

**A study of university public English policies and education
in China**

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1.0 Introduction

In an era of accelerating globalization, the role of English as a global lingua franca has become indispensable, particularly for nations like China that are deeply integrated into international trade, diplomacy, and academic collaboration. As Bolton and Graddol (2012) observed, China's rapid socio-economic transformation over the past decades has necessitated a strategic emphasis on English proficiency to cultivate a workforce capable of navigating cross-cultural exchanges. This imperative is reflected in the proliferation of public English education policies across Chinese universities, which aim to align domestic education systems with global standards (Liu & Li, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these policies remains a subject of debate, given the complex interplay of political, cultural, and institutional factors shaping their implementation.

Recent studies highlight the dual pressures driving China's English education reforms. On one hand, globalization demands linguistic adaptability to enhance international competitiveness (Wang & Zhang, 2021). On the other hand, domestic priorities, such as preserving cultural identity and addressing regional educational disparities, complicate policy execution (Chen et al., 2022). For instance, while urban universities often benefit from advanced resources and qualified instructors, rural institutions face systemic challenges, including limited funding and outdated pedagogical frameworks (Zhou, 2020). Such disparities underscore the need for a nuanced analysis of how national policies translate into localized educational practices.

The primary aim of this study is to critically evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of public English education policies in Chinese universities. To achieve this, the research addresses four objectives:

1. Mapping the Policy Landscape: Investigating the structural evolution of public English education frameworks, including curriculum standardization and assessment mechanisms.
2. Identifying Influential Drivers: Analyzing how political directives (e.g., national “Belt and Road” initiatives), economic priorities, and cultural values shape policy agendas.
3. Assessing Implementation Barriers: Examining challenges such as teacher training gaps, resource allocation inefficiencies, and student motivation disparities.
4. Evaluating Educational Outcomes: Measuring policy impacts on students’ language proficiency, academic performance, and career readiness through empirical data.

This study contributes to existing literature by bridging a critical gap: while prior research has focused on macro-level policy analysis (e.g., Hu & McKay, 2012), fewer studies explore micro-level institutional practices or regional variations. By integrating qualitative insights from educators and quantitative assessments of student outcomes, this research offers a holistic understanding of China’s public English education ecosystem. Such findings hold implications not only for Chinese policymakers but also for non-English-speaking nations grappling with similar linguistic globalization challenges.

2.0 Literature review

Research on public English education in non-English-speaking nations reveals diverse approaches influenced by regional contexts. Scholars such as Li et al. (2022) emphasize the global consensus on English as a lingua franca for trade, diplomacy, and academia, driving nations to institutionalize English education. Kamwangamalu (2010) further notes that such policies often aim to align national education systems with global standards.

Economic and political motivations are pivotal in policy development. Ahmad and Hussain (2017) argue that nations prioritize English to bolster economic competitiveness, while cultural factors, including societal attitudes toward linguistic diversity, also play a role

(Souriyavongsa et al., 2013). Educational infrastructure and globalization pressures further shape policy dynamics (Nguyen, 2013).

Implementation challenges, however, persist. Limited funding, inadequate teacher training, and infrastructural gaps hinder policy execution in many regions (Martinez, 2016; Anyidoho, 2018). Conversely, scholars like Samson and Collins (2012) stress that curriculum alignment with international benchmarks and educator quality are critical determinants of policy success.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the implementation and outcomes of public English education policies in Chinese universities. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the research aims to triangulate findings, thereby enhancing the validity and depth of the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Below is a detailed elaboration of the methodological design.

3.1 Data Collection

1. Semi-Structured Interviews:

- Rationale: Semi-structured interviews are selected for their flexibility in capturing nuanced perspectives while maintaining focus on core research questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This method allows participants—primarily university instructors and administrators—to elaborate on their experiences with policy implementation, challenges faced, and perceived outcomes.
- Procedure: Interviews will be conducted online via platforms like Zoom, each lasting 45–60 minutes. An interview guide will include open-ended questions such as:
 - *“How do institutional priorities shape the execution of public English policies?”*
 - *“What systemic barriers hinder effective curriculum delivery?”*

2. Document Analysis:

- Policy Texts: Official documents, including national education guidelines (e.g., China's National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform Plan) and university syllabi, will be analyzed to contextualize interview data (Bowen, 2009).
- Student Performance Records: De-identified academic records from three universities will be reviewed to assess correlations between policy implementation and student language proficiency trends.

3. Supplementary Surveys:

- A short Likert-scale survey will be distributed to 100 students across participating universities to quantify perceptions of curriculum relevance and teaching quality. This complements qualitative insights with broader quantitative trends (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

3.2 Sampling Strategy

- Purposive Sampling: Participants (n=15) will include:
 - University Instructors (n=10): Selected based on ≥ 5 years of experience in public English education.
 - Administrators (n=5): Involved in policy design or oversight at departmental or institutional levels.
- Snowball Sampling: Initial participants may recommend colleagues meeting the criteria, ensuring access to informed stakeholders (Naderifar et al., 2017).

3.3 Data Analysis

1. Thematic Analysis:

- Interview transcripts will undergo iterative coding using NVivo software. Initial codes (e.g., "resource constraints," "teacher autonomy") will be grouped into themes (e.g., "implementation barriers") following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework.

- Emerging themes will be cross-checked with document analysis findings to identify consistencies or contradictions.

2. Quantitative Analysis:

- Survey data will be analyzed using SPSS to calculate descriptive statistics (e.g., mean satisfaction scores) and correlations (e.g., between teaching quality and student performance).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent: Participants will receive written explanations of the study's purpose, data usage, and anonymity guarantees.
- Confidentiality: All data will be stored on password-protected servers, with identifiers removed during transcription.
- Researcher Reflexivity: To mitigate bias, the researcher will maintain a reflective journal documenting assumptions and decision-making processes (Finlay, 2002).

3.5 Limitations

- Geographic Scope: The study focuses on universities in eastern China; findings may not fully represent western or rural institutions.
- Sample Size: While purposive sampling ensures depth, a larger sample could improve generalizability.

4.0 Research timeline

The research project is scheduled to span five months, with a phased timeline designed to systematically address key objectives while ensuring methodological rigor. Figure 1 illustrates the Gantt chart delineating deliverables across distinct phases, aligning with best practices in academic project management (Bryman, 2021). Below is a detailed breakdown of the timeline and its alignment with research activities:

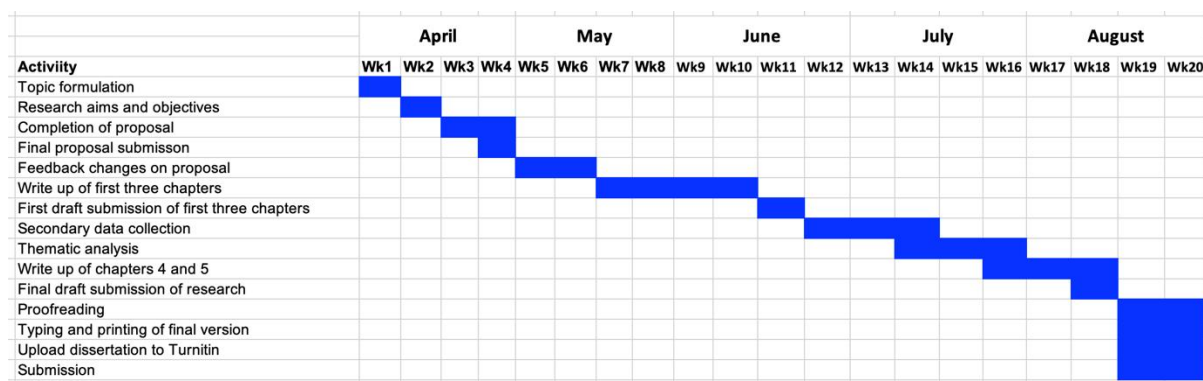


Figure 1: Gantt chart showing completion timelines of research deliverables

Source: Summarised by this proposal

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I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.