

**English in the Chinese
Foreign Language Classroom**

Danping Wang

Preface

The reemergence of China has attracted voluminous media coverage and the resulting global craze for learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) has led to academic studies of this phenomenon (Duff, 2013; Everson and Xiao, 2009; Gil, 2008; Lo Bianco, 2007; McDonald, 2011; Tsung and Cruikshank, 2010; Xing, 2006). CFL teaching and learning of Chinese is growing quickly, both as a language education market and as an independent discipline, both in undergraduate and postgraduate studies in China's higher education institutions. There were over 100 million CFL learners worldwide by 2010 and by the end of 2011, there were 861 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms established in 106 countries and regions in the world (Hanban, 2012). Within the People's Republic of China, there has also been a surge in the numbers of international students of Chinese: a record high of 292,611 students in 2011 from 194 different countries were studying in 660 universities and institutes in 31 provinces, according to the statistics released by the China Association for Foreign Students Affairs (2011).

The large influx of international students of Chinese has quickly and inevitably brought different cultures and languages into the CFL classroom and into society. Prior to the global Chinese craze, English had spread widely around the world, and the number of English speakers is still increasing steadily, especially in what Kachru calls the "Expanding Circle" (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2009b: 18; Kachru, 1985; 1992) where English is spoken as a foreign language. In the CFL classroom, it has been widely noted that Chinese teachers use English as a lingua franca (ELF) to assist their teaching in a number of ways, such as explaining Chinese grammar, directing classroom activities, giving assignments and introducing Chinese culture to their students. However, English is not exclusively used between native

speakers of English and Chinese teachers in the CFL classroom but among everyone who shares English as a common language, which is, as demonstrated by one of the studies in this book, the majority of CFL students. The popularity of the Chinese language and the fast development of ELF worldwide together mean that a new cultural and academic milieu of foreign language teaching and learning has evolved which requires more empirical attention.

Based on the previous studies on the global spread of English and the growing importance of the Chinese language, this book focuses on the role of English in the CFL classroom, and specifically, how English can be used as a lingua franca, and more importantly, as a medium of instruction for teaching and learning the Chinese language. Chinese is an ancient language but teaching it internationally is fairly new. The language situation of today's world is drastically different from that which existed in the past. English has become the most important global language, more widespread than any other language has ever been. However, few studies have been done on the impact of this global linguistic environment on foreign language teaching and learning, specifically on how the global spread of English as an international language influences CFL learners and teachers. Focusing on this previously neglected topic, this book has developed "ELF pedagogy" for preparing CFL teachers for a multilingual world and calls for improving CFL teaching not only from the linguistic side, but also from the social and global perspective. This book will contribute to a significant scholarly debate on the role of English in China's education system and discussions of the future relationship between Chinese and English.

The discussion of the role and use of English in CFL classrooms draws on the theoretical framework of a paradigm shift and a changing attitude towards first language (L1) use in second language (L2) teaching and learning. Research about using learners' L1 or familiar languages in foreign language classrooms has been one of the most extensively researched topics in recent years (Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009; Levine, 2011; Littlewood and Yu, 2009; Swain, Kirkpatrick and Cummins, 2010; Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; Wang Danping,

2010; 2012; Wang and Kirkpatrick, 2012), not only in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), but also in the teaching and learning of German, French, Chinese and other foreign languages. It has proved not only necessary but also a pressing task to reexamine the overarching language policy whereby only the target language is allowed to be used in the L2 classroom. However, a comprehensive study of the issue of medium of instruction in CFL teaching is a relatively a new topic in foreign language education research. Previous empirical studies have suggested that EFL is becoming a *de facto* medium of instruction in CFL classroom teaching and learning (Wang Danping, 2012; 2013b) though “Chinese-only” pedagogy remains the predominant language policy in CFL teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the current situation of language choice in CFL classrooms in China. Plenty of studies have been done on teaching Chinese linguistics, but very few have been done on the role and function of English in CFL teaching. Moreover, there is virtually no empirical research which strives to explore CFL teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards English use in teaching and learning CFL. The present research is designed to fill these gaps, investigating the actual situation of code choices for CFL teachers and students and eliciting CFL teachers and students’ attitudes towards English use, as well as describing how they practice the ELF pedagogy in natural classroom settings.

This book looks at the use of English in the CFL classroom in a sociocultural and ecological perspective. It brings together two important areas in language teaching and learning research by exploring the impact of the globalization of English on Chinese foreign language education. Interest in classroom language choice, reflected in three recent books by Glenn Levine (2011), Miles Turnbull and Jennifer Dailey-O’Cain (2009) and Wolfgang Butzkamm and John A. W. Caldwell (2009) has been prompted by a growing number of studies on multilingual education through pedagogy development. There has also been a growth of interest in the encounters between the Chinese English languages. Feng Anwei (2007) suggests an additive relationship between Chinese and English, through various studies on bilin-

gual education as a site for these two eminent languages to be combined. Joseph Lo Bianco, Jane Orton and Yihong Gao (2009) examined the role of English in China's education system and called for future research on the English language from "object of instruction" to "medium of instruction". In a similar sense, this book also advocates the notion of English as a lingua franca, not only "as language produced" in the communicative marketplace of an expanding Asia, but also "as pedagogy", which can be employed by foreign language teachers.

If the Chinese language is to become another global language, the first step is to define the role of English in CFL teaching. It is a fact that the world today has been very powerfully dominated by western countries and cultures, but this should not be seen solely as a threat to Chinese tradition and identity. Given that the English language is the key to the gateway of the western world, there is no reason to stigmatize it and keep it isolated from CFL teaching and learning. A culture needs both to continue to develop its own traditions and so remain national, and also to update itself through the influence of other cultures (Orton, 2009: 283). Hoping to predict which language will triumph in the end is futile. Similarly, discussing whether English will be replaced by Chinese only serves an ideological purpose, but hardly has any pedagogical impact. To let the world hear China, CFL teaching may need to take the "English Express" in the first place and learn good practice from the successful models of English in foreign language education. Through English, the Chinese culture can open the country and its heritage to foreigners in a more comfortable and convenient way, which is beneficial for both China and the rest of the world.

Why this book

There are many reasons why I have become deeply involved in research on CFL teaching and learning in the context of the global spread of English. First of all, China has become the fastest growing