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended questions. Furthermore, it enables the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondent. This rapport creates a more relaxed atmosphere in which more complex and probing questions may be asked than other types of data

collection (Robson, 1993:229; Hopkins, 1993:125).

Despite its advantages, the research interview has its disadvantages in that there are ample opportunities for bias to occur (Brenner et al, 1985:4) and it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Cohen et al, 2000:269). In the next section, there will be some discussions about how to minimize the disadvantages of the research interview by various means.

There are four main kinds of interviews that may be used specifically as research tools: a) the structured interview (see Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:133); b) the unstructured interview (see Robson, 1992: 229); c) the non-directive interview (see Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:167); and d) the focused interview (Cohen et al, 2000:272). The structured interview is one in which the content and procedures are organized in advance. The unstructured interview displays greater flexibility and freedom in an open situation without formulating questions in advance. The focused interview is particularly appropriate in educational settings with which both the interviewer and respondent are familiar. As the various types of interviews suggest a fitness for purpose and could be set along a series of continua, based on the openness of their purpose, their degree of structure, the extent to which they are exploratory or hypothesis testing, whether they seek description or interpretation, whether they are largely cognitively focused or emotion-focused, the semi-structured focused interview seems to be the most appropriate to explore in depth the respondents' perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economy of Guangxi. This is particularly so as I am also familiar with both contexts and with the respondents comprising the research sample.

3.4 Criteria of assessing qualitative research

3.4.1 Reliability and validity

In conducting qualitative research, there are various factors that need to be taken into account. The first and foremost ones should be reliability and validity. Traditionally reliability and validity are the two factors that should be considered in conducting quantitative research (see Campbell and Stanley, 1966; Cook and Campbell, 1979; Kerlinger, 1986). They are two important criteria for assuring the quality of data collection procedures. First, validity was developed in the context of experimental and quasi-experimental research where the central concern is with hypothesis-testing and how research can be designed so as to rule out various types of threat to validity. Some qualitative researchers (for example, Cohen et al, 2000; Silverman, 2000) believe that the standards which are normally applied to quantitative research are also appropriate for qualitative research.

In quantitative research, traditionally, validity refers to the accuracy of measurement. It was essentially a demonstration that a particular instrument or data collection procedure measures what it purports to measure (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:208). More recently, validity has taken many forms: for example, in qualitative research validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Cohen et al, 2000:105). Actually, in qualitative research, the issue of validity is usually posed in terms of that constitutes a credible claim to truth, as Hammersley (1998:62) claims:

By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers ... The use of the term 'truth' implies the possession of knowledge that is absolutely certain (that is proven beyond all possible doubts).

Broadly speaking, in quantitative research, internal validity refers to whether within a particular experiment the treatment administered actually caused the predicted outcome. It can be used in qualitative research as well to seek to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data (Hammersley, 1998:58). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:100), internal validity in qualitative research refers to the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomena in question. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched. External validity refers to whether this relationship can be generalized to other cases. It refers to the degree to which the results can be applied to the wider population or situations (Hammersley, 1998:58; Seligner and Shohamy, 1989:106) Thus, it is important in qualitative research to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalisable to another situation.

As we prepare our qualitative study, we should not be overly defensive. Validating the results is only one of the important components of analyzing qualitative data. This suggests that the validity of much qualitative research should be considered together with the methods of reliability, triangulation and relevance.

In qualitative research, reliability refers to the consistency of measurement (Kerlinger, 1986;

Fitz-Gibbon and Morris, 1987). The criteria of reliability provide information on whether the data collection procedure is consistent and accurate. The researcher will employ the procedure of internal consistency reliability to provide the information whether all the items measure the same thing (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:187). As part of the process, the researcher applies measures of reliability in order to verify and confirm that the scheme had been applied accurately to the data without being influenced by possible biases of her own. Thus, reliability is essentially a synonym for consistency and reliability over time, over instruments and over respondents. It is concerned with preciseness and accuracy. In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, i.e., a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:48). It refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992: 67).

3.4.2 Triangulation

To assure the quality and the value of qualitative research, scholars conducting qualitative research have raised triangulation as one of the criteria of qualitative assessment. Triangulation is an important partner which bridges concurrent validity and reliability. Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint (Cohen et al, 2000:112). Seliger and Shohamy (1989:105) say that conformability is concerned with the ability of the researcher to confirm findings by demonstrating the same findings through different sources and this

process is referred to as triangulation. Silverman (2000:177) defines triangulation as the attempt to get a 'true' fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings. Thus, the use of a variety of methods or techniques to collect data allows the researcher to validate findings through triangulation. In triangulation, the same pattern or example of behavior is sought in different sources. Use of the process increases the reliability of the conclusions reached. By having a cumulative view of data drawn from different contexts, we may be able to triangulate the 'true' state of affairs by examining when the different data intersect.

Following the six categories of triangulation in Denzin's (1970) typology, Cohen et al (2000: 115) raised four categories frequently used in education: time; space; investigator and methodological triangulation. The respondents of the present interview study come from different colleges/universities, companies or enterprises, and educational administrative departments of Guangxi. Their reflection, comparison and perception of their experience and English language education should provide a kind of time and space triangulation. In conducting the present interview study, I invited two of my MA students to conduct some interviews together with me and asked them for their opinions and discussed with them the interview processes. I also invited two of my colleagues to discuss the findings of the interview study, the teaching and research implications from the study and my suggestions for improving the English language education. This process provides a degree of investigator triangulation. The present research uses the semi-structured focused interviews and also uses some data and evidence from studies of other researchers and one of my earlier quantitative studies as well as statistics from government documents as a kind of complement to assure some kind of methodological triangulation.

Of the various categories of triangulation, the methodological triangulation is the one used most frequently and the one that possibly has the most to offer. However, in terms of Denzin's (1970) definitions of methodological triangulation, I don't think I have fully met the criteria. Therefore I could only try to compensate this criterion by meeting other criteria.

Triangular techniques are suitable when a more holistic view of educational outcomes is sought. Triangulation has special relevance where a complex phenomenon requires elucidation. Silverman (2000:99) criticizes the overemphasis on triangulation by saying that:

Triangular techniques are often adopted in the mistaken hope that they will reveal the whole picture. But the whole picture is an illusion which speedily leads to scrappy research based on under-analyzed data and an imprecise or theoretically indigestible research problem. We cannot simply aggregate data in order to arrive at an overall truth ... it is usually far better to celebrate the partiality of your data and delight in the particular phenomena that it allows you to inspect.

Though ultimately the objectivity, which means the extent to which findings are free from bias, should be the common aim of all social sciences (Kirk and Miller, 1986:10), even triangulation does not assure consistency or replication. It does not necessarily increase validity, reduce bias or bring objectivity (see Fielding and Fielding, 1986). Therefore, no two theories will ever yield a sufficiently complete explanation of the phenomena being researched. Given the contested nature of social sciences, any account of qualitative research cannot claim to describe everything. Instead, it has to be prescriptive. Silverman (2000:283) points out that biases are properly relevant to research if they can help us to establish a clear set of criteria through which to evaluate our own and other's work. According to Hammersley (1998: 59), commitment to

naturalism is often taken to imply that the sole assessment criteria should be whether the account accurately captures the phenomena being described.

3.4.3 Relevance

Relevance should be another criterion of assessing the quality and value of qualitative research.

Hammersley (1998:70) points out that:

To be of value research findings must not only be valid but also relevant to issues of actual or potential public concern, that is, to shared value ... It was not sufficient for the findings of an ethnographic study to be true for them to have value. Equally important is that they make a contribution to knowledge that is relevant to some public concern.

According to Hammersley (1998:111), there are two aspects of relevance:

1. The importance of the topic. The research topic must relate (however remotely) to an issue of public importance. The justification for social research lies in solving either practical or conceptual problems.

2. The contribution of the conclusions to existing knowledge. The research findings must add something to our knowledge of the issue to which they relate. Research that merely confirms what is already beyond reasonable doubt does not make much contribution.

Importance and contribution are necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for relevance.

Hammersley (1998:112) claims that the idea of 'contribution' does not deny the value of all studies that confirm previous findings. Ethnographic studies fill in a gap in the literature, in the

sense of dealing with a phenomenon about which there has been little previous research. Studies may be related to one another in that they contribute to the development and testing of the same theory. It is in terms of various sorts of relationship between the findings of a study and existing knowledge that we need to assess the contribution made by those findings. The present study aims to explore and evaluate people's perceptions on the English language education in improving the regional economic development, an issue that is of great importance to the public and contributes much to existing knowledge of the problem of public concern.

3.4.4 A summary

This section has dealt with four criteria of assessing and assuring the quality of qualitative research: the true and accurate description of the natural phenomena being studied, the consistency of the findings, the conformability of the study through various sources and the relevance of the study to public concern. In the next section of discussing the data collecting procedures, some explanations will be given as to how I made use of some of these criteria to assure the quality of the study.

3.5 Data collection procedures

In qualitative research, a section dealing with data collecting procedures is a necessary component of the methodological chapter. Silverman (2000:175) points out:

Unless you can show your audience the procedures you used to ensure that your methods were reliable and your conclusions valid, there is little point in aiming to conclude a research dissertation.

Kirk and Miller (1986:72) also claim: “For reliability to be calculated it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his/her procedure”. It is not only for the purpose of reliability in qualitative research as Kirk and Miller pointed out. It is only natural that our readers should expect us to tell them how we collected our data, what data we ended up with and how we analyzed them. The data collecting procedures of this study involves the following strategies: a) interview schedules; b) pilot phase; c) research sample; and d) weakness of the procedures.

Procedures for collecting and analyzing the data were designed with the following two broad inter-related goals in mind: (1) The research was to be exploratory. By this I mean that my aim was to gain insight into an area which had not been widely researched; in other words, to test the waters, to get a superficial but wide view of the situation, a research aim often associated with survey research methods. (2) The goal, therefore, was to determine general trends and patterns in the perceptions of the participants, and to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The type of questions asked are of the what, the how kind and the why kind. The most appropriate research method, therefore, was deemed to be the semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1 Interview schedules

After determining the initial main research design of the whole thesis and the main research tool, I began to formulate some interview questions relevant to the research objectives. In designing

the interview questions and their categories I considered the following factors:

1. The interview schedules and questions for the interview phase of the study is greatly influenced by the experience of my prior observation as an EFL university teacher.
2. The interview schedules and questions were designed to meet the research objectives as well as the requirements of the interview situations, i.e., the interview questions should not only be relevant to the research questions, they should also enable the gathering of the perceptions of information, use and communication held by the respondents (see Wilson, 1985:76). In a word, the elements to be sorted into the interviews should depend on the research questions.

Categorisation plays an important role in designing the interview schedules and questions (see Mostyn, 1985:137). As the study aims to explore and analyze how people, particularly policy makers, employers, university teachers and students, perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, China, the interview schedules and the categorisation of the interview questions should meet the objectives and ask the informants their perceptions and opinions of the English language education in improving the regional economic development. This involves translating the research objectives into categories and assigning relevant items into questions based on the objectives, as the categories and questions should adequately reflect what the researcher is trying to find out (see Cohen et al, 2000:274).

The design of the interview schedules and questions is one of the most important elements in

research through interviewing. The success or failure of the interview as a research method depends heavily on the thorough preparation of schedule and question and an understanding of the subject topic (see Hook, 1981). Questions should elicit the essential relevant information and direct the focus to topics of interest.

There are various kinds of questions which may be used in interviewing. The two most basic are open-ended and closed questions. The most commonly used type in interviewing is the open-ended questions, inviting the informants to participate in the conversation and to gather substantial data. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:88) point out that it is essential to ask open-ended questions while the closed questions may be engaged as a valuable supplement. What they said is adopted in the procedures of the interview schedules of this study.

Open-ended questions have a number of advantages. According to Cohen et al (2000:275), they are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth if he/she chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge; they encourage cooperation and help establish rapport; and they allow the interview to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. Open-ended questions can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest unthought-of relationships or hypotheses.

Questions may take a direct or indirect form and may invite factual answers and opinions. Tuckman (1972) suggests that by making the purpose of questions less obvious, the indirect approach is more likely to produce frank and open responses and opinions. Brandt (1972: 171-2)

lists a variety of question types which are commonly used in interviews. The varieties of questions, which are useful to this study, are listed below, illustrated with examples from the questions of the present study (see Appendix II).

1. Leading questions, used at the beginning of the topic, but the interviewer should try to ask such questions in a general and non-direct way so as to exert pressure on the respondents (see Brenner et al, 1985: 152). Example: What problems do you think exist in the present English language education at tertiary institutions of Guangxi?
2. Comparative questions, where choice or preference is involved. Example: Whom do you prefer, a graduate with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English or a graduate with rich specialised knowledge but limited competence in English?
3. What-was(is)-there-about-it questions, used to obtain further information about the respondent's relations or happenings. Example: What do you think are the difficulties in implementing E-C bilingual teaching at tertiary institutions of Guangxi?
4. Would questions, used to assess the respondent's beliefs. Example: Would you prefer graduates with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English to graduates with rich specialised knowledge but limited competence in English?
5. Should questions, used to assess beliefs about the preferred actions. Example: What

measures should be taken to improve the current college English language education of Guangxi?

6. Why questions, widely used for a variety of questions, but especially for probing questions to tease out more detail. Example: Why do you think it necessary to develop college English language education?

As Cohen et al (2000:278) point out, it is important to bear in mind that more than one question format may be employed when building a schedule.

The framing of questions for a semi-structured focused interview will also need to consider prompts and probes (Morrison, 1993:66). Prompts enable the interviewer to clarify topics or questions while probes enable the interviewer to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add to, provide detail for, clarify or qualify their response, thereby addressing richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty that are some of the hallmarks of successful interviews. Most of the questions in this study have some prompts and probes to serve the purposes.

To sum up, the process of the design of the interview schedules and questions of the study has considered the following aspects: a) the categories/topics to be discussed; b) the specific possible questions to be put for each category/topic; c) the issues within each category to be discussed together with possible questions for each issue; d) a series of prompts and probes for each issue and question. What is also considered in designing the interview schedules is that in using the questions the interviewer must be able to ensure that the interviewees selected will be able to

furnish the researcher with relevant information required (see Cohen et al, 2000:278).

3.5.2 Pilot study

After finishing the initial design of the interview schedules and questions for the subsequent semi-structured focused interviews, I carried out a pilot study with an experienced English teacher. A pilot study is essential as the reliability of interviews can be enhanced by careful piloting of interview schedule (Cohen et al, 2000:121). Interview schedule and questions can be typically developed by means of pilot research (Brenner, 1985:153). Seligner and Shohamy (1989:184) advise that in the pilot phase the researcher could examine the different data collection procedures in order to avoid problems during the administration of the actual research. Results of the pilot phase can therefore be used to revise the data collection procedures and the research as a whole. To sum up, the semi-structured interview was piloted for several purposes (Openheim, 1992; Morrison, 1993; Cohen et al, 2000) to:

1. check the clarity of the interview questions;
2. eliminate ambiguities, uncertainty, and poor wording of the questions;
3. gain feedback on the types of questions to be asked in the interviews;
4. generate categories for responses in the rating-scale choices for the questionnaires;
5. generate items for further exploration;
6. gain feedback on timing, coverage and scope;
7. identify redundant and irrelevant questions;
8. identify how motivating, threatening, non-engaging, intrusive, offensive items were;

9. identify sensitive topics and problems in conducting interviews;
10. gain feedback on leading questions;
11. identify questions which were too easy, difficult, complex and remote from experience

According to the results of the pilot interview and the advice from my supervisors, and colleague and the two MA students, the following changes were made to the research schedules and the questions (see Appendix I and II):

1. In the pre-interview/pre-reply letter attached to the questions and triggers, the words “complete confidentiality and anonymity” were changed into boldface so that the respondents could give a more faithful and true answer when they are rest assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. Besides, in order to enable the respondents to better understand the questions of the interview and to avoid the possibility that some respondents might misunderstand some categories and questions, the contextual cues and some explanations of the trend of globalisation, the global economy and English as a *Lingua-franca* were added in brief. The purpose of the change lies in the hope that the respondents might provide high degree of reliable and valid responses if they could be guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and understand the content of the questions better before the interview really starts (see Cohen et al, 2000; Silverman, 2000; Hammersley, 1998; Brenner et al, 1985).
2. The wording and diction of some questions were rearranged to be clearer in meaning so as to avoid some possible ambiguity and misunderstanding. In addition, more triggers

(prompts and probes) were added to some questions (for example, question No.1). These changes are important, as the interview questions should be phrased in a simple, clear and unambiguous way. I follow Best and Kahn (1986:79) as they point out:

Basic to the validity is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. The meaning of all items must be clearly defined so that they have the same meaning to all respondents.

3. In order to make the categories more relevant to the research questions (see Brenner et al, 1985; Silverman, 2000), the original category “bilingual teaching” was cancelled and questions of the category closely linked with measures to be taken to resolve the problems in English language education were put into the categories “existing problems of Guangxi’s present college English language education” as well as “Solutions to the existing problems.” Some irrelevant and repetitious questions were also deleted from the categories.
4. Some more specific questions concerning the respondents’ perceptions on the role of English language education in enhancing the general quality of university graduates and in promoting the economic prosperity of Guangxi were added to interview schedules and the questions based on the theoretical and conceptual analysis of Chapter Two. The addition of some of these questions partly came from reflection after finishing writing the first two chapters and partly from Brenner et al’s (1985:153) claim that once the interview questions were cognitively located, then the investigator may study the scientific or other writings on the questions, thus leading to a more thorough sorting and

ordering of the interview questions. The sorting procedures were presented with respect to both their theoretical origins and their numerous applications to open-ended interview situations.

5. The order of some questions in each category was also rearranged so that the simple and general questions came before the more specific and complicated ones. Thus the open-ended questions to be put to the respondents were presented via the “funnel” approach (see Brenner et al, 1985; Silverman, 2000; Cohen et al, 2000). Tuckman (1972) comments that specific questions, like direct ones, may cause a respondent to become cautious or guarded and give less than honest answers. Non-specific questions may lead circuitously to the desired information but with less alarm by the respondents. The present questionnaire design followed his advice.

The pilot phase not only enabled me to have an opportunity to improve the design of the interview schedules and questions. More importantly, through the pilot phase, I gradually came to understand how I could conduct the research interviews in a better way. For example, I should try my best to avoid leading the interview and giving my own standpoint in the interview so that the respondent has greater freedom to explore his/her unique experiences and perceptions in greater depth (see Brenner et al, 1985; Cohen et al, 2000). In a word, I learnt a lot both about improving the design of the interview schedules and questions and about the interview skills from the pilot phase so that I could use what I have learnt to administer the following stage of interviews.

3.5.3 The research sample

The researcher collected and analyzed published policy statements, documents, and programs drawn from a number of sources, including recent books, articles, government reports, syllabuses, and curriculum documents. These documents provided a backdrop for more detailed data collection through semi-structured interviews with informants.

Table 3.1 Composition & characteristics of the interview sample

Number of Informants	Characteristics of the Interviewee Sample: age, gender, place of work, education, etc.
2	Policy-makers (PM) working in the provincial Education Bureau of Guangxi: PM1, 52, male, BS, vice director of the Education Bureau; PM2, 43, male, graduate diploma, department director of the Education Bureau
3	Policy-makers (PM) of teaching affairs in three different universities in Nanning: PM3, 50, female, BS, vice director; PM4, 46, male, Doctor, vice director; PM5, 35, male, Doctor, director
5	English teachers (ET) from five different universities/colleges in Nanning: ET1, 52, male, BA; ET2, 48, female, BA; ET3, 42, female, graduate diploma; ET4, 35, male, MA; ET5, 28, male, MA
5	Senior students (SS) from five different universities/colleges of Guangxi: SS1-SS5, aged between 22 and 24; SS1, SS2, SS3 male; SS4, SS5 female
2	Employers (EM) of two state-owned companies: EM1, 54, male, BA, general manager; EM2, 45, male, BE, graduate diploma, manager
2	Employers of two joint ventures: EM3, 48, male, MS, manager of the Chinese party; EM4, 42, male, MBA, manager of the Chinese party
1	Employer of a private company: EM5, 36, male, EMBA, manager
Total number of Informants: 20	

The main source of the data was semi-structured interviews with about 20 informants, five of

whom were policy-makers, five employers, and five university teachers and five students respectively. The informants represented different positions, interests, and perspectives in the context of Guangxi, including government policy-makers of education, employers, university teachers and students. The composition and characteristics of the informants are shown in Table 3.1.

Convenience sampling – or as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling (Cohen et al, 2000: 102), was employed in the empirical study. An authoritative leader in charge of various businesses and enterprises in the province helped me select 10 employers that were thought to be representative of the three types of businesses/enterprises: state-owned, joint-venture and private. Similarly, an administrator in charge of teaching affairs in each university selected for me a small number of teachers and students whom were thought could represent the wider population. Then I emailed or called all of the above selected employers, teachers and students to ask if they were willing to participate in the interviews. All replied and expressed their willingness to be interviewed. Finally, I chose those to whom I had easy access, some of them I knew very well. With regard to the policy-maker informants, they were the only people I could access because they were the most authoritative people in charge of policy-making on college English education in the provincial Education Bureau of Guangxi and the three universities. These policy-makers also expressed their willingness to be interviewed. I was aware that opportunity sampling of this kind may demonstrate skewness or bias (Cohen et al, 2000: 99). However, given that it is a small-scale ethnographic or qualitative style of research, and that it is constrained by cost – in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources (Cohen et al, 2000: 98), it is more likely that the opportunity sampling would be most appropriate. And as was mentioned earlier, the author herself has taken great pains to reduce bias or subjectivity that may arise.

3.5.4 Weakness of the procedures

The most important problem associated with the design of the study was the fact that the participants were engaged in a variety of questions which were new and demanding, the outcomes of which were highly significant for the future development of both the college English language education and the regional society and economy. If they had had more time to reflect, their answers might have been better developed or even different. However, given the fact that they were only available for a short period of time, it was not possible to revisit and expand on some subjects as much as I would have liked.

As already stated, small-scale research lends itself particularly well to qualitative methods. A single researcher, working with little funding, is necessarily limited to a particular city and a relatively small number of participants. A project on a larger scale, involving another city and a greater number of participants might have offered more significant findings. However, if one person designs and implements a qualitative project, there is a greater likelihood of consistency in terms of the concepts to be explored with participants. This fact is particularly important at the point when data are interpreted.

3.6 Ethical issues

Of the various ethical issues which arise during the process of qualitative research, as far as the interviewing of the present study is concerned, the following were the particularly significant

ones: a) informed consent; b) trust and confidentiality; c) reciprocity.

3.6.1 Informed consent

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) emphasize that it is important for the researcher to ensure informed consent from the researched before conducting either the interview or the questionnaire. Informed consent is defined by Berg (1995: 212) as follows:

Informed consent means the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation.

According to this definition, informed consent should be unproblematic in my interviewing. First I gained an approval from the Ethics Advisory Committee of the School of Education, University of Hull before conducting the research interviews. Permission was obtained from policy-makers and employers, and from the university authorities involved for the students and teachers to be approached. A formal pre-interview/pre-reply covering letter (see Appendix I) together with the questions and research schedules was sent to each respondent not only to seek the written permission before the interview, but also to enable him/her to become familiarized with the content of the interview. Participants in this study had complete freedom to accept or decline to be interviewed after being informed about the purpose, nature and procedures of the research, and they could participate or withdraw from the investigation at any time. Everyone replied by e-mail, expressing their interest in being interviewed. I certainly did not manipulate any respondent, deceive any of them or deliberately put anyone under any “duress”. The term “deliberately” is

added here because in its most thorough sense, I don't think I might have ensured 100% informed consent: In my case, the fact that I was a former teacher and colleague to some of the respondents might be more influential than the letter itself. In such cases, some respondents might not be really in a position to withhold their consent and the official written consent might be little more than a token gesture.

It was made clear that the source of data would remain strictly anonymous, non-traceable and confidential so that no harm could come to the respondents (the issue of non-maleficence) (Berg, 1995:212). Data would only be utilized for the thesis. To ensure validity of the interview data, I let the interviewees read the transcription themselves, to comment on the accuracy of the translation by listening to the recordings or reading samples of the transcription. However, some interviewees (one policy-maker and two employers) were too busy to afford time to read the transcription. They said they had the trust on the researcher and that the transcription would be accurately presented. I told them that they could read the transcription later whenever they wanted to. But it would have been better practice to send them all back for verification or change by the interviewers. I kept efficient records of the project and would make these available to all participants and those concerned on reasonable request. It was pointed out to the participants that results of the research could lead to the improvement of the English language education and the economy of Guangxi, i.e., that a collective benefit might be brought to the people in Guangxi (the issue of beneficence) (Cohen et al, 2000).

3.6.2 Trust and confidentiality

The ethical issues of trust and confidentiality were equally significant in this study. Fetterman

(1989:132) regards the importance of trust simply as: "Ethnographers need the trust of the people they work with to complete their tasks." Trust is the basis of human relationships with people involved in the research and those relationships are essential to the development and completion of the study. Trust leads to its own ethical minefield, however. As far as possible, in the interviewing, I did not record any comments which were obviously intended as private information. The basic principle of not causing any harm to or betray the trust of the respondent I was involved with guided my research.

In addition, I considered it my responsibility to assure confidentiality. At each interview, permission was sought to record and anonymity was assured. Three types of confidentiality were considered in the writing of the thesis (see Fetterman, 1989: 132). The first is the confidentiality of respondents. Delamont (1984:31) advocates the use of pseudonyms. To ensure anonymity, throughout the research process, anonymity is assured through the replacement of Chinese names by English names.

The second type of confidentiality is the confidentiality of information. Throughout the writing process of the thesis, I never quote from documents which were marked "confidential", though I might have used information gained from some documents to triangulate or inform some discussion of related issues. Likewise, I never quoted things which people told me in confidence, although these things might have altered my perspectives on related themes. The third issue of confidentiality is the confidentiality of location. In my case, it was impossible to assure the confidentiality of location as I must point out the college/university/company, etc. where the respondent studies/works so as to show that the respondent is representative enough of the

population from Guangxi. I hope that through assuring two of the three types of confidentiality in the thesis, I have managed not to breach the relationship of trust with either my former students, colleagues, friends, employers or even the government.

3.6.3 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is another ethical issue which is concerned with my study. Fetterman (1989:134) points out that ethnographers use a great deal of people's time and they owe something in return. I did not feel very much parasitical in the interviewing as my primary function of the research is to attempt to improve the college English language education in Guangxi, which could benefit Guangxi's socioeconomic development and the respondents. However, I really took a huge amount of data from them and I gave them back very little help. In terms of reciprocity of the research, I should say I am still in debt to my respondents though some of them have received help from me in English teaching and learning, foreign exchange work, etc. My only hope is that the results of my study could be brought to some fruition so that some kind of reciprocity could be realized indirectly.

3.7 A summary of the chapter

In this methodological chapter, my intention has been to give some serious methodological considerations involved in conducting the empirical study, i.e., what techniques I have chosen to conduct the research, why I have chosen those techniques, how I could assure the quality of the research, what weaknesses exist in the research and what ethical issues I have considered in

conducting the research.

Obviously the chapter has been selective in that it focuses on the issues and techniques of the research processes which were pertinent to my own study. As will be clear by this stage, the process of actually doing fieldwork was far from perfect. I tried hard to make my study methodologically sound, but there are several points of research which still cast doubt on the degree of achieving this attempt. I have clarified these points in this chapter in order to make them explicit. Being reflexive about these potential flaws does not actually make them disappear. Walford (1991:2) points out in a discussion of literature on the methodology of educational research that:

The social dimension of research is omitted and the process is presented as a cold analytic practice where any novice researcher can follow set recipes and obtain predetermined results.

As a novice researcher, I followed some set recipes from some methodology books to a certain degree. However, at the same time, I became intensely aware that the social dimension was still far more powerful. I acknowledge that this study has flaws and limitations. Nevertheless, I hope that the analysis resulting either from the relevant literature, the fieldwork of the study will be considered valid enough to have some significance as a contribution to the development of Guangxi's English language education at tertiary institutions.

Chapter Four Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Before beginning to analyse the data, it seems necessary to remind the reader what we have already discussed and where our discussion has come to so as to link the previous chapters with the present one. It has been pointed out in Chapter One that the aim of the thesis is to explore and analyze how policy-makers, employers, and university teachers and students in Guangxi perceive English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, P.R. China. In Chapter Two, the background and mediation of English language education have been introduced based on the analysis of the relevant literature, followed by a contextual setting of the research, i.e., an overview of globalisation, the worldwide spread and economic value of the globalised language, English, together with a discussion of the mediation in China and Guangxi's education as well as some existing problems in China's and Guangxi's English language education. In Chapter Three, the reasons for seeking the views of the representatives of the potential population were explained and the research methodology that was used for the empirical investigation has been discussed. The reasons why the qualitative semi-structured interviews were used for collecting the data and the interview process including the research sample have been given. The present chapter will then provide an analysis of the empirical data collected in the process of conducting the semi-structured interviews. The chapter will use the theoretical concepts from Chapter Two as the basis for analysis. In particular, I am looking for some empirical evidence from these data relating back to the aims and the research questions,

explicit or otherwise of the study raised in Chapter One. Therefore, the categories and sub-categories of the data analysis and interpretation of this chapter will be classified and divided to comply with the aims and the research questions of the thesis.

First, in section 4.2, the method of analysis that was used for analysing the data will be introduced. Section 4.3 discusses the process of data analysis. Then Section 4.4 will discuss the data around the six main categories listed in Table 4.1. Each category will be sub-divided into two to three sub-categories. Section 4.5 is a summary of the chapter. It is hoped that the analysis of the data will provide a general picture of how the subjects perceive college English language education in promoting the regional economic development of Guangxi in the present context of worldwide economic globalisation.

4.2 Methods of data analysis

The interview data were analyzed using content analysis. The data are presented following the frame of the research questions:

1. To what extent has the emergence of English as a global language influenced the regional language planning and policy-making? If so, in what ways has this influence manifested itself?
2. What are the perceptions of college English language education in improving the regional economic development among policy-makers, employers, university teachers

and students?

3. How do their perceptions affect language policy-making (policy-makers), the selection criteria of employees (employers), and the teaching and learning of the English language at tertiary institutions (teachers and students)?
4. To what extent do informants feel that the standards of English language education at tertiary institutions can meet the needs of the region's economic development at present?
5. What problems do they consider exist in the present English language education at tertiary institutions of Guangxi with regard to the region's economic prosperity?

In analyzing the interview data, pre-ordinate content analysis has been used to answer each of the research questions (Morrison, 1993). The interview data are entered for each issue and by each respondent, with a summary provided for each issue (*ibid*: 128). The content analysis was undertaken immediately after each interview (Spradley, 1979; Miles and Huberman, 1984), as late transcribing "might enfeeble the analysis" and risk forgetting key elements of the interview, both in content and process, and also, for the researcher, because early transcribing will lead to reshaping of the interview techniques for the next data collection (Morrison, 1993:63).

Morrison (1993) suggests that it is important to note aspects which audio recording does not catch, for example, non-verbal communication, emotions expressed, the interview setting

(physical and emotional), the degree of animation or intensity with which a particular item is discussed, engagement, willingness to express, etc., as this also helps to determine any regularity or strength of feelings towards the issues, and whether the same issue has aroused the same emotion in more than one respondent. Such an analysis can clarify the seriousness or importance attached to an issue either by respondents. It also helps to identify hesitation, fear, anxiety, confidence, etc. in the interview, which might indicate his/her knowledge or the sensitivity of the question. Hence a combination of both verbal and non-verbal data is used in the content analysis. The interview data are presented either in prose or tabular form, whichever provides greatest clarity and parsimony.

4.3 The process of data analysis

As Cohen et al (2000) have pointed out, the process of data analysis is iterative rather than sequential. It was not a completely ordered, staged process, but a much more cyclic one, involving me in covering the ground again and again with later thoughts and data lending new insights into my review of data collected early on. This process is just as Spradley (1979:22) describes:

From the beginning of data collection the qualitative analysis is beginning to decide what things mean, is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions ... Conclusions are also verified as the analysis proceeds.

My data analysis actually began well before the analysis of the main data. As part of the pilot study I was looking for patterns and categories: comparing, constructing, aggregating, and

ordering, establishing linkages and speculating about the early data (see LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:238). This analysis informed the process of the main research. As soon as I designed the main research, I was making “analytical choices” (Spradley, 1979:21) and beginning the process of data reduction, deciding, for example, who was to participate in the research, how many people to involve in the semi-structured interviews, how many email replies I would like to request, and how long I should spend on completing each semi-structured interview. I have already discussed some of this process in Chapter Three.

The analytic choices and reduction continued: at each stage of collecting my data, I processed it, consciously reducing it to a more readily accessible format for closer examination and cross-referencing in due course. For example, I sifted through each interview again and again, focusing each time on a different theme, copying the respondents’ phrases into new theme-based documents, minus any transcriptions or recorded utterances which I deemed irrelevant to the theme (see Mostyn, 1985: 144; Cohen et al, 2000: 285).

I started by reading through the interviews again and again and noting any themes or categories – potential domains – which seemed to emerge, either because of a number of references by one person or because of individual references by a number of different respondents. Interspersed with working through the interviews and my research journal, I read again those researchers who had sought “meaning systems” in my field (for example, Byram, 1989, 1997a; Long, 1991, 1996; etc.). Where they had made statements which seemed to echo what my respondents were saying, I noted them down for the interpretation of the data.

I worked through my respondents' actual words and phrases under emergent category headings and made a first attempt at putting the categories into "families" of super-ordinate and subordinate themes. I read the interviews again to check that I had not missed anything significant. Cohen et al (2000: 148) describe this process as "progressive focusing." They agree that:

Progressive focusing starts with the researcher taking a wide angle to gather data, and then by sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on them the salient features of the situation emerge. These are then used as the agenda for subsequent focusing. The process is akin to funneling from the wide to the narrow... They (researchers) then should assemble chunks or groups of data, putting them together to make a coherent whole... The intention is to move from description to explanation and to theory generation (Cohen et al, 2000: 148).

As I worked through the interviews, they became more and more interesting by comparison and contrast. Tesch (1990: 96) has noted that "the main intellectual tool is comparison" in this form of hermeneutic research and I found this to be the case.

I kept taking a break from the analysis so that I did not miss significant words or phrases. I reread the interviews periodically to remind myself of the time, the context, the respondents and to refresh enthusiasm, the process being the "language soak" advocated by Hall S. (1975: 3). I read through each interview noting interesting comments, then again to highlight what I felt were the key words and phrases, which were eventually to become the sub-themes or sub-categories within the domains. I debated as to whether or not to report on the respondents as individuals or as a group; either approach would have been valid and interesting (see Cohen et al, 2000: 151). Although I analyzed each individual's data separately, I chose to treat my respondents as a

distinct group and as individual cases, noting their individual responses while providing some shared ideas and conceptions with constant comparison and contrast.

I recorded each stage of the data analysis in my research journal, a glance through which reveals that my comments on the preliminary analysis, reflections in passing, interwove the continuing data collection process. While transcribing the interview data, following my supervisors' advice, I circled words or phrases which seemed to me to be significant or to beg further explanation in my context. I then took some interview transcripts back to some respondents, asking them again to clarify or explain any apparent ambiguities. Later I would take all the circled items from both the pilot and the main research interviews and begin to group them in potential themes or categories, in other words, making a preliminary domain analysis (Spradley, 1979). Using the process I was able to compare and cross-refer both similar and contrasting statements made by individuals on different occasions from the semi-structured interviews. Finally I had all my data assembled and could engage in one last "tidying up" as Romagnano has put it (quoted in LeCompt and Preissle, 1993: 235).

4.4 Analysing the qualitative data

In the last section, the process of data analysis has been discussed. This section will present the qualitative data according to the categories listed in table 4.1. This is a long section, split into subsections for each category and sub-category based on the research questions.

Table 4.1 Categories and sub-categories of data analysis

No.	Categories of data analysis	Sub-categories of data analysis
1	Informants' understanding of economic globalisation and English as a global language	a. Economic globalisation b. English as a global language
2	Informants' perceptions of the impacts of English as a global language on regional language planning and policy-making	a. Language planning and policy-making at the provincial level b. Language planning and policy-making at university level
3	Perceptions of college English language Education in improving the region's economic development	a. English competence and <i>Guojixing Rencai</i> b. English language education and regional economic development
4	Impacts of the informants' perceptions of English language education on the practice of their work	a. Policy-making b. Selection criteria of employees c. English teaching d. English learning
5	Present standards of college English language education and the needs of the region's economic development	a. Present standards of college English language education b. Whether the present college English language education can meet the regional economic development
6	Existing problems of college English language education	a. Existing problems of present college English language education b. Solutions to the existing problems

4.4.1 The informants' perceptions of economic globalisation and English as a global language

Since the context of the study is the various specific contextual factors concerned with economic globalization and the economic value of globalised English, it is necessary to find out first of all whether the informants had any understanding of and how they perceived economic globalisation and English as a global language.

● The informants' perceptions of economic globalisation

As is shown in Table 4.2, the informants perceived the economic globalisation differently, broadly or narrowly, from surface level to deep level. First of all, some informants, mainly the policy-makers and employers, thought that globalisation was a broad and complicated term, while economic globalisation was more concrete or specific since economic globalisation was the most obvious and related to the common people the most closely. They thought globalisation in fact stemmed from the field of economy. Many of our economic activities were influenced by economic globalisation. The world market was highly integrated because of the global flow of capital, trade, technological innovations, the Internet, information, and cultural exchanges, etc, thereby forming an interdependent relationship of economy among the countries. The following comment by PM1, Vice Director of the Education Bureau, is representative of the other informants' opinions on economic globalisation:

As far as I know, economic globalisation has permeating into every corner of the world. It has great impact on our economic activities. The competition between the countries has become much fiercer as the world is becoming more integrated. It manifests in the quick spread of MNCs, joint ventures, open markets, fast flow of human resources and information internationally. I have the feeling that we are now living in a "global village", as experts say, where people share nearly everything together.

The employer informants also had some insightful opinions of economic globalisation as their activities were largely economic and commercial. They shared similar understanding of economic globalisation. EM3's comment is a case in point.

EM3: *Globalisation is mostly economic globalisation. You can see capital, technology, information and human resources flow and are shared globally. MNCs penetrate into almost anywhere in the globe. The world market is so competitive that our trade and production are greatly influenced. We have to compete and mediate both locally and globally for existence.*

The teacher informants' understanding of economic globalisation, though more insightful than the student informants', is not as explicit as the opinions expressed by the above two groups of informants, that is the policy-makers and the employers. We can justify this from ET1's comment which is representative of the teacher informants in this regard.

ET1: *Well, you can see that there are more and more joint ventures and MNCs, which have made economic activities global and integrated, and also more competitive. I think the world has become a "global village", because people are moving quickly and easily, doing business with one and another. One economy has to compete with another for further development; a relationship of interdependence among the countries has been formed.*

The final group of the student informants, on the other hand, understood economic globalisation narrowly and at the surface level, since they had been staying in school and had less understanding of the global world. We can find evidence from what SS1 said in the following:

Well, I think, economic globalisation is that people compete with one another in order to develop their economy. They open businesses in any country where the market is open to the world. For us students, we can now choose to work for a home company or factory or a foreign company or factory. There companies or factories home and abroad can also choose to employ students in China or those in other countries to work for them.

Table 4.2 The informants' perceptions of economic globalisation

Informants	Informants' Perceptions of economic globalisation	
Policy-makers: PM1 – PM5	Globalisation is a complicated process, while economic globalisation is most obvious and influences all aspects of economic activities; markets becoming competitive and integrated; resources shared globally; the world becoming smaller with the quick spread of the Internet and fast flow of information and human resources, etc.	Deep-level understanding ↑
Employers: EM1 – EM5	Globalisation is manifested mostly in economic globalisation; with the fast and global penetration of MNCs, capital, technology, information and human resource flow and are shared globally; their own trade and production are influenced greatly by the highly competitive world market; have to compete and mediate both locally and globally for existence	
Teachers: TE1 – TE5	Joint ventures and MNCs have made economic activities global and integrated, and also more competitive; the world has become a “global village”, with people moving quickly and easily, doing business with one and another; one economy has to compete with another for further development; a relationship of interdependence among the countries has been formed for .	
Senior students: SS1 – SS5	We can do business and open companies or factories abroad, and other countries can do the same here in China; we can work for either domestic or overseas organizations; we compete with others in the world for economic development.	Surface-level understanding

● The informants' perceptions of English as a global language

English, as a global language, is spoken and heard almost everywhere in the world, which is also the case in China, and in Guangxi. When this study was conducted, the yearly China-ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Exposition, which Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao proposed should be held in Nanning, the capital city of Guangxi from the year 2004, has been successfully held here for two years. Against this background, it looks certain that Guangxi is becoming integrated into this global economy faster. Therefore, it is necessary to find out how

the informants perceive English as a global language, because their perceptions may have great impact on English education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi.

PM4, Deputy Director of a university Teaching Affairs Department said:

English becomes a global language because its vocabulary is rich, and it is expressive, and easy to be learnt or obtained. Secondly, the fact that English has become an international language has direct relation with the social transformation and the rising strength of the English-speaking nations. For some historical reasons, the economy of these countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, has developed much more rapidly, which, together with the recent information and economic globalisation, has had great impact on other countries in politics, economy, culture, etc.

PM5, Deputy Director of the Teaching Affairs Department in a university commented:

I think economy is a vital or decisive factor to make English an international language. When the world is highly integrated, people's contact becomes closer and more frequent. They dream of a common language for exchange of opinions and for communication with one another. English is thus made popular and becomes a global language. Possessing proper English proficiency will facilitate effective communication and economic transactions around the world.

Another group of informants, i.e. employers, perceived English as a global language in almost the same way as EM5, executive manager of a private company of trade, said:

Over 90% of the information on the Internet is provided through the medium of English. In order that their scientific achievements are acknowledged and confirmed by the international academic circles, most people in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, or in Latin America use English to write and publish their books, essays. We communicate or do business in English with businessmen from Southeast Asia, from Africa and from Europe.

I can safely say that English is the golden key, which opens the door for others and us to international trade, science and technology and also tourism, because it has been integrated with the global economy. This is, I think, why English has become a global language. And I consider that this is what an international language should do or function.

The other two groups of informants, i.e. teachers and students, also had their own unique opinions of English as a global language. Let us have a look at how ET4 and SS2 perceive English as a global language.

ET4: I have the feeling that nowadays you can get access to almost any information or talk with almost anyone from any other country if you know English. Last year when I worked for the first China-ASEAN Exposition as an interpreter, I could hear English echoing here and there. People from Southeast Asia, Europe and Africa all talked with one another in English, whether on formal or informal occasions. I could see that English is the only important communication tool among them on such an international event. English is really an international language.

SS2: I have two former classmates who went to university abroad, one in Germany, the other in France. They told me that their lessons were taught in English and they communicated with the German and the French in English, too. When people from different places meet together, they prefer to use English as their communication tool. English is an ideal language of international contact and communication.

In summary, the informants perceived that the important features of English such as its hybridity and permeability (Yano, 2001), the comprehensive strength and fast economic growth of the English-speaking countries, people's dream of a shared language for frequent international communication and academic exchange, trade and business, tourism, and fast growth of the Internet were catalytic factors in helping English to expand quickly as a global language.

4.4.2 The impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy-making

Since English as a global language has permeated into almost every corner of the world as an international communication tool, which has become a fact that is widely understood, it seems necessary now to switch to the analysis of the data of whether the informants think English as a global language has had any impact on regional language planning and policy-making, and how such influence manifests itself.

● The impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy-making at the provincial level

First of all, we will present how the informants perceive the influence of English as a global language on regional language planning and policy-making at the provincial level, and how such influence manifests itself in this regard.

PM2's duty covers foreign language planning and policy-making at the provincial level, thus his opinions and/or comment is probably quite authoritative and representative in this regard:

Yes, English as a global language has indeed had some great influence on our language planning and policy-making. You know the number of English learners has more than tripled in Guangxi. We need to adjust and reform our foreign language planning and policy to satisfy these ever-increasing needs of the people and economic development of the region. For example, we have made English a compulsory subject

for all university students, middle school students, and primary pupils in cities and even some developed places in the countryside. All colleges and universities in the province are required to implement bilingual teaching in at least 8% to 10% of the content subjects of the curriculum so as to produce Guojixing Rencai (International personnel) for the regional economic development. Meanwhile, it is also one of our new policies that doctoral students are required, whatever fields they specialize in, to use and quote authentic materials published abroad in English when they write their thesis. If not, they will not be permitted to go through the viva and graduate. In some backward minority areas, originally a minority language such as the Zhuang language, as well as Mandarin were used in the primary schools as the medium of instruction of the content subjects. Now, we encourage and support them to adopt trilingual teaching (using the minority language, Mandarin plus English) if their conditions and equipment permit.

PM1: We have repeatedly urged the colleges and universities to reform their English language education. More weight should be given to the reconstruction of curriculum, the implementation of bilingual teaching, the professional development of English teachers and bilingual teachers, and the transformation of teaching concepts and beliefs. We make guiding policies for universities according to the new social and economic development and the changing needs of the people. Specific policies are to be made by the colleges and universities according to their conditions.

Apart from the policy-makers, teachers and employers have also experienced the impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy. As ET2 commented, for example, English is one of the three most important subjects for the College Entrance Examination (the other two are Chinese and mathematics). Besides, professional people are required to take a foreign language (usually English) examination for higher academic promotion. Finally, the importance and necessity of English language education is frequently publicized through the Internet, TV, radios and newspapers to raise people's awareness of English education.

However, EM3's view differed. He said:

It's true that we have implemented some policies and reforms with regard to college English language education, and some progress has been achieved. But, compared with the developed cities and provinces, our policy-makers are not innovative and creative enough. Many of our policies lag behind those in developed regions by at least five to ten years. Many people, including some top policy-makers, resist accepting new things. Their concepts are not open enough and also lag behind others. So, the most urgent thing for us to do is to change people's concepts. When concepts change, policies change.

In short, due to the great impact of English as a global language, adjustments and reforms on macro policies have been implemented in English language education at the provincial level so that more high-quality graduates are produced to meet the ever-increasing needs of the people and the economic development though there is some disagreement on how effective these adjustments and policies are in improving college English education.

● The impact of English as a global language on language planning and policy-making at the university level

To find out whether the influence of English has had any impact on language planning and policy-making at the university level, the informants, particularly the policy-makers and teachers at universities were asked in the interviews to express their opinions in this regard.

PM3 commented: we carry out the national and provincial educational policies at the macro-level, but at the micro-level, we have the power to make our own policies such as course curriculum, personnel, and so on. To make our students as well as the university competitive, we need to change our concepts and reform our policy of English education. For instance, to produce high-quality students for the rapid regional economic development, some content subjects were required to be taught using English

as the medium of instruction at our university even before the Ministry of Education advanced 12 items in 2001, which required that every college and university open 5%-10% bilingual teaching courses of its curriculum within 3-5 years and introduce original foreign editions of teaching materials. Besides, all the first- and second-year students are required to take an English speaking test every term, which accounts for 10% of the final examination. The purpose of this policy is to develop students' communicative competence of English, which is required of the international personnel. And it is also one of our policies that students are required to pass the national CET4 (College English Test, Band 4) in order to be awarded the Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, we are trying out placing students in different English classes in accordance with their English aptitude in certain faculties, for the purpose of raising the teaching effectiveness of college English.

PM4: Well, the importance and influence of English have urged us to make some changes in policy concerning college English teaching for the first- and second-year students. English teachers are asked to change their ways of language teaching. We set it as a criterion for the yearly assessment that they use interactive teaching methods instead of the traditional Grammar-Translation method, and that their teaching should be student-centred instead of teacher-centred. Otherwise, it will be difficult for them to be awarded "Excellent" in the yearly assessment.

ET1's perception was the same as PM3 as they were both from the same university. ET2, from the same university as PM4, expressed almost the same feelings as PM4 in this regard. However, as teaching levels and conditions, teachers' concepts and students' English proficiency are different among the five universities from which the informants came, their perceptions were different, too.

The group of student informants also expressed some of their feelings concerning language policy-making at the universities.

SS1: In Guangxi University, all students, whatever majors they specialise in, are

required to take the English speaking test every term. As far as I know, students in other universities are not required to do so. In addition, bilingual teaching has been implemented for some of our courses. Some of these bilingual teaching courses are compulsory, others optional. It seems that new demands with regard to English teaching and learning are made one after another. I think these new policies are good for developing our comprehensive ability and we welcome them.

SS3: I think English as an international language has influenced our language policies more or less. For example, in my university we are required to pass at least CET3 (College English Test, Band 3) to apply for scholarships. Last term, bilingual teaching was applied to one of our specialised courses. It is said that we are required to write the abstracts of the graduation dissertations or project reports in both Chinese and English.

SS2, SS4 and SS5 also thought that English as a global language did have some impact on the language policy at their colleges or universities. But as they were also from different colleges or universities, the changes in English education policies at their colleges or universities were different, in degree. For example, except for Guangxi University, students at other colleges/universities were not required to pass CET4 for the Bachelor's degree, neither were they required to take the English speaking test in the final examination.

4.4.3 English language education in improving the regional economic development

In this part, we will move to the interview data of how informants perceived English language education in improving the regional economic development, which is the focus of this study. First of all, the qualitative data of the informants' perceptions of the relationship between English competence and *Guojixing Rencai* will be presented. Universities and colleges are where

high-quality talents in various fields are developed for the socioeconomic development. Thus the qualitative data on how the informants perceive the relationship between English competence and *Guojixing Rencai* will be important for conclusions to be made in the study. Then followed are data on the informants' attitudes towards and perceptions of the relationship between English language education and the regional economic development.

● English competence and Guojixing Rencai

In the interviews, the informants were asked to define *Guojixing Rencai* first, and then to express their feelings of the relationship between English language education and *Guojixing Rencai*.

PM1 said: *Guojixing Rencai should be university graduates who have not only rich specialised knowledge, the ability to keep up with the new development trends in their specialized fields and to innovate and create, but also strong competence and good communication skills in English. In this increasingly integrated world, if they are to access knowledge of the latest science and technology in the world and become competitive, not only a knowledge of how to communicate across international borders, but a knowledge of English as the medium for doing so is critical. English in other words has become an economic imperative and a valuable asset. It is necessary for participation in situations which yield power. Opportunities are limited to people who possess the requisite linguistic patterns. Only when we have more such Guojixing Rencai can we make the region more innovative and productive and the economy develop faster.*

Other informants' opinions were similar in this regard. But PM5 stressed several times in the interviews that:

Guojixing Rencai should first of all possess rich specialised knowledge and then strong

English competence. If they possess only strong English competence but weak competence in specialised knowledge, they would not be much different from those students whose major is English. Or if they possess only rich specialised knowledge with weak English competence, then they cannot be termed Guojixing Rencai.

EM4's comment further supported PM5's when he said:

It is true that people's English competence is now playing a more and more important role. However, students should never sacrifice specialised knowledge for the sake of fluency and competence in English. They should pay special attention to the mastery of specialised knowledge in their domains.

Other informants, such as PM3, EM3 and ET5, all considered that *Guojixing Rencai* were very important to the regional economic development. PM3's comment was a case in point.

PM3: We used to be in serious shortage of high-quality personnel, which accounts for the backwardness of the region. In the era of economic globalisation, it won't do for universities to produce traditional students who have only specialised knowledge with little English competence to communicate with the outside world, or vice versa. Producing Guojixing Rencai is a new education aim imposed on universities and colleges. So we should make greater efforts to produce more such Rencai because they are the key to our regional economic prosperity.

● English language education and regional economic development

The informants' attitudes towards and perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development are the main part of the interviews. They were asked quite a few questions, with some prompts and probes. Below are representative quotations in this regard.

PM1: *In a developed region where education is advanced, the production, accumulation and application of knowledge are rapid and able to satisfy the direct needs of the economy, leading to the rapid popularisation of English. Many people will possess a higher level of English competence. In this way the speed and quality these people absorb and obtain the latest information, science and technology, culture, and experience from abroad will be guaranteed. On the contrary, in an underdeveloped region, where human resources are in great shortage, investment in education is small, teaching methods of English are backward, and knowledge is out of date, the speed and coverage of the popularisation of English will be slow and narrow, which slows down the absorption and digestion of the latest information, knowledge of advanced science and technology, and innovative concepts and methods. Obviously this in turn affects the economic development of the region.*

EM5 expressed his feeling in this regard by giving an example to show the important role of English language education in improving the regional economic development:

I'd like to give you an example of India to show my attitude towards the importance of English in improving the regional economy. Twelve years ago, China and India stood at the same starting line in the export volume of software. However, you could hardly imagine that in the last few years, India's export volume of software has reached more than 4.6 billions, 92 times more than that of China's. Actually, India's success has benefited mainly from the popularisation of English and the strong English proficiency of its technical personnel. It is the popularisation of English and the strong English proficiency of its technical personnel that have contributed to the great success and rapid development of India's software industry, one of the most sophisticated fields in the world.

The teachers and students also agreed that English language education plays a key role in the development of human resources and the regional economy. The two comments made by ET1 and SS2 are quite representative in this regard.

ET1: *One reason that our regional economy is not developed is that we are short of high-quality talents or Guojixing Rencai. Most university graduates have very limited English competence. They cannot keep track of the latest information or development in their specialised fields because they fail to read those newly published foreign research achievements, academic books or journals to update their knowledge. When these achievements, books or journal articles are introduced into China or translated into Chinese and they read them, they have lagged behind others abroad for at least three to five years. This is why our graduates and our technical personnel are not creative and original enough because of their obsolete knowledge. A vicious circle is thus developed -- the poorer the economy in a region, the greater the shortage of its Guojixing Rencai.*

SS1: *I think English language education plays a very important role in improving the regional economy, because it can help raise people's comprehensive ability and the human capital. For example, traders and businessmen can contact and do business with foreigners directly if they are proficient in English, which will make them more informative, efficient and competitive. Researchers can update their knowledge at any time of the day and know what's going on in their own fields at almost every corner of the world if their English is good enough to browse the Internet or read original English journals and books. And when people update their knowledge, they update their concepts. In this way, they will become open instead of conservative. They will accept new things more readily. They will become more creative, then our economy will be developing much faster.*

ET4 and SS5 are from Guilin, one of the most famous tourist cities in China. They both cited the rapid development of tourism in Guilin as evidence to demonstrate that English language education plays a key role in Guilin's tourism and economic development. Here was what ET4 said:

Well, Guilin's tourism is a case in point. The rapid development of Guilin's tourism has benefited much from people's English proficiency in the city. We have many people (though the number is still small, he added) who have rich knowledge of tourism and are good in English. When foreign tourists, particularly those from Europe, Latin America come to visit Guilin, they will find that Guilin is such a language-friendly city

that even old grannies can communicate with them when they need help. As a result, Guilin has become one of the tourist cities with which foreign tourists are the most satisfied. Last year, the number of foreign tourists exceeded one million, the highest in history. The development of tourism has helped other industries to develop at greater pace.

In the interviews, all the informants held a positive attitude towards college English language education in improving the regional development. And some were very serious when they talked about the issue because they thought many people in the region were still ignorant of the importance of English education in improving the regional economy.

4.4.4 Impact of the informants' Perceptions of English language education on their own practical work

The data of the formants' perceptions of English language education having been presented, it is now important to find out whether the informants' perceptions of English language education have any impact on their own practical work. Next, qualitative data obtained from the four groups of informants will be analysed respectively in four separate subcategories.

● Policy-making

Among the five policy-makers we interviewed, two held important positions in the Education Bureau of the Autonomous Region, while the other three acted as vice director of the Teaching Affairs Departments of three different universities. The work of the five informants all involved making and amending policies of education/teaching either at the provincial level or at the

university level. Thus we can say that these five informants were representative of the policy-makers in Guangxi, and the data from these informants was reliable and trustworthy.

When asked whether their feelings of and attitudes towards English language education in improving the regional economic development had any impact on their work of policy-making, the five informants expressed their opinions more or less differently. PM1 said as follows:

Yes, I think so. For example, we strongly propose to the top officials that E-C bilingual teaching should be implemented at tertiary institutions because when think it helpful to develop Guojixing Rencai for the regional economy. We tend to give English education more support and priority in policy-making because we know English proficiency is important in developing Guojixing Rencai. However, decisions or policies are made collectively instead of individually. So one person's impact on policy-making is very limited at the provincial level. Furthermore, although we have certain power to make our own policies, we are required to carry out the policies of the central government at the macro-level.

PM2's comment, to some extent, was the same as PM1's since his part of duty covered policies-making mostly at the macro-level. But he said that his own idea did not count at all when it came to policy-making, and that he was not allowed to impose his own preference on any work like policy-making, which was very serious and had much to do with the benefits of the people in the whole region.

PM3, PM4 and PM5 were vice directors of the Teaching Affairs Departments in their own college or universities. Based on the development of the college or university and the needs of the society and economic development, a college or university sometimes needs to make certain

policies of its own at the micro-level, since it has been accorded the status of legal entities and thus has certain power and right to do so. Here is the comment by PM3:

Yes, I think my perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development do have more or less impact on my work. For example, because I thought the central policy of bilingual teaching of content subjects was a very good one, I was more willing to carry it out, and at the same time did a lot to advise the school authorities to supplement some other policies in this regard according to our own teaching conditions and English language learning environment. If it were a policy I dislike, I would delay carrying it out. Even if I had to do the work, I would do nothing more than that.

However, what PM4 and PM5 said was different. They both said that it was not possible for their perceptions to influence their work. The following comments by PM4 and PM5 will give us more understanding in this regard:

PM4: The influence of our perceptions on policy-making is very limited. The school authorities decide on almost everything. We just carry out their orders. If we think it necessary to reform or implement a certain policy, we will give some advice in a roundabout way. We are very cautious in this sort of things as we may offend the school leaders if our advice or suggestions are not to their tastes. It's wise for us not to say much in this regard.

PM5: I don't think our own thinking can have any influence on our work. We work like machines. We just carry out orders without any violation. We do what we are asked to do. If the top leaders say we should make a certain policy, then we'll do so according to what we are required of. You know, you'll make mistakes if you say too much, but actually we do not have a say with regard to policy-making.

● Selection criteria of employees

Among the five employers, two are from the state-owned factory/company, another two from joint ventures and one from a private company. EM1 is owner of a big state-owned factory, which experienced many ups and downs in the past decades and managed to survive the fierce competitive market with great efforts. Its products sell mostly in the home market, with only about 10% exported to the Southeast Asian countries or regions. He said:

Yes, our perceptions do have some impact on my own work. I tend to employ those university graduates with both rich specialised knowledge and strong English competence because these graduates are really good to the development of the factory. However, we do not have much business abroad, so we are not very demanding of the graduates' English competence at present. We pay more attention to their ability and knowledge in their specialised fields.

EM2 is owner of a state-owned factory, too. However, the products of his factory are export-oriented, and the production of the factory has been going on smoothly, so his factory has made fat profits in the past few years. Here is what he said:

Yes. I consider that English competence of the technical personnel is very important for the development of this factory. In the past few years, we have established strict criteria in selecting new employees. For example, prospective applicants are required to have passed the National CET4 and the National College Computer Test Level 1. Those who have passed CET6 and Computer Test Level 2 will have more chances of being employed if they possess the same time rich specialised knowledge in their fields. The more Guojixing Rencai we possess, the more chances we will have and the more competitive we will be.

As employers of joint ventures, EM3 and EM4 shared the same opinions with regard to their selection criteria of employees.

EM3: English is the language of international cooperation. Most foreign enterprises in China and other regions of the world prefer English as a communication tool, which has become associated with the prosperity of a company or factory. If our employees have proficiency in English, they have the access to virtually all conversations about the company's economic development future. Those who do not speak English are denied participation. However, I think, to be successful in business, proficiency in English language per se is not enough. You know, language is only a carrier. We most need graduates who are not only proficient in English but have a wide store of specialist and cross-cultural knowledge and communication skills.

EM4: Our perceptions certainly would affect our own work. We are running this enterprise with a foreign company, so we demand that our employees' English is good enough to qualify themselves for their positions. When we employ new technical personnel, we consider that both their specialised knowledge and English competence are equally important. Only when they are armed with both, will they be able to update their specialised knowledge frequently and be creative. They will be able to exchange opinions directly with their foreign colleagues and communicate with experts both at home and abroad. This is especially important to our development. It's a pity that such high-quality Rencai are still small in number in Guangxi.

Finally, EM5, owner of a private company, made the following comment in this regard. It is worth mentioning that he sounded quite helpless when he made the comment.

As owner of a small-scale private company, I certainly want to employ more high-quality Guijixing Rencai, because such Rencai are more learned in their special domains and good at English, which will be good for the further development of my company. However, it is very difficult to have such Rencai because the number of such Rencai is still very small. Besides such Rencai prefer to work for foreign enterprises, joint ventures or big companies, which offer them better working conditions, better

salary and more chances of academic promotions or study.

● English teaching

The five English teachers are from different universities of Guangxi: a comprehensive university, a medical university, a college for nationalities, a teachers' college and a herbal medical college. The age of these teachers range from 52 to 28 and the years of their English teaching are between 30 and 7, so they are representative of the English teachers of the universities or colleges of Guangxi. Teachers are always considered to play a decisive role in the teaching quality or teaching outcome in the Chinese context, which means the general quality of students' English depends to a greater extent on the teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to find out whether their perceptions of English in improving the regional economic development have any impact on their own work. Presented below are the qualitative interview data in this regard.

ET3: Yes, we know it won't do to teach English in the old ways, which is divorced from the practical needs of the society and economy. I think most of us teachers including me have the awareness of changing our traditional teaching methods now in order to train qualified students for the economy. We know that we need to change our concept of teaching, and we need to accommodate to the fast growing needs of the integrated economy. We have indeed got rid of some obsolete teaching habits and are now moving in the direction of developing students' intercultural communicative competence, a new and widely accepted teaching concept of foreign languages. And I find it more important for us teachers to further our professional development to enhance our quality and ability so that we can keep up with new changes in this increasingly integrated world.

ET1: Well, to be honest, our work is more or less affected by our perceptions or beliefs. We are aware of the necessity of developing students' comprehensive ability of English.

To achieve this end, we try to adopt those advanced teaching theories and methodologies such as the communicative approach, the interactive approach, etc. However, if the old assessment systems, which evaluate students and teachers according to the pass rate of students' written examinations, remain unchanged, it is difficult for us to go any step forward in teaching reform.

ET5, the youngest informant, commented: *We know that we cannot teach our students now like our teachers used to teach us when we were students. Our teachers' teaching was mainly teacher-centred and grammar-translation methods were adopted. As a result, our learning interest and enthusiasm were not fully motivated and our communicative competence was low. The society and economy do not want the sort of graduates as we were, who spoke "dumb English." So as teachers of English in the 21st century, we should use new and interactive teaching methods to teach our students so that they are qualified for the future society and economy.*

ET2: *Yes, I find it urgent that we should adapt our teaching to the practical needs of both the students and the regional economy. We need to change our teaching concepts and teaching methods. What's more, I find it very important for me to further my professional development in order to update my concepts and specialised knowledge.*

ET4 also said that his perception of English in improving the regional economy had had great impact on his teaching concepts and methods. However, he thought there were still some obstructive barriers, such as the obsolete assessment system ET1 mentioned, preventing him and other teachers from adopting new teaching theories and methods.

● English learning

Whether students can become high-quality talents or *Guojixing Rencai* depends much on their beliefs, perceptions or attitudes of English, which are vital to the teaching and learning outcomes.

The student informants were five senior students from five different universities. SS1 is from Guangxi University, majoring in Electrical Engineering and its Automation. He has passed CET4 and CET6 and is a top student in his class. He was excited and self-confident when he was interviewed. He said:

Yes, I think so. I strongly believe that if we want to be qualified talents for the gradually global economy, we must be good enough in English so that we can work together with people from around the world, obtain the latest information or knowledge from the Internet, English academic journals, or foreign experts and at the same time have more conversations about the country's development future. English isn't just a foreign language. It's a helpful tool that can help us to get better jobs and achieve greater success. So many of us now learn English much harder and make greater efforts to pass CET4 or CET6. At the same time, we need a sound foundation of specialised knowledge. I think we can become creative and innovative talents with both rich specialised knowledge and strong English competence.

SS2, a senior student from Guangxi Medical University, majors in clinical medicine. He believes that English competence is closely related to his future. Here is what he said:

Guangxi needs more and more high-quality talents since it is integrating into the world economy. I think English competence is closely related to my future. I am sure such competence will enable me to become the sort of high-quality talent or Guojixing Rencai the global economy needs. So I have been learning English harder to improve my comprehensive ability of using English. If I am proficient in English, I will be able to learn or update advanced knowledge from foreign experts or journals directly, have more participation in the region's development and a better future.

SS3, a senior student from Guangxi University for Nationalities, majors in Physics. He expressed his opinions in this way:

Well, we can sense that English is more important than before. When we look for jobs, we are required to take a speaking test in English and meanwhile to show our certificates of CET3, or CET4 or CET6. The companies, in particular the foreign companies and factories and the joint ventures all have very demanding criteria in selecting prospective employees. Strong proficiency in English, I believe, will guarantee success and a brighter future in our fields. So now I am working harder at English and practice everyday to improve my oral competence in English.

SS4, a third-year student from Guangxi Herbal Medical College, majors in Chinese Herbal Medicine. She used to dislike English, but now she has changed her mind when she was aware of the importance of English. She said:

I didn't like English before because I thought English did not have anything to do with Chinese Herbal Medicine which was deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition. But now I know that we can learn from Western Medicine to enrich or supplement our knowledge of Chinese Medicine. Now many foreigners are interested in Chinese Medicine. I think if our English is good, then we can help promote the industry of Chinese Medicine by introducing it to foreigners or learning the best out of Western Medicine to improve our Chinese Medicine. So now that I am aware of the importance of English to my future and our economic development, I am working harder to improve my English.

SS5, a fourth-year student of Guangxi Teachers' College, majors in Chinese. She said:

English is important for the development of high-quality talents and the improvement of the regional economy. So it can be very important for the science students or students who major in trade or tourism or others. But for me, it seems not very necessary to learn it well. You know I major in Chinese and will be a Chinese teacher in a certain primary school or middle school in the near future. I cannot see any value of English with regard to my future work except for taking a national English test for academic promotion.

In sum, all the student informants except SS5 had the awareness of improving their English because they considered that English proficiency was important for their future development. However, SS5 thought English had little value to her future.

4.4.5 The standards of the current college English language education and the needs of the region's economic development

In order to find out what they think of the standards of the present English language education at tertiary institutions in Guangxi and whether they think the standard can meet the needs of the regional economic development, the informants were invited to answer some questions in this regard. Prompts and probes were also used in order to get more specific and detailed data. These data will be helpful for us to understand the standards of the present college English language education in Guangxi and whether it can satisfy the needs of the regional economic development.

● The standard of the present college English language education

In the interviews, all the informants expressed their own opinions of the standard of the present English language education at tertiary institutions in Guangxi. Their opinions are quite informative and representative of those of the general public. First presented are two comments by the policy-makers.

PM1: Generally speaking, College English language education is changing fast for the best. Many reforms and adjustments have been carried out to meet the needs of the students, the society and the economy. Students' level of English has been improved a

lot compared with the situation of 10 years ago. Most important of all, both teachers and students have become aware of the importance of developing students' English communicative competence. However, we still need to do a lot more before our English education can fully satisfy the needs of the regional social and economic development.

PM5: English language education at universities, I think, is not very satisfactory yet, but some progress has been made. For example, the pass rate of CET4 in my university has increased at least 10% more than that of five years ago. And bilingual teaching has been implemented for some content subjects, so students' general level of English is higher.

The employers, the two managers of joint ventures in particular, thought that college English education could not meet the needs of the regional economic development. Some even thought that English language education was divorced from the practical needs of the society.

EM4, for example, said:

We can say that the level of college English language education is now higher than it used to because more students are able to pass CET3, CET4 or CET6. But I think this is a superficial phenomenon. Actually, many students' communicative competence is still low. College English teaching is largely examination-oriented and divorced from the real needs of the economy.

EM2': Well, I do think there is some change in college English language education and its level is higher than before. But compared with the fast regional economic development, college English language education is still backward.

Then how did the other two groups of informants -- the students and teachers, perceive this?

Here are some comments by them.

ET1: I think our English language education has been developing fast in universities.

Its level has been raised a lot. Our pass rate of students' CET4 is about 40% to 50%, and our students' oral English has greatly improved since we implemented the speaking test as part of the final examination. Every year, we select and send some students to participate in some national English contests, and they can get very good results. However, the number of students proficient in English is relatively low compared with the ever-increasing needs of the society and economy. So greater efforts need to be made.

SS1: I think college English language education in Guangxi has improved to some extent. More attention has been paid to developing our comprehensive ability of English. But I think the level of college English teaching is still low compared with the rapid development of the society and economy.

SS5: I don't know how to say. I think English is still taught the same way in university as it used to when I was a middle school student. Not much improvement. Many of our prospective employers are generally not satisfied with our English competence.

All in all, most informants thought that college English education in Guangxi had been improved to some extent with the change of teachers' concepts and the implementation of many new teaching theories and methods, but considered the level still low. The teacher informants, on the other hand, thought, the level of the present college English language education had been raised a lot though there were still some problems.

● Whether the present college English language education can meet the region's economic development

From the data above, we can see that the informants have different perceptions of the standard of college English language education. Now data on whether they thought the present college

English language education could meet the region's economic development will be analysed below.

PM1: We have trained for the society some high-quality students every year. But the number of high-quality students with rich specialised knowledge and strong competence of English is relatively too small compared with the ever-increasing needs of the economy. There is indeed a gap between the development of college English language education and the regional economic development. We need to further reform our college English language education.

PM5: I think great efforts have been made in our college English language education to train high-quality students for the society. However, it is still not very satisfactory and cannot satisfy the economic development of Guangxi.

EM3: Personally, I think, College English language education in Guangxi is far from being satisfactory. We need the sort of graduates who are good in both English and specialised knowledge. However, it is difficult for us to get access to such graduates. And we have found that the communicative English competence of the graduates we have employed is not up to our standards, which is the result of the examination-oriented education.

The other four employers had the same feeling that college English language education could not meet the regional economic development yet. They thought that more efforts should be made to make it suit the fast growth of economy. Now presented are the teacher and student informants' perceptions.

ET1: I think our present college English language education is on the whole good and can satisfy the needs of the regional economic development to a certain extent. For example, we are able to hold the first two China-ASEAN Expositions successfully because we have provided Guangxi with various high-quality graduates who have both

rich specialised knowledge and strong English competence.

SS1: We find that we are inferior to other students graduating from other universities in the developed cities or provinces with regard to English competence and specialised knowledge. Because of our inferior English competence, we are less competitive in the job markets, too. Employers also complain about our weak communicative competence of English, which they think is not qualified for the development of Guangxi.

SS2: In my opinion, the level of college English language education is still low compared with the regional economic development. We students' actual ability of English is still weak. Our English teachers teach us in almost the same ways as our middle school English teachers did.

SS4: College English language education of Guangxi is still low in quality. I myself think it still cannot meet the needs of the regional economic development.

From the above comments, we see that the teacher and student informants differed in their opinions. The former seemed to think that college English education could satisfy the regional economic development to some extent while the latter did not think so.

4.4.6 Existing problems of the present college English language education, and solutions

In this part, data concerning the informants' perceptions of the existing problems of the present college English language education and solutions to the problems will be presented in two subcategories: (1) existing problems of the present college English language education, and (2) solutions to the existing problems.

● Existing problems of the present college English language education

When asked whether there existed any problems in the current college English education, all the informants said “yes”. Here are some quotations from the interviews.

PM2: People, including some top leaders of the province and the universities, are still not fully aware of the importance of college English language education in improving the regional economic development, resulting in conservative concepts and policies in English language planning and curriculum. Secondly, the present college English teaching system is divorced from that of the middle school for lack of coordination with one and another. Furthermore, the goals of the college English curriculum are mainly developing students' reading ability, with an emphasis on the acquisition and repetition of superficial knowledge. These problems exist not only in Guangxi but also in many other places in the country. However, they are more serious in such underdeveloped places as Guangxi.

PM3: I think the most serious problem is that college English language education is in great shortage of funds or investment. It has long been our practice that 90% of our funds and investment should be for science and engineering subjects which are thought to have a direct impact on the teaching levels of a university and on the regional economic development. It is very common that a science or engineering research project can be funded as large as one million RMB while an English teaching research project can have only several thousands. As a result, research on English language planning and policy-making, assessment systems, teaching curriculum, teaching methods and management and so on is rare, and there is hardly any training plan for teachers' further professional development.

PM4: I think one major problem is that our language policy-making is not open and flexible. Policies are not made and adjusted according to the needs of the regional socio-economic development. Another problem is that most minority students are very poor in English because they did not receive regular instruction in a foreign language in less developed minority middle schools. Hence, it is very difficult to improve their foreign language in university. In addition, government funding for college English

education is far from enough to improve the teaching facilities and equipment. And teachers' well being, working conditions, opportunities for professional development, and so on are not good enough to motivate them to get further ahead. "Brain drain" is serious among college English teachers.

The above perceptions including PM1 and PM5's were quite insightful of the problems that exist in the present college English language education of Guangxi. The employers, on the other hand, considered that the main problem of college English language education lies in teaching students English solely as a subject in universities. Here are the comments by EM3 and EM4:

I think the main problem is that English is still taught as a subject only. Bilingual teaching, an effective means to further enhance students' ability either in English competence or in specialised knowledge, has been largely neglected. In addition, students are not taught in accordance with their English aptitude. All students, whether their English level is low or high, are placed in the same class, leading to low effectiveness of college English teaching.

EM4: *The weakness of the present college English instruction, in my opinion, is the graduates' poor ability to use English to communicate. Even for those who have a high CET4 or CET6, or even TOEFL score, they are weak in speaking and writing. This is a major failure in college English instruction.*

The teachers and students, however, blamed the traditional examination-oriented system, which still prevails in colleges and universities.

ET3: *I think the most serious problem is that our teaching is still largely examination-oriented. Every year students are assessed by written examinations, while we are assessed by the pass rates of the students we teach. We are inclined to teach students more knowledge about grammar, vocabulary or reading in order to develop students' testing ability. It's strange that teachers do not raise objections against these*

sorts of policies and the obsolete teaching practices. Besides, when employers are selecting university graduates, many of them still judge the students' English competence by whether they have passed CET4 or CET6, which further strengthens students' belief that possessing good testing ability and passing certain important tests and obtaining the relative certificates are important and in fact the passport for them to better jobs.

SS2: Because of the examination-oriented system, we tend to focus more on memorizing grammar rules and specific words and phrases to enlarge our vocabulary. Our teachers rely on the textbook only for teaching, asking us to repeat and memorise, without much change in teaching styles. Their teaching methods are passive and mostly teacher-centred, with little interactive activities. Our communicative competence is thus hindered. What's more, the class is too big, with too many students (over 50) in a class. We are offered little chance to practice speaking or do interactive activities, with the teachers talking or imparting knowledge only almost all the time.

It is worth highlighting here that ET5 thought that students' lack of cultural knowledge had led to their low communicative competence of English. He thought that many students could not communicate very well with foreigners because they lack the common and necessary knowledge of both the foreign and home cultures. He said:

The fact that our students lack the necessary knowledge of cultures, including both the home cultures and foreign cultures, is another problem that obstructs the smooth development of college English education. When students describe, or discuss or write about their own life, their own environment, or the people around them, or the places they were born or live in, they find it very hard and very often seem to have nothing to say, or to write or to discuss, not to speak of the foreign life, foreign cultures, and so on. You know it is difficult for them to carry a conversation with foreigners because they have little to say and don't know how to keep up the conversation. However, not enough attention has been paid to this problem yet and it seems to get worse. Besides, many teachers' abilities, though sufficient for their work, are limited and need to be further enhanced. Their knowledge and concepts also need to be updated in order to adapt to the fast socio-economic development.

In short, the informants thought there still exist many problems in college English education. Solutions would seem to be badly needed to deal with these problems in order to enhance the teaching effectiveness and students' English comprehensive ability.

● Solutions to the existing problems

Though some efforts have been made to solve some of the problems and some progress has been achieved, all the informants thought that further and more effective solutions should be explored and found to deal with the existing problems of college English language education. Then how did they think that these problems should be solved? In this part, data on the informants' perceptions of solving the existing problems of college English language education will be documented.

PM1: To solve the existing problems, we should first work together to raise people's awareness of the importance of developing English language education in the globalised world, by means of the publicity media such as the Internet, TV, radios and newspapers. In this way more support, either spiritual support or financial support, will be obtained for college English education. Second, more government funding should be invested in college English teaching and research. Thirdly, we should make great efforts to create a favourable both virtual and real environment of English learning by using the rapid transfer of information technology in the process of economic globalisation. Hence, Students' learning interest will be motivated and they will be able to have more opportunity to carry out interactive activities, which will be helpful in raising the effectiveness of their learning.

PM2 also thought that raising people's awareness was important:

I think, it's important for people to understand the value of English and have a positive attitude toward English language education in improving the regional economy. In my opinion, the best means of raising people's awareness is to use the public media, such as the radios, TV, newspapers and the Internet to publicize the value of English in improving the regional economic development and integrating into the global world.

The other informants also agreed that it was important to raise people's awareness of the importance of English education in improving the regional economy. They thought that when people were aware of the importance, they would support the policies and new practice of English education. Besides, they thought that government funding and investment should be increased to improve college English teaching facilities, teachers' professional development and well-being. Furthermore, they felt that immediate measures should be taken to reform the English curricula of both middle school and college. Coordination was badly needed to re-position the teaching goals and contents of both curricula.

Other informants, particularly the employers considered that new teaching concepts should be introduced from developed countries and reform the present college teaching systems. EM3's comment is quite representative in this regard:

I think English should no longer be taught just as a subject. Bilingual teaching should be implemented for as many specialised subjects as possible so that more Guojixing Rencai can be brought out to meet the increasing needs of the regional economy. Besides, we should teach students in accordance with their English aptitude. Students with the same level of English should be placed in the same classes. In this way, the effectiveness of college English teaching will be guaranteed to the maximum.

On the other hand, some informants, in particular the teachers and students thought both the traditional examination-oriented and assessment systems should be reformed. And cultural knowledge should be an integrated part of English teaching since successful communication depends much on cultural awareness and qualified accommodation and mediation in various cultures.

ET5: Our examination-oriented and assessment systems need to be reformed. If not, both teachers and students will revert to the old practice of teaching and learning grammar and vocabulary, with reading as the main teaching objective. Speaking, which is helpful to develop students' communicative competence should become part of the final examinations for all university students. Besides, employers' concepts of judging students' English competence by their certificates of CET4 or CET6 should be changed, hence attention will be attracted to developing students' strong communicative competence.

SS1: Stimulating students' enthusiasm and motivation to learn English is important. One effective way to do so is that new teaching concepts and methods, such as student-centred and interactive teaching methods, should be introduced, and new and interactive authentic teaching textbooks and materials should be adopted.

In conclusion, the informants thought that if measures were taken immediately and people's awareness was enhanced, then it is possible that all the above-mentioned problems could be solved and college English language education would be able to meet the practical needs of the regional economic development.

4.5 A summary of the chapter

In this chapter of data analysis, the researcher has so far given an introduction to the method of analysis she used for analysing the data, and the process of her data analysis. Then her qualitative data was presented and analysed around six categories, each sub-divided into two to four sub-categories. The data presented have further increased the readers' understanding of how the informants perceived economic globalisation and English as a global language. Meanwhile, she also presented data on the informants' perceptions on the impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy-making and college English language education in improving the regional economic development. Then followed is the data of whether the informants' perceptions have any impact on their own practical work and whether they thought the standards of the present college English language education could satisfy the needs of the regional socioeconomic development. Finally data on what problems the informants thought existed and how they thought these problems should be solved were presented. In Chapter Five, the researcher will discuss the findings of the results along with some recommendations and implications of the study.

Chapter Five Discussion of Results and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, the researcher has presented her empirical data of the semi-structured interviews. These data are rich and original. This chapter will discuss the empirical data, presenting an interpretation of them and the possible explanations for the results. The interpretation and discussion of the empirical data will address the purposes and research questions of the thesis. Then some implications of the study and recommendations to solve the existing problems of Guangxi's college English education will be discussed. A summary of the chapter will be made at the end.

5.2 Results and discussion

5.2.1 How do the informants' perceive economic globalisation and English as a global Language?

First, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews showed that the informants' understanding of economic globalisation ranged from surface level to deep level (Table 4.2). Some informants, mainly the policy-makers and employers, thought that globalisation was a broad and complicated term, while economic globalisation was more concrete or specific since

economic globalisation was the most obvious and related to the common people most closely. They thought globalisation in fact stemmed from the field of economy. Many of our economic activities were influenced by economic globalisation. The world market was highly integrated because of the global flow of capital, human resources, trade, technological innovations, the Internet, information, and cultural exchanges, etc, thereby forming an interdependent economic relationship among the countries. Teachers thought that joint ventures and MNCs, the quick flow of business people had made economic activities global, integrative, and also more competitive, forming a relationship of interdependence among the countries for existence. However, the student informants understood economic globalisation narrowly and at the surface level. The possible explanation for the different perceptions of the informants could be: the economic activities of the employers are closely related to the competitive and integrative market, so their ideas of the economic globalisation are more insightful than those of the teachers and students, whose activities are largely academic.

It was mentioned in Chapter Four that during the time when the study was conducted, Guangxi had successfully held the first and second China-ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) Exposition, which Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao proposed should be held annually in Nanning, the capital city of Guangxi, from 2004. To host the yearly international event more successfully, Guangxi has opened its doors wider and made greater efforts to attract more international exhibitors and buyers so as to bring about more business opportunities for businessmen and enterprises from both China and ASEAN countries. In addition, during the first two expositions, thousands of foreign enterprises, businessmen and traders came to seek business opportunities or cooperation with their Chinese counterparts. Against this background, most

people in Guangxi including the informants had a fair understanding of the economic globalisation and the increasing integration of the global economy.

Second, the empirical data show that the informants considered that English had become a global language for the following catalytic factors:

1. The unique characteristics that English has rich vocabulary, is expressive and easy to be learnt or obtained have made it a global language;
2. The powerful comprehensive strength and fast economic development of the English-speaking countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, further English as a global language;
3. English is integrated with the global economy;
4. In a highly integrated world, people's dream of having a shared language for frequent international exchange and communication helps make English a global language;
5. 90% of the information on the Internet, most scientific achievements, academic journals and books, etc are transferred, published or written in English;
6. English is the preferred and ideal medium of communication for politicians, business people, traders, tourists, learners and students, etc. when they meet together on international occasions, do business, and travel around the world.

These results seem to be in agreement with what other researchers or experts have found (Yano, 2001; Bamgbose, 2000). As is indicated by Bamgbose (2000), the prominence that a language has in language policy may be due to a number of factors such as population, prestige, status,

functionality, nationalism, etc. English shares all these factors in different countries, and may, in fact, have more than one of the factors in the same country.

In response to economic globalisation, many people in such underdeveloped regions as Guangxi have also become aware that some competence in a foreign language, particularly English, was badly needed. The value of English in improving the individual future and the regional economic activities is thus being gradually accepted. *Guojixing Rencai* were valued and badly needed. This data were in agreement with what the researcher had found in an earlier quantitative study. During the second China-ASEAN Exposition, which was held in October 2005, the researcher herself, together with one of her M.A. students, conducted a questionnaire on the perceptions of 80 employers of Guangxi' enterprises and companies on university graduates' English competence. The quantitative data from the questionnaire revealed that 92% of the respondents thought *Guojixing Rencai*, who possess both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English, were what they wanted and were exceptionally important for the region's economic development as well as for the development of their own companies or enterprises.

5.2.2 To what extent has the emergence of English as a global language influenced the regional language planning and policy-making? If so, in what ways has this influence manifested itself?

According to the informants, the impact of English as a global language on the region's language planning and policy-making is great. Data show that adjustments and amendments in policies concerning English education have been implemented at the provincial level including:

1. Publicity has been initiated through such media as the Internet, radios, TV and newspapers to raise people's awareness of the importance and necessity of English language education;
2. English has been made a compulsory subject for all university students, middle school students and primary school pupils in cities and the developed areas in the countryside in order to produce more high-quality talents for the ever-increasing needs of the people and the society;
3. English is one of the three most important subjects for the College Entrance Examinations in the province;
4. Guiding policies have been made to direct the universities to reform their teaching curriculums to guarantee the teaching and learning effectiveness of English;
5. Universities have been required to implement bilingual teaching of 8-10% content subjects to produce more *Guojixing Rencai* for the regional economic development;
6. Doctoral students are required to use and quote authentic academic English books, journal articles or other materials for their thesis to further improve their English competence;
7. Trilingual teaching is encouraged and supported in the primary schools in the underdeveloped minority areas;
8. Professional people are required to take a foreign language (usually English) test for higher academic promotion;

Meanwhile, the impact of English as a global language on the college language planning and

policy-making is also great. For example, some universities have initiated a policy that all the first- and second-year students take an English speaking test, which accounts for 10% of the final examination, to develop students' communicative competence in English, which is required of the *Guojixing Rencai*. Some universities have made incentive policies for continuing education for the teaching staff and the upgrading of their qualifications. In addition, students in Guangxi University are required to pass the national CET4 in order to be awarded the Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, an experimental policy is being implemented in Guangxi University where students are placed in different English classes in accordance with their English aptitude to raise the teaching and learning effectiveness of college English. Similar policies are also implemented in other colleges and universities, though the criteria are somewhat lower. For example, in Guangxi University for Nationalities, students are required to pass CET3 instead of CET4 for the Bachelor's degree, and bilingual teaching is implemented for some content subjects.

Education at tertiary institutions has been greatly decentralized in China. Colleges and universities have been empowered to manage their institutional affairs, including the right to appoint personnel, develop degree programmes, make their own specific curriculums, set up commercial enterprises and establish links with domestic and foreign industry and business (Mu, 1996: 296). These changes in policies have created a major shift in all aspects of education at the local sites. Colleges and universities in Guangxi can also make their own language teaching policies at the micro level in order to produce more *Guojixing Rencai* and accordingly make the universities more competitive. However, as the university status and infrastructures, teaching conditions and facilities, teachers' teaching level and students' proficiency in English, etc. differ from one university to another, policies at the micro-level, requirements of teachers and students

and above all government funding are also different from one to another.

Since the old higher educational system in China became dysfunctional after a series of economic reforms from 1985 onwards (Hare, 2002), the Chinese government began to expand the successful reforms in agriculture and economy into education, starting by increasing competition among institutions of higher education (HEIs) and the establishment of higher standards. The then State Education Commission (1993) set new goals and targets and has undertaken a series of reforms, including decentralization of the administration, reforms of enrollment procedure and the most significant one – the initiation of Project 211 (building 100 high-level key universities in the 21st century). In January 1996, the State Education Commission announced that RMB 10 billion yuan would be spent on the improvement of 100 key universities by the year 2000 (Huang, 2000). The work 'key' meant that all other universities would be excluded from the consideration. In Guangxi, only Guangxi University had the good fortune to be one of these key universities with some key specialities at national level, so it has got more funding than the other universities from both the central and local governments. This explains that Guangxi University differs to some extent from the other colleges and universities in the implementation of various reforms and policies.

In a word, the informants have recognized the importance of English in facilitating international communication related to the region's political, economic, and development transitions. Further, they have acknowledged the importance in the form of policies allowing English to be taught, personal decisions to enroll in English language classes, and advocacy for English in settings where it is not taught. It can be predicted that in the perceivable future, more changes will take

place in language planning and policy-making concerning English education to ensure the people and the region more participation in the global economy.

However, there is evidence that though education at tertiary institutions has been greatly decentralized in China, there is a lack of innovation in language planning and policy-making in Guangxi. Some policies with regard to college English education lag far behind those of the other developed regions due to people, particularly policy-makers' backward and old concepts. This phenomenon is not exclusive to college English education, but rather widespread in all other fields of education. Besides, it takes a much longer time in Guangxi for a new and good policy to be drafted and then implemented because of much resistance from both the top leaders and the common people. Sometimes, people know it is a coercive policy and they dislike it, but few of them challenge it. Therefore, if more changes are to take place in English language education at tertiary institutions in Guangxi, then people's old concepts must be changed first.

5.2.3 What are the informants' perceptions of college English language education in improving the regional economic development?

Data show that the informants demonstrated considerable uniformity in the view that high-quality talents or *Guojixing Rencai* contributed greatly to the growth of the regional economy. They considered that *Guojixing Rencai* were graduates who had not only rich specialised knowledge, the ability to keep up with the new development trends in their specialized domains and to innovate and create, but also strong competence and good communication skills in English. They thought that specialised knowledge should be placed in

the first position, and English competence the second in E-C bilingual teaching. Otherwise, these *Rencai* could not be termed *Guojixing Rencai* if they possessed only strong English competence because they would be the same as those students whose major was English.

On the other hand, they thought that competence in English has become an economic imperative and a valuable asset. It is beneficial in raising people's comprehensive ability and enhancing the human capital by preparing and enabling them to contribute to economic growth and thereby increase their standard of living. It is necessary for participation in situations that yield power. Opportunities are limited to people who possess the requisite linguistic patterns. In their opinion, the shortage of high-quality personnel with both rich specialised knowledge and strong proficiency in English accounts for the economic backwardness of the region.

Accordingly, it is believed that in the era of knowledge economy, the relation between people's strong competence of a foreign language (usually English) and the regional economic development is interactive. When people have a high level of English competence, the speed and quality at which these people absorb and obtain the latest information, science and technology, culture, and experience from abroad will be guaranteed. They accumulate more knowledge, resulting in their change in concepts and becoming more open and ready to accept new things, thus they become more creative and productive, pushing the economy ahead. In return, when the economy is developed, more investment will be put in education, leading to the rapid popularization of English. Then more people will be keener to learn English. Their ability to communicate in it, will further facilitate access into the labour market. English has become a *lingua franca* 'to the point that any literate educated person is in a very real sense deprived if he

does not know English' (Burchfield, 1985: 81).

Indian's rapid development in the software industry and Guilin's successful development in tourism further strengthened the informants' belief that college English language education contributes greatly to the regional socio-economic development. Therefore they held the belief that greater efforts should be made to popularize English and develop college English language education.

5.2.4 How do the informants' perceptions of English language education affect their own practical work?

The empirical data show that the policy-makers' feelings of and attitudes towards college English language education in improving the regional economic development had some impact on their work. Their awareness of the importance of English education in producing *Guojixing Rencai* and thereby in improving the regional economic development would make them:

1. propose strongly to the top officials that certain policies, such as bilingual teaching of content subjects, should be implemented;
2. tend to give more support to policies that contributes to raising students competence in English;
3. tend to be more willing to implement certain policies that they thought good, and even advise the school authorities to make supplementary policies for better effectiveness for these policies according to the teaching conditions and learning environment of their

universities/colleges. On the other hand, they would delay or even ignore the implementation of the policies they thought not good in developing students' ability.

However, the impact of the informants' perceptions on their own work was very limited for the reasons as follows:

1. they were not allowed to impose their own preference on any work like policy-making, which was very serious and had much to do with the benefits of the people in the whole region;
2. policies were made collectively instead of individually;
3. they did not have much say with regard to policy-making, so they just did what they were required.

It is understandable that in the Chinese culture policies are 'top-down' (Spring, 1998) and coercive (Huang, 2000). Absolute implementation without any distortion is required of the policies by the central government. Policy-makers at both the provincial and university levels are not allowed to make any changes. If it is a policy at the provincial level, then the universities/colleges are required to carry it out without mistake. And if it is a policy at the university level, all the faculties are required to implement it at any time. Furthermore, it is also the Chinese cultures that policies are made collectively or democratically. One person does not have much say. Unless he/she is the No. 1 leader, then his/her say will weigh much more than the others'. However, such hierarchical systems and coercive policies have been proved (Huang, 2000; Wang and Xue, 1998) to have more negative effects than positive ones. Under such a

system and imposed by such coercive policies, people tend to be conservative and keep silent. They dare not challenge the system and the policies. As a result, their creativity and originality are suppressed, resulting in a lack of innovative policies. Therefore, measures should be taken to update people's concepts. When people's concepts are changed, then the practice of policy-making will be changed and thus new policies will keep up with instead of lagging behind the socioeconomic development.

Data from the employers, on the other hand, show that the employers' perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development had great impact on their selection criteria of employees, though the criteria may differ in degree. In selecting employees, employers tend to:

1. employ university graduates with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English, which is beneficial to the development of the company/factory;
2. give priority to university graduates who have passed CET4 or CET6.

These employers all agreed that the more *Guojixing Rencai* they have, the more competitive their companies/factories will be. Their perception of the market and economic value of English in employment favour employees proficient in English. Clayton (2002: 3-25) stated that "On one side stand individuals who control English and who, as a result, have access to virtually all conversations about the country's political, economic, or development future. On the other side stand those who do not speak English and who thus are denied participation." It is the case now that if you know English, you can then have relations with people who speak that language— not

only economic relations, but also political relations. Language choice is market driven and the market favors English. It looks certain that English is thus gradually becoming an inevitable accompaniment to the regional economy. However, it is a great pity that the number of university graduates who are both proficient in English and rich in specialised knowledge in their domains is still small. So at present high-quality talents or *Guojixing Rencai* are in great shortage in Guangxi.

Data from the teacher informants, on the other hand, show that their perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development also had much impact on their teaching. Evidence shows that they:

1. are aware that the traditional teaching methods are divorced from the practical needs of the society and economy, and that advanced and effective teaching theories and methods should be adopted;
2. have recognized the importance of developing students' intercultural communicative competence which is essential to successful communication and thus highly favored by the society;
3. find it urgent to further improve their professional development in order to update their concepts and knowledge in their domains.

However, there is evidence that the examination-oriented system, the main obstructive barrier to college English teaching reform, still prevails at schools and universities in both developed and underdeveloped regions in China. (Boyle, 2000; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Huang, 2000; Wang and Xue, 1998; Zhao & Campbell, 1995). If measures were not taken to reform it, college English

language education would not be able to satisfy the needs of the students and the regional economic development.

Finally, data show that the student informants were highly aware that their competence in English was important for the region's development. All the informants, except for SS5, confessed that their perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development had impacted upon their learning. They believed that their proficiency in English would:

1. facilitate access into the labour market;
2. enable them to get access to the latest information, advanced knowledge;
3. guarantee them better job opportunities and brighter future;
4. enable them to contribute their knowledge and experience to conversations about the country's political, economic, and development future.

It was found that students generally showed a pragmatic response to English. As has been mentioned, English is necessary for participation in situations which yield power. Opportunities are limited to people who possess the requisite linguistic patterns. "The spread of English may result in communicative inequality that represses the speakers of languages other than English from articulating their voices in international communication" (Clayton, 2002: 3-25). Organizations from English-speaking countries, political, economic, and development enterprises associated with both non-English-speaking nations and with international organizations representing multilingual constituencies have chosen English as the medium of communication

in China, thus students are being encouraged to learn English in order to work with these enterprises and participate in their programs. For them, these connections present a very simple formula: those willing and able to spend the time and money to learn English can participate with foreign enterprises in these domains, while those who lack these resources cannot.

However, as the data indicates that there are still some students who, like SS5, do not think their proficiency in English will count in their future development. They don't think it equally important for students of different majors to learn English well. For students in certain majors, such as Chinese, Chinese medicine, many think it not very necessary for them to learn English. Their low awareness of the functions and importance of English and their low motivation account at least to a certain degree for the low learning and teaching effectiveness of college English education in Guangxi.

5.2.5 To what extent do informants feel that the standard of the current college English language education can meet the needs of the region's economic development?

As indicated by the data, all the informants agreed that a degree of progress has been achieved in college English language education of Guangxi due to the implementation of various reforms, the adoption of various teaching theories and methods, and the change of teachers' concepts. For example, the pass rate of CET3, CET4 has increased considerably. In addition, students' oral competence in English is higher than before. So some teacher informants believed that college English language education could meet the needs of the regional economic development to a

certain extent.

However, there is evidence to show that the standard of the present college English language education of Guangxi is still too low to meet the needs of the regional economic development (Huang, 2000). It was found that:

1. students' communicative competence in English is probably too low to meet the needs of the society and economy;
2. college English is largely examination-oriented and divorced from the real needs of the economy;
3. the number of *Guojixing Rencai* or high-quality talents is still too small to satisfy the fast growth of the regional economy;
4. students' lack of intercultural knowledge make it difficult for them to carry on conversations with foreign speakers, and to write about such topics as their own living environment, their own cultures, not to speak of foreign cultural issues.

The low level of English teaching, actually, is not exclusive to college English teaching, but is part of a much more pervasive set of problems at schools of all levels, particularly at tertiary institutions in Guangxi. More efforts need to be made and it will take some time for college English language education to reach the kind of level that would meet the needs of the region's economic development.

5.2.6 What problems do informants consider exist in the present college English language education of Guangxi?

There is evidence that many problems exist in current college English language education in Guangxi. These problems are not exclusive to college English language education in Guangxi. The data here reinforce a wide spread phenomenon at college English language education in many colleges and universities in developing regions like Guangxi.

1. Full awareness of the importance of English language education in producing high-quality or *Guojixing Rencai* and thus improving the regional economic still remains to be enhanced;
2. The present college English teaching system is divorced from that of the middle school, each being independent of itself and not progressive in content;
3. Government funding and investment are in great shortage, leading to inadequate research on college English education;
4. Policies concerning college English education tend to be conservative and coercive;
5. The irregular instruction in English in the middle schools of the less developed minority areas renders it difficult for many minority students to improve their English at colleges/universities;
6. English teachers' well-being and working conditions are poor, and there are a lack of opportunities for further study or professional development, resulting in low motivation and "brain drain";
7. Students are not taught in accordance with their English aptitude, leading to low

learning and teaching effectiveness;

8. Bilingual teaching, an effective means to produce *Guojixing Rencai* who possess strong competence in English and rich specialised knowledge, is largely neglected;
9. Most employers judge the students' English competence mainly by whether they have passed CET4 or CET6, reinforcing their beliefs of possessing testing skills and passing certain examinations;
10. Students lack the necessary cultural knowledge, including both the home cultures and foreign cultures, leading to low communication competence in English;
11. The curriculum is characterized by teacher-centred teaching instead of student-centred teaching;
12. College English curriculum is geared mainly to developing students' reading ability, *with an emphasis on the acquisition and repetition of superficial knowledge*;
13. Teachers rely heavily on textbooks, rote learning, exercise and memorization;
14. English teaching is still largely examination-oriented;
15. Teachers do not challenge the current assessment systems and the traditional teaching practices;
16. Teachers' abilities, though some informants felt that they were sufficient for the task, are, in some cases, limited.
17. The use of audiovisual aids and computers in education is still limited, mainly because of the huge financial outlay required to provide them for the hundreds of schools throughout the region. This is true even at tertiary level.

These results seem to support many other researchers' views, such as Cortazzi and Jin (1996b),

Grin and Vaillancourt (2001: 65-7), Zhao and Campbell (1995), Wang (1998), Boyle (2000), etc. For example, Grin and Vaillancourt (2001: 65-7) think that there is a general lack of awareness, especially among company employees, of the economic value of English in doing their business. This underestimation of the value of the language is also reflected in the interviews of some student informants, and in the practice of many people in Guangxi. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) think that Chinese teachers tend to emphasize English language knowledge, content, teacher-centered classrooms and exam results; they tend to stick to the textbook, which is often the same one throughout practically the whole country; they put much more emphasis on learning grammar and vocabulary lists, and on keeping an eye firmly fixed on the national exams. Given the importance of exams in the Chinese educational system, it is not surprising that students often prefer the examination-orientated approach of their Chinese teachers and are enthusiastic about courses which by Western standards would be dull and geared simply towards the exam (Wang and Xue, 1998). Schools and teachers pay closer attention to learning and memorising knowledge instead of training students' skills, attitudes and other non-cognitive attributes (Wu, 1994). It is stated by the Chinese Ministry of Education that one of the largest perceived problems of 'examination-oriented education' is that students are always put in a passive position: compelled to learn for the purpose of dealing with examinations. This can lead to students having good skills in answering examination questions but a lower capability for dealing with problems in practice (Ministry of Education, 1999a, 46-47).

5.3 Recommendations to solve the existing problems

These problems, both wide spread and also specific to college English teaching in Guangxi,

reinforce each other. Simply solving one problem may have little impact. Hence, seventeen general recommendations are now made as ways of resolving these problems.

1. Use publicity media to further enhance people's awareness

Publicity media such as the Internet, TV, radios and newspapers should be used to further raise people's awareness of the importance of developing English language education in improving the region's economic development. Most people in Guangxi, have long been isolated from the outside world because of the region's backwardness in such fields as economy and communications. Their awareness and attitudes towards the economic value of foreign languages, particularly English, still do not fit in with the greater socioeconomic development. Only when people's awareness is raised, will it be possible for more support to be gained, either financially or spiritually, to reform and further develop English education in Guangxi.

2. More investment in college English education

Higher education in China had a very poor start and still doesn't have enough input in terms of financial support. We can justify this from the evidence Wang and Ke (2003: 588) provided in this regard:: "In developed countries more than 6% of GNP is put into education, while in China the figure rarely exceeds 2.5%, far behind even Brazil and India. A survey of 153 countries conducted by UNESCO reveals that China ranks 145th with regard to the average per capita spending on education. In China, education funds come mainly from the government, while only a portion of the funds of most universities in Western countries is from the government, the rest

being raised by themselves since they are private. Their resources are far more abundant than those of any university in China. In 2000, China's total spending on education totaled 10.9 billion yuan, or US\$ 1.3 billion, only half of the annual funding for Harvard University alone." Wang and Ke (2003: 588) Actually, the whole picture of the economically backward areas like Guangxi is even worse. Shortage of funds and investment is very serious for higher education, especially college English language education (Huang, 2000), the value of which is underestimated.

Therefore, more government funding and social investment should be invested in college English education. One major reason why English education in Guangxi is low in quality lies in the difficult access to better teaching facilities and instructional equipment. It was mentioned in Chapter Two that because of the national economic policies which privileged more developed regions since the 1980s, schools in these areas are better off in terms of financial resources, with better facilities and equipment for English language education. In contrast to the optimistic picture of the schools in the developed areas, schools in the less developed areas, especially the minority regions like Guangxi, tend to be inadequately equipped (Henze, 1992; Yang, 2001). Quite a large number of these schools even have financial difficulties in repairing dangerously dilapidated school buildings, let alone up-to-date teaching facilities and equipment. Consequently, a great majority of the schools in the less developed areas lack the 'hardware' to support educational reform and innovations whose success often depends on the availability of good teaching facilities and extensive use of instructional technologies. This is one of the major barriers hindering the development of English education in Guangxi. Huang's (2000) study shows that funding for education in Guangxi either at the secondary level or at the tertiary level

is far from enough. So more privileged financial support is badly needed from both the local and central governments to resolve problems resulting from financial difficulties.

3. Implement flexible and pragmatic policies at the provincial level

Flexible and pragmatic policies at the provincial level should be made and implemented according to the needs of the region's socioeconomic development. Though some preferential treatment (Huang, 2000) has been given by the central government because of its special situation, still too much conservatism permeates the concepts of educational reform in Guangxi. It was mentioned earlier that the educational policies in Guangxi usually lag behind those in the developed regions by at least five years. This situation should be changed, and more consideration should be given to making the best use of the privileged treatment and policies the central government made strategically in the past two years for the development of the western regions of the country, getting rid of those obsolete education systems and implementing more flexible and pragmatic policies according to the local socioeconomic needs. Colleges and universities should be allowed in terms of policies to reconstruct their specialties, teaching and research. Different types and levels of syllabus for English teaching should be set for different universities according to their special characteristics and conditions. For example, the standards of bilingual teaching should be higher for universities like Guangxi University, since it has more funding, better teaching facilities and teaching personnel.

4. Create a favourable environment for English learning

Greater efforts should be made to create a favourable environment to motivate students and offer them more opportunities to learn English. The rapid economic growth in the developed regions has brought with it growing awareness of the importance and value of English among people and an escalating demand for proficiency in English. Communicative language learning activities and pedagogical efforts directed at enhancing language skills feature in classroom teaching and learning. However, the lag in economic development of the less developed areas has limited the demand for English proficiency and hence the development of ELT there. There is little opportunity to use English for social and vocational purposes in these areas, and students have virtually no exposure to English out of class. In other words, in comparison with the developed regions, these areas do not have a favourable English learning environment or the impetus for a pedagogical orientation towards developing communicative competence in students. The uses of English are largely limited to the domain of education (Zhao & Campbell, 1995). Students study English mainly to secure a place in an institution of higher learning (Feng, 1999). Consequently, the motivation to learn English is still low among the students in these areas. To create a favourable English learning environment, the key solution lies in the acceleration of the region's greater openness to the outside world and the speeding up of economic development.

5. Reform the English curricula of both middle school and college

Immediate measures should be taken to reform the English curricula of both middle school and college, and to re-position the teaching goals and contents of both curricula. Few primary schools

in Guangxi offered English instruction until the year 2001 when a directive by the Ministry of Education (2000a) required that all primary schools nationwide to start English teaching at Primary Three. As a result, a great majority of students began to learn English from scratch after they went to secondary school, resulting in their difficulties in English learning at tertiary level. So English should be introduced into the primary one curriculum just as it has been the case in the developed regions. In this way the popularisation of primary ELT is likely to lead to a reasonably good foundation for the students for their English study at the secondary and tertiary level. Meanwhile, the teaching goals and contents of both middle school and college should also be reformed and repositioned so that they complement each other instead of being divorced one from the other. A certain degree of continuity in textbook contents and teaching goals should be maintained and balanced.

6. Reform and further develop the current English syllabuses

The current English syllabuses should be reformed and further developed. As discussed earlier, the decentralization policy pursued since 1985 has allowed a number of economically and socioculturally advantaged regions to develop their own syllabuses to meet diverse social, cultural and economic needs. However, most of the less developed areas have been required to adopt the syllabuses drawn up by the Ministry of Education (2000b, 2000c). These syllabuses have set lower teaching objectives and requirements than the syllabuses for the more developed areas. To cater for the growing demand for English proficiency and to build on the rising quality of ELT, the underdeveloped areas like Guangxi should also be allowed to develop their own syllabuses that are interfaced with new developments in ELT theories and practices worldwide.

Such syllabuses should prioritise communicative competence, stress an integrated development of language skills, advocate some form of task-based instruction, and promote learner autonomy.

7. Introduce new teaching concepts and theories

New teaching concepts and theories should be introduced from developed countries to reform the present college teaching systems. The traditional Chinese culture of learning impinges on English language education in such underdeveloped areas as Guangxi. The most striking feature is the conceptualisation of education more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a practical process of knowledge construction and use. Because of this conceptualisation, the traditional Chinese model of teaching is a mimetic one that emphasises the transmission of knowledge (Paine, 1990, 1992). The favoured teaching methods are expository, and the learning process is teacher-dominated (Biggs, 1996; Scollon, 1999). A teacher's paramount responsibility is to select, mediate, and transmit authoritative knowledge whose immediate use may not be transparent to students (Hu, 2002b; Lee, 1996). Against this background, students are greatly influenced. They prefer learning strategies such as high receptiveness to teacher-transmitted knowledge, intense repetition of what is difficult or not understood, constant review of old knowledge to gain new knowledge and deeper understanding, accurate reproduction of learned knowledge, meticulous attention to fine details of knowledge, memorisation, and mental rather than verbal activeness (Wu, 1983a, 1983b; Yu, 1984).

Due to the greater openness of the developed areas to the outside world, the traditional Chinese culture of learning is weakened in its influence in the developed regions. On the other hand, the

less developed areas are still largely isolated, and there is no substantive exposure to foreign cultures. As a result, the traditional Chinese culture of learning is kept relatively intact from external influences and exerts a strong influence on the approaches to teaching and learning adopted in these areas. Relatively fewer advanced teaching and learning theories and approaches in foreign languages have been implemented in these underdeveloped areas. If Guangxi aims to enter the global society, its education must keep in pace with the international standards. Its academic learning and teaching styles in EFL should not fall behind the advanced academic learning and teaching theories and styles.

8. Adopt new and interactive authentic teaching textbooks and materials

With regard to English language teaching materials, the less developed areas, particularly Guangxi, are also greatly disadvantaged. In Chapter Two, we mentioned that the more developed areas have access to a wider range of textbooks, which incorporate new conceptions of education and international education developments and cater for the different needs of English learners, provide them with greater exposure to authentic use of English, and create a condition for them to learn the language experientially and communicatively. By contrast, such English-language materials are largely absent from the less developed regions. This means that students in these regions are exposed to English only in their English classes and mainly through a single set of textbooks. As a result, these students have little opportunity to experience English in authentic use and to learn it in context. This not only makes it difficult for them to develop their communicative competence in the language but can also affect their language learning strategies and incline them to take a largely analytical approach to English learning. Students from the less

developed regions are more likely to treat English as an object of analytical study rather than a means of communication. To solve the problems concerning the poor teaching facilities and instructional equipment and the shortage of up-to-date teaching materials in English language education in the underdeveloped regions, joint efforts need to be made by both the central and local governments in terms of providing more financial support and making privileged policies.

9. Introduce new teaching concepts and methodologies

Because of the constraints in the resources available and the prevailing sociocultural influences, the dominant ELT approach followed in the less developed areas like Guangxi for many years has been the grammar-translation method (Burnaby and Sun, 1989; Fu, 1986). This traditional language teaching approach is characterised by systematic and detailed analysis of grammar, extensive use of translation in teaching and learning, rote learning of vocabulary, and emphasis on written language (Ng and Tang, 1997; Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The major goals of ELT are viewed as developing in students a solid knowledge of the structural patterns of English, the grammar and vocabulary knowledge needed by students to pass various English tests, the ability to read in the target language, and other intellectual skills which can be fostered in the process of learning a foreign language. The basic assumption underlying the approach is that a foreign language can be most effectively taught and learned through mastering its grammar rules and applying the resultant grammar knowledge in exercises that require structural manipulation of the target language. Thus lessons are organised around language points – sentence patterns, prescriptive grammar rules and vocabulary items. The target language is typically studied at the sentence level, with little concern for discourse functions; grammar rules are taught deductively,

usually in Chinese; and the focus of study is on reading and writing (Lam, 2002; Li, 1984; Rao, 1996). In some schools, teachers may combine the grammar- translation approach with some form of audiolingualism, an oral-based pedagogical approach that views the learning of a foreign/second language as a process of forming a new set of verbal habits (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). In classrooms where such a mixed approach is adopted, there is a predominant concern with formal accuracy of language production and constant correction of students' mistakes in order to develop good verbal habits. Formal practices such as pattern drilling and exercises involving repetition, imitation, and substitution are frequently used to develop fluency in production. Contrastive analyses of English and Chinese are often employed to help students understand structural differences between the two languages and to identify possible areas of learning difficulty; teaching is generally organised around the presentation and practice of structural patterns.

While the grammar-translation method, audiolingualism, or a combination of the two, can be found in many English classrooms in the more developed regions, there is a growing tendency for teachers there to incorporate some principles and practices of new teaching approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into their teaching. CLT tries to balance pedagogical attention to communicative functions and formal properties of the target language. It stresses the provision of opportunities for students to use the target language to engage in problem-solving activities and real communication. Now there is the tendency that a 'strong' version of CLT, which is a form of CBEI (Content-based English Instruction) and integrates the teaching and learning of English with instruction in non-language school subjects (Hu, 2002a), is being adopted in the developed regions. With strong support in the areas of materials development,

teacher training, and contextual support (Hu, 2002a; Wu, 2001), CLT, especially CBEI, has been adopted mostly in the developed areas. Its adoption in these areas has been largely successful because of the economic and social values that communicative competence in English has accrued, the amenability to foreign sociocultural influences as a result of frequent exposures, the growing investment in modern teaching facilities, the relatively easy access to a variety of instructional resources, the availability of well-trained teachers with professional and communicative competence, and the reforms of curriculums and syllabuses in recent years. However, such new teaching approaches are not widely adopted in the less developed areas. Therefore, measures should be taken so that new teaching concepts and theories and methodologies are adopted and implemented in the classrooms of English teaching in Guangxi.

10. Promote teachers' professional development to enhance their teaching abilities

The developed regions' economic prosperity and better living standards, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, have helped schools there not only attract a disproportionate number of high quality university graduates but also lure many qualified teachers from the less developed regions as well as from abroad. Because of their good professional competence, teachers in the developed regions are more capable of implementing pedagogies such as skills-oriented, task-based, and communicative approaches (Ng and Tang, 1997), leading to the students' strong competence in English. Compared with the developed areas, the less developed areas like Guangxi have a much lower proportion of qualified teachers. For historical and political reasons, a very large proportion of middle school English teachers in these areas have not received

professional training. Many of them are known as *minban* (community-sponsored) teachers and have received only a secondary education (Wang (2002). Because of the required expansion of English into lower secondary education, there has been a greater shortage of teachers of English than teachers of other subjects in the less developed areas. Take Guangxi as an illustration. The percentage of college English teachers with the Master's degree is lower than 20 percent. Consequently, a lack of professional training is a more acute problem with English teachers. As a result, a large number of English teachers in the less developed areas lack the necessary subject knowledge, communicative competence in English, and professional skills to adopt a more communicative approach to ELT, and they often teach updated textbooks in traditional ways (Leng, 1997). In particular, there is a general lack of knowledge of the cultures of English-speaking countries on the part of these teachers (Burnaby and Sun, 1989), and without such knowledge, it is difficult for them to develop communicative competence in their students, one component of which is sociolinguistic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980). The professional training and competence of teachers are thus decisive in raising the quality of college English language education and in improving students' competence in English. Greater attention at different levels, enough financial resources and more privileged policies need to be focused on if we expect college English language education in such less developed regions as Guangxi to make any breakthrough.

11. Implement content-based English instruction or bilingual teaching

It was mentioned earlier that English is still being taught as a subject at almost all levels in Guangxi. How to effectively integrate students' English language learning with their academic

study and future vocational and professional needs, i.e., the integration of content language in English education should be high on the agenda of the policy-makers and school authorities. CBEI or bilingual teaching, an effective way to develop students' competence in both English and their specialised knowledge, should be implemented as early as possible for as many content subjects as possible to generate more *Guojixing Rencai* to meet the increasing needs of the region's economic development. Content-based English instruction or bilingual teaching has been proved to be an effective way to develop high proficiency in the language (Hu, 2002a). Despite its effectiveness and growing popularity in the developed regions, the less developed areas like Guangxi lack the necessary resources and sociocultural conditions to implement CBEI or bilingual teaching. Urgent measures should be taken to resolve problems hindering the implementation of CBEI or bilingual teaching.

12. Cultural knowledge should become an integrated part of English teaching

The empirical data from the qualitative interviews justify the necessity that cultural knowledge of both foreign and home cultures should become an integrated part of English teaching. Also during the second China-ASEAN Exposition, the researcher herself and one of her MA students conducted another questionnaire on the foreign exhibitors and businessmen's opinion of the translation quality of the exposition. The results showed that 82% of the foreign exhibitors and businessmen were not satisfied with the translation quality. Over 60% of them thought the weak intercultural communicative competence of the translators and interpreters was responsible for the low translation quality (Huang and Luo, 2006). This data furthered strengthened the necessity of teaching cultural knowledge in the English classrooms. With the increasing international

integration of the production, exchange and consumption of goods and services, for which globalisation often stands, and with the wide use of the Internet, people from different countries with diverse cultural backgrounds will conduct business transactions with each other as well as communicate on topics of common concern. Communication is a two-way process if it is to be successful, and communication in the world of business is not limited to business only, it involves a wide range of knowledge. In an age of the global village, we need to learn from others but we also need to make our cultural heritage and traditions known to the outside world. Therefore, to train our students to become both proficient and culturally literate in the international language of English in a global setting is one important approach for universities to adopt to produce more *Guojixing Rencai* for the region's economic development.

13. A balance of language input and output

The issue of language input and output in our current teaching practice deserves a reconsideration. The role of input is of critical importance in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Given the status of English as a foreign language in China where students rarely use or encounter English outside educational contexts, it seems extremely necessary to improve the language input in at least two respects. First, try to create a better language environment, by organising after-class English activities like annual English festivals, English corners, or by establishing self-access language centers, adopting course books composed of two parts: one part in book form which would be relatively stable, while the other part would be dynamic in that texts could be changed or replaced with texts which are more up-to-date and relevant to students' interest and the topics in the staple part of the book. This idea is also

applicable to input in other language skills. Modern technology can be harnessed to our aid in this area. For example, use of Internet resources and web courses seem to be particularly suited for that purpose. We believe that relevance and authenticity will lead to learners' interest, and interest in turn will result in a strong motivation to learn a foreign language well.

The output hypothesis put forward by Swain (1985: 235) claims that output enhances the comprehension and acquisition of input. It should be noted that although input has received relatively sufficient attention in EFL circles in China, output is neglected to a certain degree. This neglect probably accounts for a general lack of proficiency in learners' productive skills like speaking and writing. At this juncture, we emphasize accuracy as well as fluency of English. It must be recognized that at the tertiary level, when English has already been learnt for about six to even nine years, we should not be content with developing our students' skills in short, interactional exchanges. Learners at that level should, instead, be able to extemporize on a given topic to a group of listeners, for example. This ability to give an uninterrupted oral or written presentation needs to be trained and practiced.

14. Challenge the traditional examination-oriented and assessment systems

The traditional examination-oriented and assessment systems is deeply rooted in China's education. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Central Government has made considerable changes to the existing system, its content and teaching methods throughout the country. However, during this period it was felt that more talented persons of high quality were needed and that the educational resources (funds and teachers) were

quite insufficient to do this. As a result, the government carried out a policy of selective resource allocation from the beginning of the 1950s. Human and material resources were amassed to run key schools. The policy of key schools resulted in examination-oriented education being intensified. In the mid-1980's, competition to enter university was increasing and examination-oriented education was further strengthened. Schools tend to focus on how to help students pass the selective examinations and how to increase promotion rates. In some areas the schools are divided into key and non-key schools according to the promotion rate and classes are divided into fast and slow streams according to their students' scholastic achievements. The students themselves are publicly ranked in order on the basis of test scores. As a consequence, schools use the test scores as the primary indicator for evaluating students and take the promotion rate as the main indicator for evaluating teachers. The educational authorities and parents use these indicators to evaluate the quality of schools. As far as college English education is concerned, students' proficiency in English is judged by whether or not they have passed CET4/6, while English teachers are assessed by the CET4/6 passing rates of their students. Under such examination and assessment system, students are always put in a passive position: compelled to learn for the purpose of dealing with examinations. This can lead to students having good skills in answering examination questions but a lower capability for dealing with problems in practice (Ministry of Education, 1999a, pp. 46–47).

Former Chinese president, Mao Zedong, criticised the examination-directed schooling structure many times. According to his views, teaching methods placed too much stress on book knowledge and examinations in school placed too great a learning load on students (Han and Yang, 2001). The *Outline for Reform in Education and Development in China* issued by the

Ministry of Education in 1993 (State Education Commission, 1993) proposed that education should be changed from 'examination-oriented education' to an education that is aimed at enhancing the citizens' quality, serving all students, promoting the students' ideas, morality, work skills and psychological quality in order to enhance the students' all-round development. The Third National Conference of Education, convened in June 1999, issued a report *Decisions on Deepening Reform in Education and Improving Quality-based Education in an All Round Way* (Ministry of Education, 1999b). This resolved to speed up reform in the admissions, examinations and assessment systems and to establish a mechanism for assessing schools, teachers and students. Local government at all levels is not allowed to take the promotion rate as an indicator for assessing the teaching quality of schools. Although there has been much progress in the reform of the educational assessment and examination systems since 1990, educational assessment in many areas, especially in less developed regions like Guangxi, is still in the shadow of examination-oriented education. It is important then that both the traditional examination-oriented and assessment systems are challenged, and measures taken to reform this examination and assessment system.

15. Make speaking part of the final examinations

Speaking, which is helpful to develop students' communicative competence should become part of the final examinations for all university students. English language education has long been dominated by the traditional grammar-translation method. The method is helpful in improving students' reading comprehension, but has little beneficial effect on their speaking ability. The method might have met the needs of the learners at the time when they had little opportunity to

come into contact with native speakers of English. However, in today's world with its freedom of movement and access to travel, Internet and various media resources, learners will feel frustrated when they cannot communicate freely with people from other countries in the global language, English. So, by making speaking as a part of the final examinations, students' attention will be directed to developing and improving their communicative competence. And teachers will have to adopt communicative teaching approaches to meet the needs of their students' as well as the growing needs of the region's economic development for more and more *Guojixing Rencai*.

16. Teach students in accordance with their English aptitude

The economy in many parts of Guangxi, especially the rural areas, is still backward. Due to the shortage of financial and infrastructural resources (including school facilities, instructional equipment, language learning materials, and professional competence of teachers and government policies and economic development), most students do not begin to learn English until they are promoted to junior middle schools. However, students in urban schools or schools in the developed places begin their English study at primary three. As a result, the competence of the two groups of students in English differs greatly in degree. Evidence from the semi-structured interviews shows that placing students of different English aptitude in the same class and teaching them at the same level does them more harm than good. The College English Syllabus (Higher Educational Press, 1999: 8) proposed that graded English teaching should be adopted due to students' different English levels, and different rules and methods be used in teaching different students. Many other researchers and scholars in China, such as Wang and Ke(2003), Hu (2005), Cheng (2005), Huang and Luo (2006), have also justified the necessity of

teaching students in accordance with their English aptitude. In Guangxi, only Guangxi University has tried on graded English teaching, which has proved quite successful. However, most of the other colleges and universities have not done anything in this regard. It is time that measures are taken to change such teaching practice. Students should be taught in accordance with their English aptitude.

17. Change the way employers judge students' English competence

In the job markets in Guangxi, quite a large number of employers still judge the college graduates' English competence by whether or not they have passed CET4 or CET6. This practice has led to an illusion among the students that the certificates for CET4 or CET6 are very important to their future job-hunting. Consequently, they pay special attention to obtaining examination skills in order to pass these sorts of examinations, which partly explains why the examination-oriented education still prevails in Guangxi and why the quality of college English education is still low and unsatisfactory. To change this situation, first of all the local government should make some efforts to change the employers' concepts and criteria of selecting prospective employees. Second, colleges and universities should also be aware of the harm of the examination-oriented education and take specific measures to reform it so that English education is not divorced from the socioeconomic development.

5.4 A summary of the chapter

This chapter, then, has interpreted and discussed the results based on the empirical data. The

interpretations and explanations for the results have been made according to the empirical evidence of this study, with support from similar evidence by other researchers as well as the government documents. A list of specific recommendations has been made according to the findings of the study. These recommendations were made around a series of contextual factors, which impinge on the dynamics of language teaching and learning, and from an ecological perspective, a perspective that takes into account the total economic, political, social, and cultural contexts in which language teaching and learning occur and their complex multifaceted interaction. In Chapter Six, the final chapter of conclusion, a general summary of the study will be made, with some reflections on some limitations of the research and some possible future research directions.

Chapter Six Conclusions and Suggested Future Research

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the author presented an interpretation and discussion of the results based on the empirical data, with support from similar evidence by other researchers as well as the government documents. A list of recommendations to solve the existing problems of the current college English language education were made based on the findings from the data which offered evidence as to the participants' perceptions of college English language education in improving the region's economic development. This evidence was used to justify the urgent development and improvement of college English language education so that it can produce more high quality talents for the region's economic development.

To conclude the thesis, the author will first give a general summary of the study in this chapter. At the beginning of the chapter, there will be reference to the literature in the field which proved to be particularly helpful, and the contribution of this study will be situated within the field. Its limitations will be discussed and there will also be some reflections on the research process itself, the difficulties which arose, and the compromises which had to be made. It will also point out the advantages which are offered by a small-scale research project. There will also be some suggestions for possible future research.

6.2 A general summary of the study

More specifically, in this study I intended

- ◆ to explore the impacts of English as a global language on the attitudes of the informants towards the regional language planning and policy -making, and the regional economy;
- ◆ to evaluate and analyze the opinions of the informants on using English to improve the regional economy;
- ◆ to evaluate and analyze whether the perceptions of the informants affect the practice of their work: language policy-making, selection criteria of employees, and teaching and learning of the English language;
- ◆ to identify whether the present college English language education can meet the needs of the regional economic development;
- ◆ to find out what problems exist in the present college English language education of Guangxi with regard to the region's economic prosperity;
- ◆ to make recommendations to resolve the existing problems existing in the current college English education by addressing issues identified in the empirical study with regard to the contextual factors at both local and global levels.

These aims seem to have been justifiably achieved through careful analysis of the empirical interview data.

The theoretical framework has been set out in Chapter Two based on the analysis of a wide range of literature on economic globalisation, the economic value of English as a global language, and the role of college English language in promoting the economic development of a state or a region. In order to confirm and identify Guangxi's policy-makers, employers, college teachers and students' views and perceptions on college English language education in improving the regional economic development of Guangxi, I chose to carry out hermeneutic research, in the belief that the interpretative paradigm was consistent with my research aims. I was seeking qualitative rather than quantitative data. Even given the practical constraints of time and funding, my empirical research generated a considerable amount of original data. I drew on the respondents' perceptions and experiences in four types of activities: policy-making, employees-selecting, college EFL teaching and learning. The data collection instruments were face-to-face semi-structured interviews and government official documents. A sample of the interview questions may be seen in the appendices. The criteria of assessing qualitative research in the process of collecting data were also discussed in Chapter Three. They involve reliability, validity, triangulation and relevance. Ethical issues that should be observed in conducting qualitative research were considered. Some strengths and weaknesses of the data collection procedures have also been pointed out in Chapter Three and they will be further discussed and clarified in the subsequent section of this chapter.

In the early planning stages of my study, my choice of research instruments was closely related to

the method of analysis to be used subsequently. Morrison (1993), Cohen et al (2000), Spradly (1979), Mostyn (1985), Silverman (2000) were significantly influences in various aspects, especially concerning the way in which I carried out my data analysis, the method and process of which I discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Content analysis was the main methods of the data analysis. I drew on the work of various scholars and researchers on globalisation, the economic value of English language education and so on, for theories which would complement and illuminate my empirical investigation. The selected data represented the concepts which could be identified in the respondents' talk about their attitudes towards and perceptions of English language education in improving the regional economic development. My interpretation of their concepts and the relationships between these concepts was illustrated by the words of the respondents themselves. It was from their own words that I drew examples to support the views expressed by my respondents that English language education plays a key role in promoting the region's economic development. The analysis of the empirical data in Chapter Four suggests that the data have confirmed the positive attitude of the respondents towards the economic value of English language education, which is in conformity with the theoretical and conceptual discussions in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five is a discussion and interpretation of the empirical data and the possible explanations around the results. The interpretations and explanations of the results have been made according to the empirical evidence of this study, with support from similar evidence by other researchers as well as the government documents. A list of recommendations to solve the existing problems of Guangxi's college English education has been made according to the findings of the study. These recommendations were made around a series of contextual factors, which impinge on the

dynamics of language teaching and learning, and from an ecological perspective, a perspective that takes into account the total economic, political, social, and cultural contexts in which language teaching and learning occur and their complex multifaceted interaction.

6.3 Reflections on some limitations of the study

It had been a long-cherished ambition for me to carry out a large-scale study on the relationship between college English education and the region's economic development. However, I was quite simply fascinated and motivated by my experience and EFL teaching profession to find out how the informants perceived college English language education in improving the regional economic development. On the other hand, devising and conducting a study of this kind meant that I was limited by certain practical constraints, notably of time, funding and so on.

Conducting a wider range of empirical study with a larger sample could have been more preferable and might have offered more significant findings. However, I had to content myself with research mainly in limited colleges and universities in the capital city, Nanning, of Guangxi and mainly rely on my colleagues, friends and students' cooperation for generating my empirical data and followed Merten's (1998) view that small-scale research could lend itself particularly well to qualitative methods. I took account of these issues in designing and conducting my study. For example, I knew from the outset that my research could generate data for qualitative rather than quantitative analysis, if only because of the small numbers of respondents likely to be involved. However, recognition of this meant I worked very much on the detail of my respondents' concepts and I feel confident that I have presented an acceptable interpretation of

their replies, have been able to “stand in their shoes,” as it were, to gain a privileged insight into the way in which they see the world. My interest was in interpreting meaning, not just interviewing, recording and receiving some messages. Quantitative studies do not yield this depth of analysis. As Honess (quoted in Beail, 1985: 244) points out: “an intensive study of individuals is the route par excellence for developing and testing general propositions concerning behaviour or experience.”

I was fortunate that I knew most of the participants, who were selected from among my close colleagues, friends and students. They were willing to spend time with me and give the information needed. However, this had both advantages and disadvantages during the fieldwork.

AS Goward says:

Ethnographic fieldwork is subjective both in the sense that ethnographers report selectively what they are predisposed to see, hear and record from the floods of words and events that wash over them every day in the field; and in the sense that the kind and quality of information which comes their way depends on a very large extent on the kind and quality of relationships between anthropologists and their informants (cited in Ellen, 1984: 118).

The advantage was that access to my respondents was generally not a problem. I knew them well and experienced the empathy between the respondents and me. However that may at times have been a disadvantage. I continue to wonder to what extent my relationship with my respondents hindered, rather than helped, the interview and analysis process. I have mentioned this in Chapter Three, but return to it here as I do feel it was a limitation to my study. Because I was the only researcher, I had no opportunity for standardization or comparison of any kind of my findings

with those of anyone else. I am not convinced I have been able to completely eliminate my personal bias from either the ways in which I conducted interviews with them, or the way in which I analysed the data they produced. Sarchy (cited in Ellen, 1984: 129) speaks of the particular difficulties of the balance to be struck between empathy and detachment.

Besides, as a known researcher to them, I wonder to what extent I was really able to find out my respondents' honest views, to what extent they were "doctored" for my consumption and whether I made the factor of "social acceptability" stronger. Goward (quoted in Ellen, 1984: 116) reports the frustration of a number of ethnographers in this respect when he says: "Berreman for example, discovered that some people were more concerned about creating the 'right' impression on him than others." However, I do believe that my study is a fair representation of my respondents' views. Ellen (1984:149) has summarized work in this area and highlights the importance of respondents' rights to consultation and feedback. I took account of this and have consulted my respondents, who are satisfied they have been fairly portrayed. They are also satisfied the level of anonymity in my writing up (Ellen, 1984: 138) is sufficient to protect their identities. All I can say at this point is that I was aware of this potential bias throughout and have endeavoured to eradicate its negative effects on my findings.

Reflection, retrospection and also introspection were the features of my study, both for me and for my respondents. I have no doubt about the significant value of the data I have drawn in furthering my own learning and research in that it has in me an "emergence of a new self-awareness born out of an awareness of the relative nature of values and of the universal aspect of human nature" (Yoshinkawa, 1978, quoted in Kim, 1988: 145).

Inevitable, some respondents were more confident and eloquent than others in replying to questions in the interviews. Where they were having difficulty in supplying information, it was necessary to adopt an encouraging manner in order to ensure that the interview was a positive experience for them. This procedure may, at times, have distorted the responses, although the general impression gained was one of honesty and openness on their part. Care was always taken to assure the respondents that the interviews did not touch upon matters which might concern their personal identities, and confidential issues of the companies or government. This fact imposed a limitation on the study. However, this compromise was necessary in the interests of obtaining clearer data in relation to the focus of the study.

To conclude about the value of this kind of research, I would add that it had undoubtedly been of benefit to my respondents, too. For example, all the four teacher informants said that they began to reflect upon their own teaching practice, which they rarely did before. In addition, the policy-maker informants said that through taking part in the research interviews, they had found some errors in their policy-making. In a word, during the research process they have engaged themselves in “cognitive mirroring”, exploring their own structuring of meaning (Beail, 1985: 271) and they have been offered an opportunity to narrate and reflect upon the narration, to analyse and interpret (Zarate et al, 1996: 85).

6.4 Some possible future research

As I have just said in the previous section of this chapter, it might be more satisfying to have a

larger sample to produce more significant findings and it might be better to combine and complement more varieties of research techniques to conduct future research. In future research, first of all, various questionnaires for quantitative quasi-experimental analysis could be designed. For example, a questionnaire could be used to analyse socioeconomic needs of English language education in improving the regional socioeconomic development. Another questionnaire on teachers and students' perceptions of the socioeconomic needs and the relationship between English language education and the regional economic development could lead to better assessment and effective feedback of the whole picture of college English language education in Guangxi. In addition, qualitative research techniques such as various types of interviews, needs analysis and so on, could be used in a longitudinal study.

The social environment and economic development without doubt exert a huge impact on second language acquisition. Spolsky (1989: 131-3) sees the impact of the social environment and economic development from two perspectives. On the one hand, it affects learners' attitudes towards the language being learned, its speakers and the learning situation that are hypothesized to directly influence their motivation; on the other hand, it determines the social provision of language learning situation and opportunities of various kinds. This impact has already been strongly felt since the implementation of the country's policy of reform and opening-up. China's WTO membership and Beijing's successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games will intensify the nation's involvement in the process of economic globalisation and international communication. If the actual need for English in the past for many people, including college students and government officials, was "deferred" or was only of value for passing various tests, then China's WTO membership will presumably strengthen the socioeconomic and environmental support by

making the need for English more pragmatically and immediately felt. The researcher has made the first attempt to study twenty informants' perceptions of English language education in improving the region's economic development. More research on various aspects in this regard is needed, which will be of great significance and certainly be beneficial in enhancing the level of college English language education, contributing more to the region's socioeconomic development in terms of developing more and more qualified high quality talents.

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Appendix I

A Pre-interview Letter

Dear Mr./Mrs/Ms _____,

I shall be undertaking some small-scale qualitative research to be written up as a thesis for the degree of the Doctor of Education which I have been studying for in the Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, the United Kingdom. The thesis will be titled “An Evaluative Analysis of the Opinions of Policy-makers, Employers, University Teachers & Students on English Language Education in Improving the Regional Economy of Guangxi, China.” Under the impact of globalization, many countries in the world are rapidly integrating into the global community through a shared medium of communication, mainly English, which dominates international exchanges of knowledge, is central to technological development, and the international language for business and commerce, science and technology, international relations and diplomacy, and sports. With China’s increasingly active involvement in economic globalization and international cooperation, the biggest challenge for China is that high quality talents, especially *Guojixing Rencai* with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English, are in great shortage. This research aims to find out how people perceive College English education in developing such *Rencai* and promoting the region’s economic development.

The main instrument of this research will be one-to-one answers or interviews to my open-ended questions. To enable me to carry out the research, I am now asking you to spend some time

participating in my interviews. This is really a good way for me to find out about perceptions of college English education in developing Guojixing *Rencai* and promoting the region's economic development. I would appreciate you very much if you could tell me as much as you can. **Complete confidentiality and anonymity** will be guaranteed in my report on the research. So you can tell the truth. I would be very grateful if are willing to assist me with my research which could prove useful not only to my research but also to college English education and the region's economic development.

I am looking forward to your early reply or consent to take part in the interview. If you have anything you are not clear about or to ask about, please don't hesitate to contact me either by email or letter or by telephone. My postal address is # 735, West Campus of Guangxi University, Nanning 530004, Guangxi. My email address is blhlsh8833gx@hotmail.com, and my telephone number is (+86) 771 3236628.

Thanks in advance and best wishes

Sincerely yours,

Binlan Huang

Ed.D student, cohort 3

Centre for Educational Studies

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Appendix II

Sample Questions and Triggers for Interviews

I. Economic Globalisation and English as a Global Language

1. What do you know about economic globalisation? (definitions, characteristics and functions)
2. What impacts does economic globalisation have on our country?
3. Which language (English or Chinese) can be called an international or global language?
4. What do you think make English become an international or global language?
(characteristics)
5. Why do you think English is so popular in the world as well as in China? (importance, role)

II. Impact of English as a global language on the regional language planning and policy-making

6. Do you think English as a global language has had any impact on the region's language planning and policy-making?
7. To what extent has English as a global language impacted the region's language planning and policy-making at the provincial level? (give some examples for justification)
8. To what extent has English as a global language impacted the region's language planning and policy-making at the university level? (give some examples for justification)

III. English language education in improving the regional economy

9. How do you see the relationship between college English education and *Guojixing Rencai*?
(Do you think it important for *Guojixing Rencai* to be proficient in English?)
10. Do you think such Rencai should possess both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English? (give some reasons to support the answer)
11. Who do you prefer? Talents with both rich specialised knowledge and strong competence in English? or talents with rich specialised knowledge but limited competence in English? (give reasons to support the answer)
12. How do you perceive college English education in improving the region's economic development? (importance and role in developing high quality talents or *Guojixing Rencai*)

IV. Impacts on practical work

13. Does your attitude towards English education in improving the region's economic development influence your own practical work? (Yes/No)
14. In what way and to what extent? (Give examples for justification in policy-making, selection criteria of employees, English teaching and learning)

V. Present standards of college English language education and the needs of the region's economic development

15. How do you evaluate the standards of the current college English education? (high or low)
16. Do you think the standards of the current college English education can meet the needs of the socio-economic development? (yes/no, justification for your answer)

VI. Existing problems of college English language education

17. Do you think there exist any problems in the current college English language education?
(yes/no)
18. What problems do think exist in the current college English language education? (in what way, give specific examples: examination-oriented education, bilingual teaching,)

VII. Solutions to the existing problems

19. What measures do you think should be taken to resolve the existing problems in the current college English language education? (give specific examples: policy issues, investment, teaching materials and methodologies, bilingual teaching)