

David Graddol



Profiling English in China

The Pearl River Delta

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by

David Graddol

Cambridge English Language Assessment

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First published 2013
Reprinted 2013 (with minor corrections)

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Canon UK Limited.

ISBN 978-1-908791-07-8 Profiling English in China

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Profiling English in China is the first volume in what is intended as a series of publications on profiling English in context.

Resulting from a collaboration between David Graddol and members of the Research and Validation team in Cambridge English Language Assessment, this book is designed to complement ongoing research within the English Profile Programme (see www.englishprofile.org).

The *Profiling English* series – building on the research Graddol has previously conducted on behalf of the British Council and which led to the publications *English Next* (2006) and *English Next India* (2010) – intends to be complementary, yet strike in a new direction: to focus on the social, economic and cultural factors which provide the context for English language use when in contact with other languages.

The need for this new direction comes from a need to understand local circumstance better when operating internationally on a global scale. In a period of rapid change, this is pressing: Cambridge English in particular has a special interest in monitoring how English language standards in a local context can be set and measured by international tests and examinations.

To this end, the *Profiling English* series uses an ‘in context’ research methodology – focusing on a defined geographical region in a limited timescale (12 to 18 months). The strength of this approach is that we can take a snapshot of the features which are influencing the linguistic landscape and creating the need for English language skills in society.

This approach provides key directional information and perceptive insights gained from many different areas. Research can, for example, focus on the multinational work environment; on people aiming to facilitate international research and academic collaboration; or on those using English as a *lingua franca* in other ways, such as seeking to foster social cohesion amongst migrant communities and an international workforce.

From a study of such on-the-ground contextual features we can better understand the powerful influences exerted on the attitudes and motivations of those learning English, appreciate the ways in which the language is taught and assessed within educational frameworks, and produce an assessment system able to adapt to meet the local and global scenarios ahead.

For providers of international educational services, this is essential: to match their provision to local needs and contexts, seeking to achieve local legitimacy and avoiding inappropriate transposition of practices from one context to another.

This is of particular importance for Cambridge English as a provider of educational services, including high-stakes language assessments used for international purposes. Given the impact that examinations of this kind are known to have – both on societal processes and on individuals – Cambridge has a special concern in ensuring that stakeholders benefit in positive ways and that negative effects are avoided.

This is a major challenge given the global pace of change and the increasing demand for customisation to meet specific requirements. In many parts of the world social and economic developments are both rapid and dynamic and, as traditional boundaries and ways of doing things fade, new ones emerge, offering global rather than national outreach, yet coming into contact with often established international practices.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in China; especially in those territories around the Pearl River Delta and along the borders with the former European colonies, Hong Kong and Macau.

It is appropriate therefore that this first volume provides a snapshot of the Pearl River region in 2011/12, examining in detail the linguistic implications of the rapid urbanisation which has accompanied the phenomenal economic developments in that region.

Graddol employs a methodology which relies on personal contact with the people and the places and builds up a comprehensive picture of the context. As in similar sociological and ethnographic approaches, he draws on documents, reports, photographs and images as well as first-hand interviews with informants.

His research, conducted while living in Hong Kong in 2011/12, identifies the need for practical tools to spot trends and to understand future needs for language skills at different levels of proficiency.

An internationally recognised 'learning ladder', which can be linked to functional requirements for English language skills in social contexts, is currently lacking in the Chinese context and the potential benefits of using a common framework of reference (such as the CEFR) are discussed.

The matching of language learning goals to international proficiency standards, together with the provision of relevant assessment tools to measure progress and provide useful qualifications, are central concerns for educational policy makers and for employers in the world of work who recognize the need for a plurilingual workforce in conducting their business.

But the challenge is not insubstantial.

The recently completed *European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC)* conducted by the SurveyLang group on behalf of the European Commission revealed the challenge that language learning provides – even in wealthy European countries where policy-makers have advocated an environment where 'speakers of all languages feel welcome and language learning is encouraged'.

In reflecting on the disappointing results of the first survey, the Executive Summary (2012, page 12) makes the following point in its conclusions:

Language policies should address the creation of language-friendly living and learning environments inside as well as outside schools and other educational institutions. Language policies should promote informal learning opportunities outside school, and consider the exposure to language through traditional and new media, including the effects of using dubbing or subtitles in television and cinemas. Overall, language policy should support that people in general, and young people in particular, feel capable of language learning and see it as useful.

So, unless the social environment creates a 'language friendly' context where the language being learned is widely valued for 'real world' purposes, it is unlikely that school-based learning

will bring about high levels of success for the majority of learners – as shown by the results of the survey.

It is crucial, therefore, to understand the contextual dynamics and to set realistic policy goals in order to raise standards over time in local environments which truly value the benefits of multilingualism.

Creating a joined-up approach to curriculum goals, provision of pedagogic materials, the application of a coherent assessment system, and the on-going development of teachers should be at the heart of the policy. It must also be grounded in a clear vision of the wider geopolitical context and possibility of progress being made in the medium and longer term.

As China is vast, economically and culturally varied, follow-up work is planned to explore similarities and differences in other parts of the country. It is not expected that findings can be made general across the country as a whole, but the insights which have emerged in this case will be re-examined and explored in other contexts. In this way a fuller picture will be built up alongside other relevant research findings (for example, from Cambridge's impact studies – see Research Notes 50; 2013).

It is also hoped that the methodology which this volume exemplifies will be developed and applied to contexts in other parts of the world, leading to further volumes in the series *Profiling English in context* in years to come.

Nick Saville
Director of Research and Validation
Cambridge English Language Assessment

June 2013

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Note: Extracts and quotations used in this book are unedited. In this way they provide a flavour of the varieties of English found in the Pearl River Delta.

In this short book, *Profiling English in China: the Pearl River Delta*, I explore the changing role and status of the English language in an area of Guangdong province in South China. This region includes the former European colonies of Hong Kong and Macau at the mouth of the Pearl River, and stretches up to the historic mainland city of Guangzhou, formerly known in English as Canton, about 100 km up-river.

Although much of the world has not heard of the Pearl River Delta, and might not be able to locate it on a map, the area touches the lives of nearly everyone. Wherever plastic goods, toys, shoes, lighting or electronic gadgets are sold, there is a high chance that these were manufactured in one of the factory towns of the delta. The label 'Made in China' usually means 'Made in the Pearl River Delta'.

The Pearl River Delta can also claim to be where the story of English in China began – with the 'Canton Trade' via Macau in the 17th century. It is sometimes forgotten that the expansion of English worldwide occurred at the same moment in different parts of the globe: the first English-speaking settlement in North America at Jamestown, the arrival of the East India Company in India at Surat, and the first English traders in China at Canton all took place within the space of a few years in the early 1600s. The story of English in China, then and now, forms an important part of the wider story of English and globalisation.

The history of English in the region has been continuous over four centuries or more, and its development into a trading *lingua franca* known as 'pidgin' (thought to have been derived from the Chinese pronunciation of the English word 'business') has been an influence on modern varieties of English everywhere.

During its long history, the number of people learning English in China has waxed and waned, reaching a low point during the Cultural Revolution at the end of the 1960s, but now experiencing what (for demographic reasons) is likely to prove a peak.

A zone of political and economic experimentation

The Pearl River Delta has been at the forefront of many political, economic and social reforms in China. In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping, the reformist leader of the Communist Party in China who came after Mao Zedong, established the city of Shenzhen as a 'Special Economic Zone', on the border with Hong Kong. The city which began as an experiment in 'capitalism with socialist characteristics', remains a test-bed for social and economic reform as it becomes more closely integrated with Hong Kong and Macau.

The present president of China, Xi Jinping, even before he took office in March 2013, made a visit to the Pearl River Delta which echoed one famously made by Deng Xiaoping in 1990. This was widely interpreted as an indication that the 'Guangdong model' of political and economic reform will continue to enjoy influence [5215]. If so, understanding what is now happening in the Pearl River Delta may give us an insight into developments which will affect the rest of China in the coming decade.

A forward-looking work

This book is intended as an exploratory study in several respects. First, it is concerned not only with providing an overview of the current situation, but also with the dynamic of change. It asks questions such as, 'What will the extraordinary changes now taking place in the Pearl River Delta mean for the future of English in the region?'

Second, this book is forward-looking in the sense that it suggests ideas and methods of enquiry which can be extended in the future, in partnership with local institutions and researchers in the Pearl River Delta itself, across other regions of China, and in other emergent economies.

The book should thus be seen as a preliminary study identifying topics and modes of enquiry that merit further investigation.

A sensitivity to levels

Research on English in economic and social development too often regards the knowledge of the language as something which is binary: people are typically regarded as either knowing English or not. In reality, there is a wide

range of proficiency in English in the community, from the Hong Kong street-market trader who knows just enough words to ensure a sale to a tourist, to the PhD graduate engaged in international, collaborative research for a hi-tech firm in Shenzhen.


In this book, I have tried to be sensitive to the notion that needs, aspirations and achievements exist at different *levels* of English competence; I argue, for example, that we need to understand more about the relationship between such levels and job functions before we can answer pressing questions about the role of English in economic development and social equity; and I try to understand how a learner's progress in learning English, conceived as a 'learning ladder' towards increasing functional competence, maps on to social, employment and educational needs.

I have also been open to different notions of 'levels' in English. Part two of the book explores 'language landscapes' and what they tell us about the underlying social, economic, and political life of a community and the complex roles that English plays. This emphasises the idea that English is not a static matter of 'have' or 'don't have', and helps us understand the fluid, dynamic and ever-shifting role which English plays in the communities of the Pearl River Delta.

Sources

This book draws extensively on a research database of news articles, letters, comments and blog posts. This database, compiled intensively during the research period from a variety of print and electronic sources, contains around 2000 items, and reflects current opinion, anecdote and formal statistics. Where text has been used directly from the database, the source reference is given as numbers in square brackets. Text from these sources has not been copy-edited.

This book also incorporates research, experience, and observation gained during my position as Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of English at City University in Hong Kong during 2010 and 2011. Acknowledgements to some of the many people in the Pearl River Delta who have helped me in this research are provided at the end of the book.

An aerial photograph of Hong Kong, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous skyscrapers and residential buildings. The city is situated on a peninsula, with a large body of water (the harbor) in the foreground. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The foreground is dominated by a lush green forested hillside.

Part one
English in the
Pearl River Delta



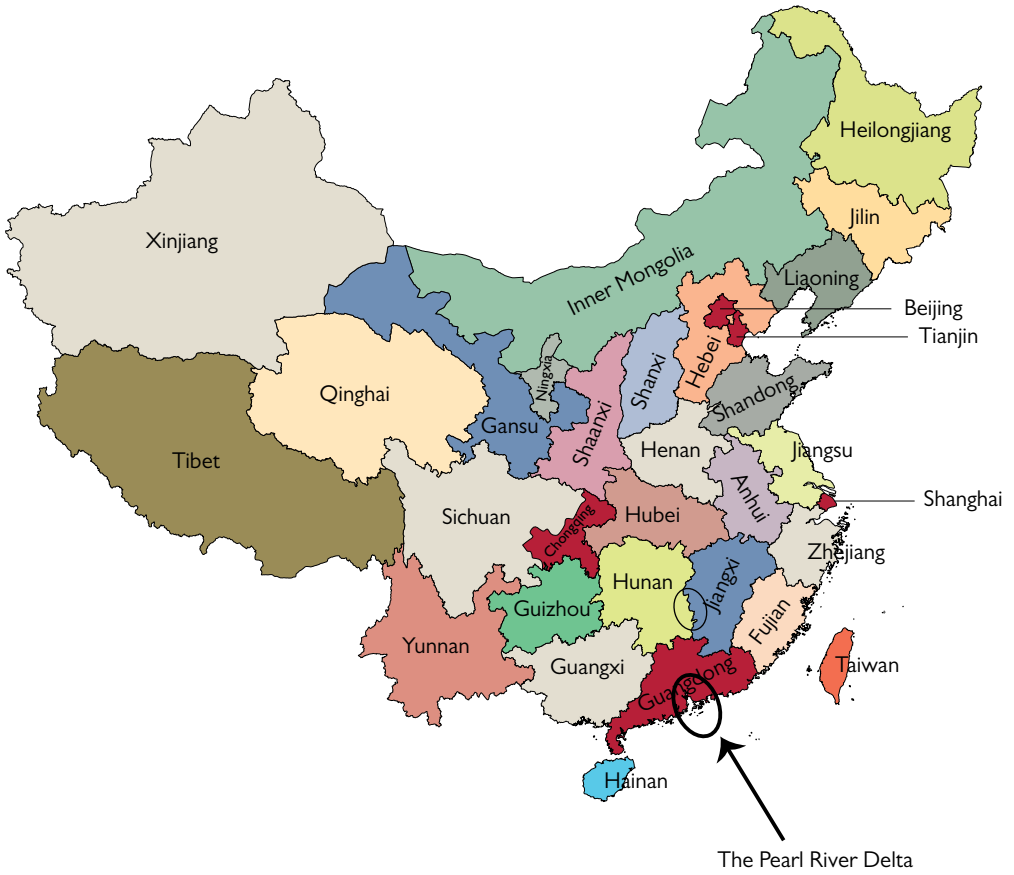


Figure 2 *The Pearl River Delta is an area of Guangdong province which stretches from Macau and Hong Kong at the entrance to the South China Sea, to the city of Guangzhou about 120 km up-river.*

Figure 1 *(previous pages)*
Hong Kong as seen from
The Peak on a rare clear
day in summer 2012.

LANGUAGES AND COMMUNITIES OF THE PEARL RIVER DELTA

The Pearl River Delta contains surprising linguistic diversity. Guangdong province is the homeland of the Cantonese language and Cantonese remains the dominant local language, spoken throughout the region – in mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong – by almost everyone born there. Cantonese ranks as one of the world’s biggest languages in terms of native-speaker numbers, with an estimated 55–60 million first-language speakers in established communities in over 20 countries – making it a language roughly the size of Italian.

Cantonese is not the only indigenous language in the delta area. On the east side runs a historic linguistic boundary between Cantonese and Hakka – more or less dividing the new city of Shenzhen. There are also enclaves of several other Chinese dialects in the region.

In Hong Kong and Macau, Cantonese is an official language but its status is increasingly challenged by Putonghua (often referred to locally in English as ‘Mandarin’). English is an official language only in Hong Kong, though its use is spreading across the rest of the delta, as this book documents.

The language profile of each city is distinct

In some delta cities, linguistic diversity has been greatly increased because of the large number of migrant workers, most of whom do not speak Cantonese. In Shenzhen, for example, Putonghua has become the working language in both policy and practice, but Shenzhen has experienced rapid shifts in linguistic make-up as the city grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s.



Figure 3 *Cantonese Opera remains popular in Hong Kong, often performed in temporary bamboo opera houses in outlying areas at holiday times (Lamma Island).*

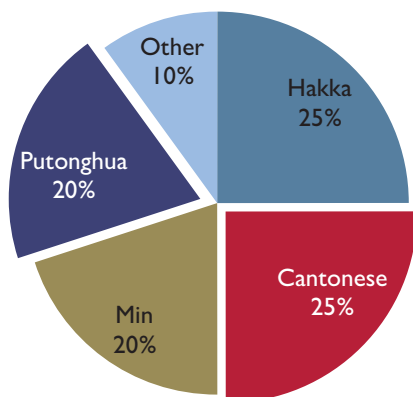


Figure 4 The languages of Shenzhen in 1985. (Zhang, 2005)

The Shenzhen area used to be occupied by Cantonese-speaking villages in the west and Hakka communities in the east. In the 1980s, as the city grew, it became multilingual when migrant workers flooded in from other provinces. Now it is pulled towards both Putonghua and Cantonese – still the dominant language of neighbouring Hong Kong.

Shenzhen, occupying the length of the border between Hong Kong and mainland China, provides us with a complex and fascinating research site for the study of language change. But although there has been substantial sociolinguistic research generally on language use in urban areas, and of the fate of language minorities created by migration, the linguistic consequences of new city developments remain largely unexplored.

A study of Milton Keynes in the UK, a much smaller city, but one established only slightly earlier than Shenzhen, suggests a number of ‘new town’ tendencies (Williams & Kerswill, 1999):

- (1) that dialect levelling occurs (i.e. linguistic differences between new residents grow less);
- (2) loose and diffuse social network structures – of a kind that typically occur in areas of in-migration – promote rapid language change;
- (3) adolescents are key agents of language change.

In looking at new cities, we can note that although the use of Putonghua is clearly growing in the whole delta region, there is contradictory evidence concerning how far and how fast such shifts are taking place. Some recent reports suggest adolescents who are second-generation migrants in Shenzhen are now acquiring Cantonese.

➤ *Li Zhen is a 16-year old high school student who was born in Wuhan and moved to Shenzhen at the age of 10. She insists on talking to her friends in Cantonese. 'My parents do not speak Cantonese and we speak Putonghua or Wuhan dialect at home' Li said. '...in school, we only speak Putonghua in class. (But) all my friends are Cantonese speakers. Cantonese is the fashionable language among Shenzhen teenagers.'* [3046]

The status of Cantonese in Guangzhou, the original home of 'standard Cantonese', seems to have been eroded in recent years in favour of Putonghua, but there remains a powerful language loyalty. When the government 'suggested' that the Cantonese-medium TV channels should broadcast in Putonghua ahead of the Asian Games in 2010, it led to street protests in both Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

➤ *Chinese authorities have been anxious to suppress the growing pro-Cantonese movement, sparked after a political advisory body in Guangzhou proposed last month that local TV stations broadcast their prime-time shows in Mandarin instead of Cantonese ahead of the Asian Games in the province in November. Adopting China's official language, also known as Putonghua, would promote unity, 'forge a good language environment' and cater to non-Cantonese-speaking Chinese visitors at the huge sporting event, authorities were quoted as saying.* [834]

Language shift

These changes in the Pearl River Delta need to be seen in the context of the inter-generational language shift taking place on an extraordinary scale across China. Chinese dialects, such as Wu and Yue (which includes Cantonese), which are amongst the world's largest languages in terms of numbers of speakers, are giving way to Putonghua. The Chinese languages, though as different from each other as the languages of Europe, are steadily being positioned as local, non-standard, 'dialects'.

This language shift in mainland China is largely a product of national policy. Because Putonghua is the medium of education in most of China, children encounter the language even in pre-school, whatever their family language. Many parents speak to their children in Putonghua at home, to prepare them for school. Younger children, whether in Shanghai or Guangzhou, do not always now share a language with their grandparents.

Hong Kong as a focal centre of Cantonese

If Shenzhen is becoming more Cantonese again, then it might mirror the kind of language shift which has been taking place in Hong Kong in recent decades. Hong Kong, during the 1990s and 2000s emerged as an increasingly Cantonese-speaking area, despite historic waves of immigration from the rest of China – most notably after the communist revolution of the mid-20th century.

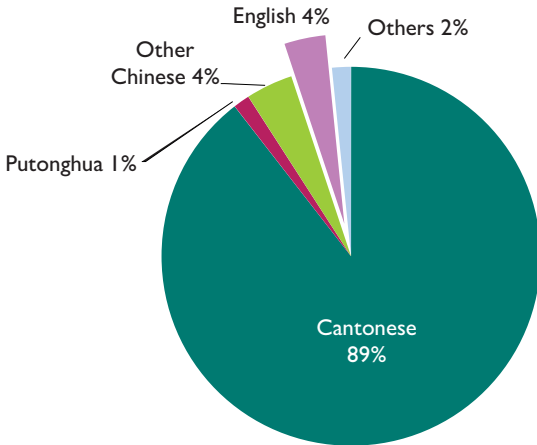


Figure 5 'Usual language' of the population of Hong Kong according to the 2011 census.

Endangered languages of the delta

Rapid economic change and large-scale in-migration has transformed the linguistic landscapes of the Pearl River Delta, but in the process some minority languages, spoken in small enclaves, are disappearing. One example is the local Mekanese language in Macau.

> *In a dark basement theatre, Nair Cardoso runs through her lines before a rehearsal of a play that will be watched by hundreds of people in just a couple of weeks. However, her character – Benina – speaks a language she only half understands. It is a problem shared by most of her fellow cast, not to mention her future audience. The script is in Patuá – a creole that mixes Portuguese, Cantonese and Malay – that today is only spoken by a handful of Macau's residents and has been listed by Unesco as "critically endangered". Patuá was once spoken by many Macanese – the Eurasians who acted as the Portuguese colony's administrators and interpreters and who today are trying to hold onto a distinct cultural identity in the predominantly Chinese city. [1438]*

Western names in the Pearl River Delta

In Hong Kong, most children are given an English ('western') personal name in addition to their Chinese name ('legal name'), a trend which has been spreading across the Pearl River Delta in recent years.

In Hong Kong, a western name is often given by parents at birth, perhaps inspired by the sound of the Chinese name (for example, *Ka Mun* might become *Carmen*). But the name may reflect parental aspirations for their child.

In Guangzhou, where the fashion for western names is more recent, students are often given a name by an English teacher (at any stage of education from kindergarten), or they may choose a name themselves on entering college. Names may sound odd to western ears as a name – such as *Dictionary*, *Onion*, *Bottle*, *Banana*, *Virus* and *Anxious* (all reported by delta English teachers).

In both Hong Kong and Guangzhou, the use of the western name at university may form a 'rite of passage' to adulthood, especially in interactions with westerners. Or perhaps it provides a way of adopting the informality expected in the English classroom without the intimacy implied by the use of a Chinese personal name.

Chinese family names are usually a single syllable. Personal names are typically two syllables (and so two written characters), though there seems to be a trend amongst the younger generation for names of a single syllable. In Chinese, the family name is always given before the personal name.

Chinese who have lived in the west or work for western companies may refer to themselves as 'western name + family name' leaving out the Chinese given name altogether. The sons of Hong Kong business tycoon Li Ka-shing, for example, are usually known by their English name and family name: Victor Li and Richard Li.

The use of western names is not so common in other parts of China, or in Singapore, though the practice appears to be spreading. Academics who publish in English often switch to the western order of first name + family name, to conform to western bibliographical practice.

The written languages of the delta

The communist government introduced a system of 'simplified characters' in the 1950s as a means of improving literacy levels in the population. Neither Hong Kong or Taiwan (where the Nationalists fled after the communist revolution) adopted the new system. Singapore and Malaysia, by comparison, have over time adopted simplified characters, but most other overseas communities – many with historic connections to Hong Kong or Taiwan – still follow Hong Kong practice.

The use of traditional characters today remains a powerful symbol of identity in Hong Kong; it may, to some readers, symbolise 'non-communist'. When public notices appear in Hong Kong using simplified characters, it can cause resentment amongst the local population.

Yet, ironically, traditional writing also became a symbol of modernity for some mainland Chinese, as Hong Kong and Taiwan modernised faster than the mainland, becoming richer and more westernised. But as Hong Kong's neighbours in the delta grow in wealth, and their cities expand, that attitude is changing.

Simplified and traditional Chinese characters are not the only choices for written text: there is also a way of writing Putonghua in the roman alphabet known as *pinyin*, the spread of which has been encouraged by the government in mainland China. Pinyin is less visible in Hong Kong, where several alternative romanisations are used.

Pinyin serves an important function in modern China: it offers a quick means of text input for texting and word processing, for example. Pinyin indicates tones with accents above letters – which are essential in Chinese to distinguish between what would otherwise be homophones. Since these are clumsy to input on a basic alphabetic keypad, text prediction on smartphones often displays the alternative characters which an alphabetic input could refer to.

Throughout China, a debate continues as to whether English translations or pinyin should be used in public signage, for example on street names and the names of institutions, including universities. Should the street in Guangzhou be called *Beijing Lu* or *Beijing Road*, or even *Peking Road*? This is discussed more fully in Part two of this book.

English in the Pearl River Delta

The learning of English in China has a long history and probably began in association with the Canton trade. Bolton (2003) suggests that the first fully documented encounter between English speakers and Chinese in the delta area occurred in 1637, when an expedition of four English trading ships arrived in Macau and Canton, at a time when there was already extensive trade between Europe and China controlled by the Portuguese based in Macau. The British expedition communicated with the Chinese through Portuguese-speaking interpreters, marking the start of a long, sometimes inglorious, history of contact between Cantonese and English speakers.

The first record of Chinese attempts to pronounce English come from the diaries of Peter Mundy, an early 17th century English trader (Bolton, 2003:145). By 1836 it was reported that at Canton 'English is the only medium of conversation between foreigners and Chinese' (Bolton, 2003:151).

English has now emerged as a global *lingua franca* used by speakers of many languages to communicate with each other. Bolton (2006:203) claims that 'Spoken English also serves an intraethnic communicative purpose between some Hong Kong Cantonese speakers and Putonghua speakers from mainland China'.

My impression is that such *lingua franca* use is becoming less common, perhaps as Mandarin becomes better known in Hong Kong. Some years ago I was staying in a hotel in Guangzhou little used by foreigners. Few staff in the hotel knew English. One day, the chambermaid was keen to tell me something. I knew no Cantonese, she no English. She reached for the notepad and wrote the message in Chinese. This was clearly the way she communicated with visitors from elsewhere in China who spoke a different dialect. But sadly it was of no help to me.

English is more likely to occur at points where mainlanders have to communicate with local tradespeople in Hong Kong or Macau who do not speak, or do not wish to speak, Putonghua. English also remains the main *lingua franca* amongst the many expat workers in the delta and is the main language with which the Chinese communicate with foreigners throughout the delta, especially in service encounters in hotels, restaurants and businesses.

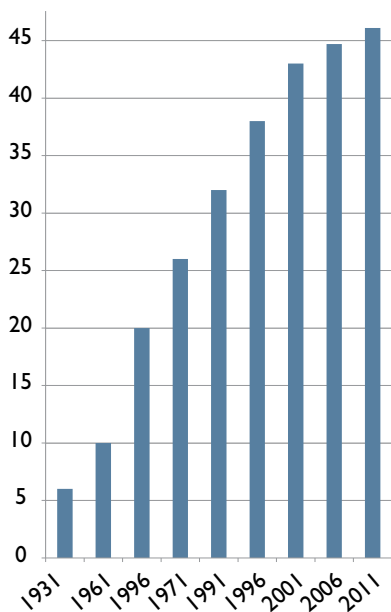


Figure 6 The growing percentage of the Hong Kong population who report being able to speak English, according to census surveys.

Knowledge of English in Hong Kong has been rising ever since records began in the early 20th century. However, knowledge of Putonghua has also been rising. Slightly more residents in Hong Kong can now speak Putonghua than can speak English according to the 2011 census – a moment of some symbolic importance.

Varieties of English in the delta

In Hong Kong, British English remains the dominant variety of English, especially in printed sources. The house style of the *South China Morning Post*, *The Standard*, and government publications all adopt British spellings. US spellings and spoken usages are, however, increasingly found in other contexts.

In mainland China, the reverse is true: the dominant variety in written communication is that of the USA rather than the UK. However, some British spellings can occasionally be found, especially in Guangzhou.

There are also other varieties of English to be found throughout the region, including local forms. There is, however, dispute as to whether Hong Kong English should be regarded as a distinct variety, like Singapore English. On the whole, most linguists are happy to recognise that Hong Kong English is a distinct variety, whilst many local people are not.

Work units and the *hukou* system

Before the shift to a market economy, started by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, when students left education they were assigned jobs in a state-owned enterprise. This formed a person's 'work unit' or *danwei*.

The work unit provided all an employee's needs, from accommodation, education, and medical care to subsidised meals. It also formed the lowest layer of the Communist Party's hierarchy of political control. In fact, until 2003, no-one could change employment, marry, divorce, or conceive a child without the permission of their work unit.

With economic liberalisation in the 1990s, many middle-class couples followed the path of 'one family, two systems' – one person retained employment in the public sector to ensure subsidised accommodation and welfare, whilst their partner found a job with a private enterprise, with less job security but higher income.

Urban migration became a key policy objective in the 1990s, encouraged by the explosion of new employment opportunities for less-educated people in the new private-sector factories in the Pearl River Delta and elsewhere. The *hukou* system allowed some measure of continuing political oversight and control during a potentially chaotic period. *Hukou* is the system of household registration which allocates citizens rights of residence in a particular city or area, and which provides access to services – most importantly to health care and government schools. A key distinction lies between rural and urban *hukou*, which provide access to different kinds of benefits. Most migrant workers now live, work, and spend money in the cities but still have rural *hukou*.

Migrant workers lack *hukou* in the places where they work, so the factories which employ them typically provide dormitories, canteens, and leisure facilities – thus effectively continuing to act as a traditional work unit, though less directly under the control of the Communist Party.

Hukou regulations are discussed in later chapters, because they play such an important role in access to education, municipal services, and visas for travel to Hong Kong and Macau.

Migrant workers

One of the biggest stories in the Pearl River Delta today is that of the migrant workers, millions of whom have flooded into the delta over the past decades from many parts of China. They have come especially from the poorer rural areas of the hinterland, expanding the population of the cities with unimaginable speed. In some townships of the delta, almost the entire population now consists of migrants.

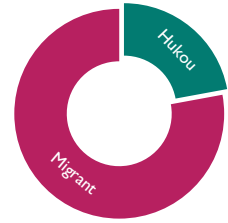
Migrant factory workers typically have low levels of education, many having left school at age 14, and the majority do not speak Cantonese. However, many live in dormitory accommodation provided by the factories and do not mix extensively with the local population.

The future of the delta region and its languages is tied to the future of these migrants. Will they all return 'home' as better employment opportunities appear elsewhere in China? Will they be encouraged to establish homes in the delta, and raise families there? Will local governments allow them permanent residence status, or even abolish the *hukou* system, so they have equal access to services such as education and health care?

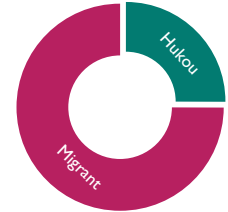
Who is a 'typical' migrant worker?

Migrants are fairly evenly divided between men and women. Most are young, below the age of 25, and unmarried. Workers over the age of 40 say they have difficulty in finding jobs. Many move to the delta for complex reasons, and experience there not only their first employment, but also an important transition to independence, adulthood, and an urban lifestyle.

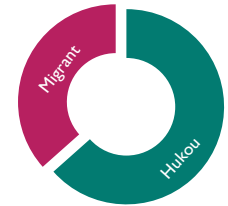
There are relatively few children in the factory towns of the delta: migrants often have to leave children behind to be brought up by other family members because children have the right of free public schooling only in places where their mothers have *hukou*, or permanent residence registration (see panel).



Dongguan



Shenzhen



Guangzhou



Zhuhai

Figure 7 Migrants in four cities of the Pearl River Delta. Dongguan has the largest proportion of migrants.

The decline of the work unit forms a key part of China's modern development. Pressure has been growing recently to reform the *hukou* system, and the new competition for migrant workers has already led some cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, to allow migrant workers better access to local services.

Foreign migrant workers

Not all migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta are Chinese. According to news sources, in Dongguan over 400 skilled workers are from Japan; half of all Brazilians living in China – around 2,000 – work in Dongguan's footwear industry, and the west African community in Guangzhou is claimed to number over 20,000. One Nigerian source claims that '80 per cent of Nigerians living in China are in Guangzhou' [5735]. Many such traders can be found in the district surrounding Guangzhou East railway station.

The situation in Hong Kong and Macau is rather different. In Hong Kong alone, there are over 300,000 domestic workers, mostly from the Philippines and Indonesia, and the Hong Kong government has recently made arrangements for a new source of maids from Bangladesh [5607].

There are also indications that as factories in the delta find it more difficult, and expensive, to recruit migrant workers from elsewhere in China, they are being sometimes replaced by workers (often undocumented) from Myanmar and Vietnam [6410].

The role of ethnic minorities

Because the population of the Pearl River Delta is overwhelmingly Chinese (even in Hong Kong the population was found to be 94% Chinese in the 2011 census), the important linguistic role of other ethnic groups is easily overlooked. Some ethnic minorities, however, provide key language resources, especially English, throughout the delta region.

Filipina maids, for example, account for the great majority of Philippines residents in Hong Kong, who account for 1.8% of the population. Visa restrictions mean that they, like all domestic helpers, are required to live with the families who employ them. Unlike the Indonesian maids, who form the other major group of domestic helpers in Hong Kong, most Filipinas speak good English but often have poor Cantonese. They are sought after by middle-class families who want their young children to be exposed to English in the home.

English proficiency is distributed in a complex manner amongst other ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Detaramani and Lock (2008), for example, found that

different groups in the Indian community in Hong Kong possessed different language repertoires and patterns of language shift. The Indian community in Hong Kong is well-established – many families came to Hong Kong before the partition of India (in 1947). The younger generation in Sikh families, many of whose parents worked in the police force and more recently as security guards, attend local Cantonese-medium schools and seem to have maintained their heritage language, along with English. In the more middle-class, business-oriented Sindhi community, however, many children attend English-medium, private schools. There appears to have been loss of heritage languages amongst this group, for whom English is now often their first language.

A significant proportion of professionals with high proficiency in English are foreign workers, often on short-term working visas. Hong Kong and Macau have long depended on the English language skills of such short-term workers: as the economy develops elsewhere in the Pearl River Delta, competition for English-speaking professionals may increase.

Language worlds and language biographies

Little research has been conducted on patterns of language use amongst young people in mainland China. What glimpses we have suggest a more complex and nuanced situation than might be thought.

For example, Bolton (2012) has explored the notion of ‘language worlds’ with students in the English department at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. His interviews indicate that many students encounter several languages in their everyday lives and often have complex language histories in their families.

My own research, interviewing students at the same university, suggested that undergraduate and postgraduate students in the English department had acquired English in more diverse ways than I had appreciated. School lessons sometimes played a relatively minor role. On the other hand, family members could play a key part in learning, as could private tutorials, visits overseas. Above all, personal motivation and aspiration seemed a common factor amongst those students who managed to rise above the levels of English typically found amongst school-leavers in China.

Education in China is a highly competitive business and English now forms a significant part of almost every high-stakes exam. The Pearl River Delta, however, seems to be distinctive in both its education provision and its needs for English.

For example, the business of the region can require a greater number of workers able to communicate in English, probably more than any other area of China, but at the same time the Pearl River Delta has one of the highest populations of migrant workers. Ironically, these workers are employed on assembly lines in factories where they are forbidden to talk to each other.

The Pearl River Delta is also distinctive for its distortion of conventional age profiles. In cities such as Dongguan for example, migrants represent as much as 80% of the current population. This not only makes the area peculiarly lacking the 'normal' urban age spread of the very young and very old, it also affects the available pathways through the education system, since migrant parents without *hukou* – permanent residence – usually cannot gain access to local public schools for their children. Many children of migrant workers are therefore schooled away from their parents, outside the region.

A further distinctive feature of the Pearl River Delta is the presence of Hong Kong and Macau. These two cities, where English plays an important role in both education and business, have affected social attitudes to English in the region and the perceived importance of English in employability. They have also affected the regional capacity for the teaching, learning and testing of English.

The importance of English in public exams

Despite many attempts over the years to remove the 'key schools' system, in which some schools are designated as elite and able to attract more resources, schools have long been 'banded' in both mainland China and Hong Kong. Entry to elite institutions depends on attaining a high score in first the *zhongkao* (which decides which senior

English testing in Chinese education

AGE	PHASE	
1		
2		Kindergarten interview
3	KG	
4		
5		
6	Primary	
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12	Junior Middle	
13		
14		Zhongkao
15	Senior Middle	
16		
17		Gaokao
18	Undergraduate	
19		CET 4/TEM 4
20		CET 6
21		TEM 8
22	PG	
23		CET Band 8

Figure 8 This table indicates the structure of the education system throughout China, though details vary in some cities. In Hong Kong, the structure is now similar, but instead of *gaokao*, students take the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, which is used to determine entry to university.

secondary school a child attends) and then the *gaokao* (the national university entrance exam). English is a core subject in both exams.

Testing in English continues after school: all university students must sit the College English Test (CET) Band 4, unless they are English majors, in which case they take the Test for English Majors (TEM). Postgraduates are required to take CET Band 8. Entry to some professions, the civil service and career promotions, often require further tests of English.

Education reform in Hong Kong

The education system in Hong Kong previously followed the English system: students sat 'A' levels before entering university aged 18/19, when they began a three-year undergraduate degree. Recently, a major reform has taken place, creating a new single exam in the public education system – the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), and moving students to university at age 17/18 to take a four-year undergraduate course. The new arrangements mean that Hong Kong is now more similar to the systems of mainland China, North America and Europe.

The first cohorts of the new system entered Hong Kong universities in autumn 2012. A substantial funding programme has allowed Hong Kong universities to recruit new teaching staff and build new accommodation for the overnight one-third increase in student numbers.

One of the consequences of educational reform in Hong Kong is that the universities, by taking students a year earlier, have also taken on greater responsibility for ensuring that students reach the level of English required for English-medium study.

Learning English in schools

A child in Hong Kong, Macau (and increasingly also in mainland China) typically begins learning English before school age, either in the home or at a kindergarten. Many middle-class Hong Kong families, for example, employ a Filipina maid who introduces children to English at a very early age. Kindergartens and nurseries are also expanding fast in both Hong Kong and mainland China. Kindergartens are keen to position themselves as a crucial pathway to entry in a good primary school, and many advertise heavily that they are 'English-medium'.

In Hong Kong, testing for English often starts at age two, because many kindergartens require an interview. Since kindergartens are often seen as the pathway to entry to good primary schools, and thus to secondary school and university, such interviews are regarded by parents as a high-stakes test. Some tutorial centres in Hong Kong provide courses to prepare both children and parents for such tests. The idea that 'college starts at kindergarten' is now growing elsewhere in the delta.

Although decisions are officially taken at a provincial level, the national policy in mainland China prevails: Putonghua is the medium of education in almost all schools. Most children in the Pearl River Delta are thus expected to learn Putonghua as soon as they begin compulsory education:

in the province of Guangdong, where Cantonese is the dominant local dialect, putonghua is generally used in more than 83 per cent of primary schools in the capital city of the province, Guangzhou. ... In rural areas of Guangdong ... it is reported that putonghua is used in only 50 per cent of primary schools. (Chen, 2007:157)

A decision was taken by the Beijing government in 2001 to introduce English classes nationally by at least Grade 3 (9 years old). However, in the larger cities English is usually now introduced at Grade 1.



Figure 9 Ten-year old students learn English in a school in Guangzhou.

Children starting compulsory education in the delta are thus faced with major linguistic challenges, being expected to acquire Putonghua, learn Chinese writing, and begin English using the roman alphabet, all at the same time. Many children of migrant workers will also be unfamiliar with Cantonese, which they will encounter from other children and school staff.

Language education policy in Hong Kong

Before 1998, 93% of students in Hong Kong primary schools studied through the medium of Cantonese, and 7% through English. In secondary schools, the inverse was true: 94% studied through English, and 6% through Cantonese. This policy changed in 1998.

Official documents in China, including Hong Kong and Macau, usually refer to 'Chinese', without distinguishing between Mandarin and Cantonese. This makes it difficult to know if the balance between the two languages is changing.

There had long been disquiet about the quality of learning in schools which claimed to be 'English-medium' but in which the prevailing classroom language was in reality a 'mixed code' (i.e. a mix of Cantonese and English). A report issued by the colonial government as early as 1990 (ECR Report 4) had recommended that only those secondary schools which could demonstrate they had the competence to teach through English should be allowed to do so. This recommendation was put into effect by the post-handover Hong Kong Government in 1998, when the majority of schools (307/421) became Cantonese-medium.

Although primary education in Hong Kong has always been mainly Cantonese-medium, the increasing number of students crossing the border each day from mainland China to attend Hong Kong primary schools is affecting the medium of instruction in schools in the New Territories.

The Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented a 'fine-tuning' policy regarding the medium of instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools, which allows schools to teach particular classes or age groups through English. The EDB at the same time reaffirmed that 'The Government's overall language policy aims at nurturing students to become "bi-literate and tri-lingual"' (EDB, 2010).

Since the 'fine-tuning' policy was introduced, all three languages can be used in the same school for different subjects, ages or streams. This makes it difficult not only to determine what exactly is the medium of instruction (Mol), but also to monitor any change in the use of Mol, or assess the relative use of English against other languages.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was established by the Council of Europe to define levels of language proficiency in a way which could be used across the many languages now learned in Europe. Since the first developments in the 1970s, the CEFR has matured to become important tool in international policy and language testing.

The CEFR levels represent functional communicative abilities rather than knowledge of particular linguistic structures or vocabulary. A learner progresses to A1 level, at which simple, formulaic communication can be carried out, upwards to C2 level, which is approaching the proficiency of a native speaker in terms of adaptability and range.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

A ladder of English progression

In many countries, education policy defines the level of English proficiency which learners are expected to reach at different stages of their education. For example, Colombia now expects students to leave school with at least CEFR B1 in English. In other countries, there may be a *de facto* standard associated with national exams. Perhaps the most critical stage is entrance to university. Students wanting to study an English-medium course at university are usually expected to reach C1 level.

Only very recently have independent, large-scale surveys of English proficiency been undertaken which provide an accurate picture of the real situation. A study of 14- to 15-year old learners of English in European countries, for example, discovered significant differences in the level of English of Grade 9 students (Figure 10). The survey showed that the majority of Swedish Grade 9 students were able to use English at CEFR B2 at least, whereas over 70% of French students, after the same number of years of compulsory education, reached only CEFR A1 or below.

This establishes a useful background for understanding English language learning in the Pearl River Delta. According to a study in Hong Kong (see Chapter 5) all graduates seeking professional employment should exit university with at least C1 level English. But students should *enter* university at C1 level if they intend to study an English-medium course without extra intensive language support. On the other hand, as we will also see in Chapter 5, many kinds of work in the region – even shop assistants and hotel staff – now require some level of English skills, but CEFR A2 would be sufficient for many.

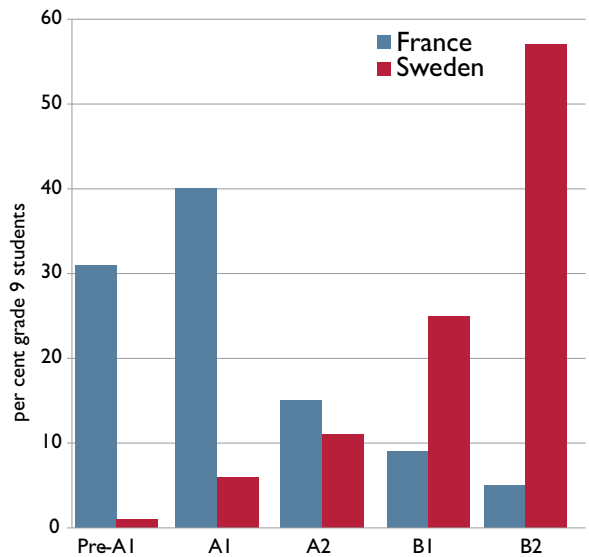


Figure 10 A survey of English proficiency amongst Grade 9 students in European countries found wide differences between national systems. (European Commission, 2012)

English in the universities

English is important for all students in universities in China, not just because they are expected to pass the College English Test before graduation, but also because of the internationalisation of Chinese universities.

➤ *Qinghua [Tsinghua] University has now 57 courses being taught in English, in an effort to make itself more competitive internationally. ... English is now the language medium of more than 60 percent of the courses in the department of biology and school of economics and administration at the university. [3207]*

The increasing use of English as a medium of instruction adopted by Tsinghua in Beijing – one of the most prestigious universities in China – is now to be found in many other elite universities.

This is consistent with another, perhaps less expected, trend. Until recently, the best English-speaking students were always found in the foreign languages departments of universities. Such students, trained as interpreters and translators, usually ended up working in the foreign affairs offices of state-owned enterprises, including universities. However, as the standard of English in schools has improved, the situation in universities may also be changing. Professor Dai Fan, head of the English department at Sun Yat-sen University, explains:

with the improvement of English teaching in high schools, the average student entering university now has a higher level of English proficiency than previous generations of students. However, students with high scores in English often choose to study 'practical' subjects other than English, such as business studies, computer science, economics, medicine, etc. Increasingly, a number of programs at universities in China are even being taught through the medium of English. Consequently, English majors have less and less advantage over non-English majors, and departments of English have had to restructure their syllabi. (Dai, 2012:21)

Dai Fan draws attention to the way that university English departments throughout the region have been forced to reconsider the nature of their courses. The old diet of 'intensive reading' and courses on phonology are disappearing. In their place are imaginative approaches – such as the creative writing courses which Professor Dai has implemented which take incoming students at B2 level and transform them into proficient C2 users.

This highlights a feature of the learning ladder of English which is probably shared much more widely. Although students are expected to have reached C1 level in English before entry, actual levels reached by students at age 17-18 are in reality substantially lower. Increasingly, the role of English departments is to guide students over what is often a difficult gulf, from B- to C- levels. The old teaching approaches largely fail to accomplish this. Indeed, there are few successful models globally of how to achieve the transition from B2 to C1 level on a large scale.

English in Hong Kong and Macau universities

Hong Kong students do not take the College English Test, but they are encouraged to take the international IELTS test, at government expense, in a scheme called Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme (CEPAS), first introduced by the University Grants Committee in 2002. Around two thirds of all students take IELTS in their final year. Since those who take the test have this fact included on their graduation transcript, one might guess that proficient students are more motivated to take the test than students who are less confident.

CEPAS scores have risen slightly over the years, despite the fact that a higher percentage of students now take the test (around 12,400 in 2010-2011). There is no evidence, in other words, that standards of English amongst graduates have been declining, as is sometimes claimed.

Over half of Hong Kong students in their final year are below C1 level – widely regarded as the minimum entry level for English-medium study. This suggests there may be a mismatch between students' English proficiency and the aspiration of Hong Kong universities to be world class English-medium institutions.

Figure 11 shows the band results for IELTS test-takers in both Hong Kong and mainland China. Although levels of English in Hong Kong appear to be higher than on the mainland, we need to remember that the majority of test takers in Hong Kong are final-year students, taking IELTS within the CEPAS scheme, whereas those in China take IELTS as a gateway to overseas study. In other words, mainland test-takers are likely to be younger, and at an earlier point in their English-learning careers.

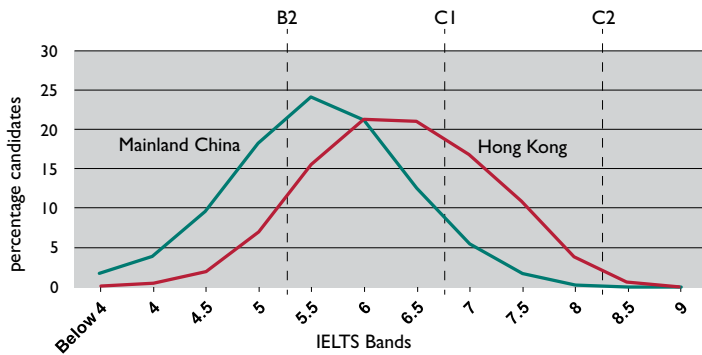


Figure 11 The IELTS performance of test-takers in mainland China and Hong Kong, 2012 data. (Source: Cambridge English)

Although Hong Kong universities refer to themselves as English-medium, they are far from being English-only zones. Textbooks and assessments are usually in English but the use of English in lectures is more mixed, depending on the subject and lecturer. Informal use of English outside classes, however, is low.

In Hong Kong, the number of mainland students is increasing, especially in Hong Kong University which is the city's highest-ranking institution. Some reports suggest local students are finding it difficult to compete with these selected mainland students who also squeeze out local candidates from the university's overseas exchange programmes with elite overseas universities.

> *The younger generation from the mainland constantly outperforms locals ... they score high in exams, participate in social activities and even speak better English than many local students. "We invited investment bankers to give seminars on campus", an HKU professor said, "and after, all the mainland students rushed to socialise with the speaker, handed in their resumes and asked for internship opportunities, while many local students just hid themselves in the back rows."* [5847]

In Macau the situation is similar, except there are proportionally more private sector institutions and a higher percentage of mainland students. A recent study of English usage amongst mainland students in Macau concluded:

Mainland students who come to Macao to pursue their tertiary studies hope to improve their English proficiency by studying in an English-medium university, but it turns out that their chances of practising and developing their English skills are actually very limited. (Zhang, 2013)

English teaching in the private sector

Private sector provision in both Hong Kong and mainland China is extensive and diverse, varying from small tutorial centres which supplement children's study at school to major international schools.

There is perceived to be a crisis in English-medium school provision in Hong Kong, as government subsidy schemes are withdrawn, fees escalate, and an increasing number of places in international schools are taken by local Chinese children. This may, in turn, be reducing the number of English-speaking managers willing to live in Hong Kong.

Most international schools in the region are located in Hong Kong, but as the number of expatriate workers elsewhere in the delta increases, so has the need for international schools. Guangzhou has several such schools, and a small number are now established in Shenzhen. In 2012, Harrow school, a British private school, opened a new campus in the Hong Kong New Territories in daily commuting distance of mainland China.

Most private provision in the region is, however, designed to be supplementary to school. There are many private language school chains, such as New Oriental – an organisation which operates throughout China and is now listed on the New York stock exchange. New Oriental advertises over 50 branches in the region, mainly in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. English is also the mainstay for most Chinese-operated tutorial centres which are often focused on preparing students for local tests.

The distinction between private and public schools in China is not always clear – cut. Many elite schools in the public sector will accept a student who does not have a sufficiently high exam score if parents are willing to pay fees. Children of migrant workers often do not have free access to local government schools – they have to pay fees at a public school, or attend cheap private schools which cater for migrants.

There also exists a wide range of international language school chains, such as Wall Street, EF, Berlitz and Disney. These often have a presence in city-centre shopping malls and recruitment points in metro stations and other public places.



Figure 12 Disney English, which opened its first centres in 2008 in Shanghai, now has centres in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. It is one of several major language school chains operating in the delta region.

The role of foreign English teachers in China

English teaching in mainland China schools is largely focused on the need to pass local and national high-stakes exams, but none of these exams include spoken English as a compulsory component. Typically, students will have to complete a battery of multiple-choice questions and be expected to know specific vocabulary lists.

This may help explain the strangely marginal situation of the many foreign English teachers working in kindergartens, schools, colleges and tutorial centres throughout the delta region. The blogs which document their lives in China are often filled with stories of poor working conditions and professional frustration.

In practice, foreign teachers in China are usually kept at arms length from the main teaching duties, which are left in the hands of Chinese teachers who understand 'the system'. Stanley (2013) in an ethnographic study of foreign teachers in Shanghai universities, came to conclusions which will resonate with expatriate English teachers throughout China:

Whereas CELTA-type courses stress language awareness and the ability to clarify and provide controlled and freer practice of target language points within a communicative framework, teachers' needs in the context are primarily that teachers will perform 'foreignness', provide 'fun' lessons, and perhaps engage students in oral fluency practice provided that such activities are given face validity by seeming to be controlled practice of specific language points.

Within the delta region, there exists a clear centre-periphery pattern with regard to foreign teacher employment: those employers based in suburbs and

small towns, and less prestigious institutions, pay a lower wage; provide poorer working conditions; and are often willing to employ teachers on the basis that they 'look' American or European, regardless of actual qualifications or experience. Even where pay levels are generous in local terms, they may still be insufficient to attract qualified, experienced teachers from overseas.

The following extract from an article published by an American teacher in his home newspaper indicates a typical situation: young untrained teachers whose main virtue is that they are native speakers of English.

> *We trainees are being babied by comparison to the other teachers before us. [language school chain] has been in China for 15 years. Their program is a very good one with a well thought out curriculum. Even though I have never taught in my life, I feel comfortable taking on the challenges of teaching given this company's support system. [3851]*

A tension between tests and real world needs

Despite this rather depressing view of what drives English learning in the delta region, two sectors, both of which are experiencing rapid growth, seem more oriented to developing real proficiency in English communication.

The first sector is composed of the kindergartens which, it seems, are opening in all the towns and suburbs of the delta. Whilst quality is variable, there seems to be a parental desire to give their young children a 'head start' in English. The British Council in Hong Kong, for example, has responded to this eagerness for 'toddler English' by introducing a new 'Stay and play' English course for children as young as 18 months.

The second sector caters for young adults, preparing students for overseas study or employment, both of which are discussed in later chapters.

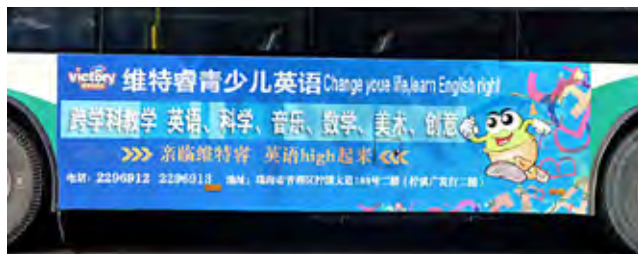


Figure 13 As the advert on this bus in Zhuhai demonstrates, private language schools now often promote the idea that English is an important life skill.

Both the very young and older sectors seem more oriented to externally validated notions of English proficiency than those catering for school age students. Spoken English proficiency has the status of an extra-curricular activity. Mary O'Donnel, a long-time observer of urban change in Shenzhen, commented on the low priority often given to such activities:

> *Many parents and students put off extracurricular activities until college. ... Many parents and students have clear priorities: get into a good high school and college and then "indulge" in their interests. Those students who do pursue total education do so knowing the risks. What's more, they tend to be either well-off, carry foreign passports, or prodigiously talented. [5384]*

What level of English do local learners reach?

Because the tests which learners must negotiate in their educational careers cannot be easily correlated with functional proficiency, it is difficult to establish a 'ladder of English' aligned to the CEFR. Nevertheless, my perception is that standards of English are improving fast in mainland China.

Although both the nature of high-stakes English testing in China and the methods used in teaching encourage a rote learning of vocabulary rather than a communicative proficiency in the language, it seems that an increasing number of young people in the delta region *can* communicate in English. We need to understand how and why this is happening.

There may be several reasons for increasing achievement in Chinese schools in the region: as employment conditions in the delta become more like those of Hong Kong, the importance of English proficiency becomes better recognised by universities, students and parents. Study overseas is also becoming a more possible and attractive option for families; a route which requires a minimum proficiency in English to be established by means of an internationally recognised test.

Paul Sze, an experienced teacher-trainer and school inspector in Hong Kong, now working at the Chinese University, has been working with teachers in Foshan

– a city now merging with Guangzhou. He confirmed that levels of English on the mainland seemed to be improving.

> *Had a most uplifting experience today visiting a primary school in Foshan, meeting with the panel of 15 energetic and devoted English teachers, and observing a P3 lesson that completely blew me away. The children were using English in speaking and writing that not even all S1 students in HK could produce; and they so enjoyed learning English. ... I'm really starting to worry about Hong Kong. In February last year, David Graddol made a public prediction that in seven years' time, the average student in China would have better English than the average student in Hong Kong. From what I have observed so far, this day may really come. And it may take less than seven years. [2082]*

Changing attitudes towards English

Throughout the 25 years or so that I have visited China as a 'foreign expert', I have heard the constant complaint that too much emphasis is put on English; that many kinds of employment do not really require English; that as a result of English 'mania' people are given jobs because they have passed the English test, even though they do not have the skills the post requires; and that the heavy concentration on English is weakening students' command of Chinese language and culture.

An English major I interviewed at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou explained:

Student: [The reason] I can really talk with others in English is because of my study in the university. Although English is a compulsory course in middle school, primary school it is focused on vocabulary and grammar, all for tests.

Me: Compared with your [younger] cousin, do you think it has changed?

Student: A little bit changed. Not sure much. We now have many ways, we have video, we have computer, we have internet to help learning English become more fun. But the purpose of learning English is still for the college entrance exam for the middle school students.

These long-standing complaints have recently been echoed by the state news agency Xinhua, which suggests they are now gaining high-level political recognition.

> *People's mania for English learning has wasted education resources and threatened the study of Chinese, said Zhang Shuhua, dean of the information and intelligence institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhang made the remarks at a meeting during the annual session of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, which closed on Tuesday. His outspoken words have triggered intense online discussion, with nearly 90,000 comments posted on the topic by 9 p.m. Thursday on Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter. [5326]*

This may indicate that English will play a less important role in high-stakes exams in future. If this is the case, it can only focus attention more on the need to develop real-world proficiency in English language communication. Xinhua later reported that the top universities in China, who set their own entrance exams, were dropping tests of English for many subjects in 2013.

> *China's top universities began their annual independent recruitment exams on Saturday, with English no longer included among the exams' compulsory subjects. In most of these universities, those who have applied for science and engineering majors will only be required to take math and physics exams, while art students will be required to take Chinese and math exams. Yu Han, an enrollment officer at Tsinghua University, said the subject was eliminated in order to reduce students' workload and attract talented students who excel in the targeted subjects. [5337]*

Any reduction in the gate-keeping role of English is, however, likely to lead to a reduced role for English in the school curriculum.

We may be on the brink of a change of status in relation to English in China. In the past, the main 'driver' of English in China has been the need to pass national exams. In future, this orientation may decline, but the need to obtain a real communicative competence in English may be increasing, as discussed in the chapters in this book on 'Overseas study', and 'English, jobs and the economy'.

Migrant workers and education

What happens to the children of migrant rural workers? This is one of less frequently told stories of China's economic rise, despite the fact that it involves family and education disruption on such an extraordinary scale that it may prove to be as powerful a factor in shaping China's future social and economic development as the one-child family policy.

There are relatively few children in the factory towns of the delta. Migrants usually have to leave children behind to be brought up by other family members in the countryside because children have the right of free public schooling only in places where their mothers have *hukou*, or permanent residence registration.

Instead of thinking of China as providing free education at post-compulsory stages, it is easier to see it as a complex system of scholarships and bursaries or subsidies. The availability of such subsidies usually depends on a student's *hukou*, and on scores in entrance exams. For the children of migrant workers, it is usually cheaper to attend low quality private schools than public schools. But this is an area of rapid policy change.

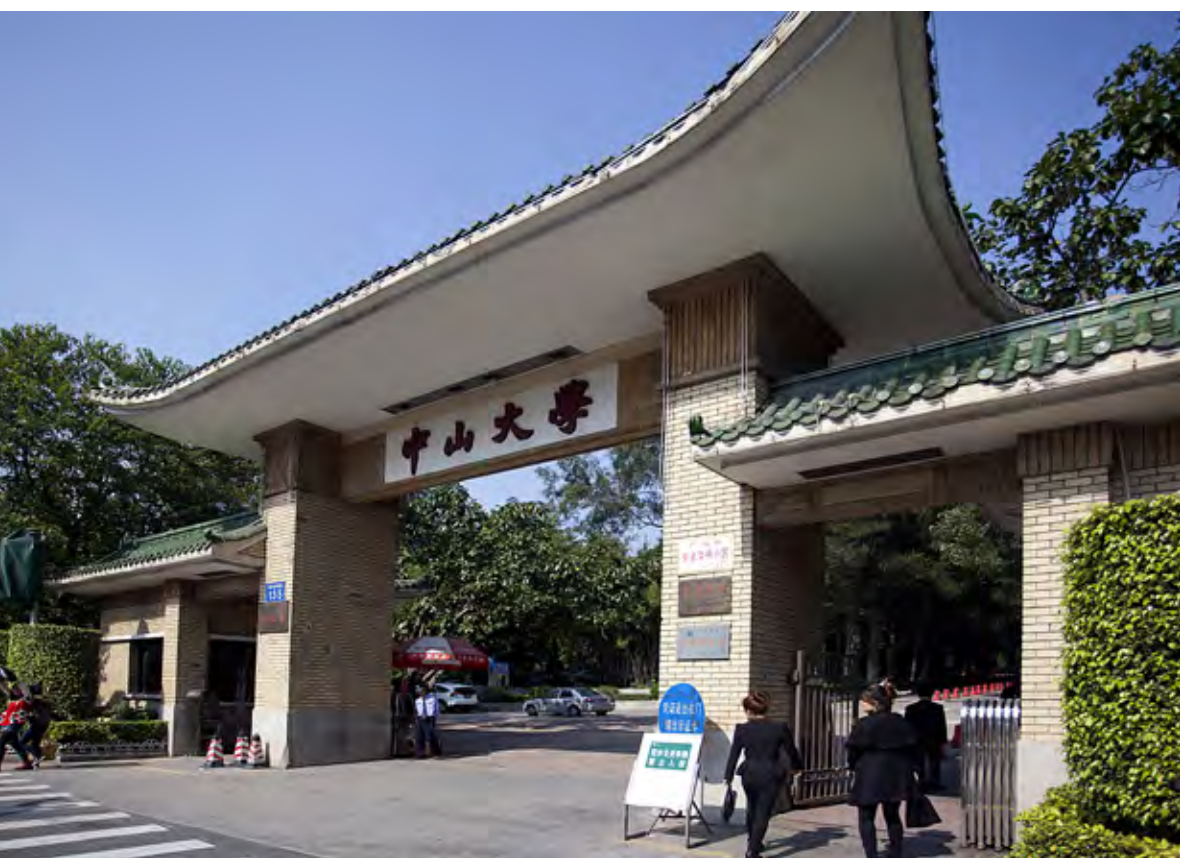
Nationally, 22 million children were 'left behind' by migrant workers [3536]. In the delta, however, an increasing number of migrants appear to be bringing their children with them – over 60% in Guangzhou according to one report [3553]. However, in order to do this, they need to find low-cost family accommodation – usually in one of the areas of cheap rented housing in the cities known as 'urban villages'. However, many of these areas in Guangzhou and Shenzhen are now being demolished.

The trend towards whole families migrating has led to an interesting development of low-cost private schools in some local neighbourhoods, established to cater for children of parents who do not have local *hukou*, and hence who do not qualify for local public schooling. The report on Guangzhou [3553] however, suggests that over 5% of these children do not attend school at all.

In recent years, fewer migrant workers are coming to the delta area from elsewhere in China – as factories relocate (see Chapter 6). Some remaining factories are responding to the increased cost of labour by employing (often undocumented) workers from neighbouring countries such as Vietnam.

Current trends amongst migrant workers – both skilled and unskilled – seem to be leading to contradictory and unpredictable outcomes in relation to education demand and provision, and the use of English and other languages in the region.

Figure 14 *The main gate to Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. Although Sun Yat-sen is one of China's most prestigious universities, and was originally established in the 19th century as a training school which prepared students for overseas study in the USA, there are no English, or even pinyin, signs at the entrance.*



Overseas study has a long history in China. Indeed, several prestigious universities, such as Tsinghua University in Beijing and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, began life as Christian mission schools preparing Chinese students for study in the USA.

After the opening up of China from the 1980s, the number of students travelling overseas began to increase; by the start of the 21st century, Chinese students had become an important part of university life in the English-speaking destinations of the US, UK and Australia.

Rising numbers

In the mid-2000s, the rising trend of overseas Chinese students seemed to falter. In 2006 (Graddol, 2006) I predicted that the apparently unlimited stream of students coming out of China would decline, and that instead of providing the world's largest source of international students, China would itself become a net destination for overseas study.

There were several reasons for concluding this. My research had found that the number of places available in higher education within China was growing rapidly: in Guangzhou alone, in 2004 over 100,000 additional places were made available when the island of Xiaoguwei in Panyu district opened as a 'university city'. Across the delta there has been a similar explosion in higher education provision in both public and private sectors.

At the same time, there are fewer young people graduating from high school because of demographic decline – even accounting for the increased proportion of students staying in education beyond the compulsory age of education. This means that the competition for places in Chinese universities was getting easier.

Furthermore, attitudes of Chinese employers also seemed to be changing. Finding local graduates more pliable and better connected in the social networks which are paramount in Chinese business, returnees sometimes

found themselves less employable. This encouraged students to stay in China for tertiary study. As recently as summer, 2012, a BBC news report seemed to confirm this interpretation:

> *There was a time when Chinese students who obtained higher education abroad were considered to be the most fortunate of their generation. After graduating from elite universities in the US and Britain, they were virtually guaranteed the best career prospects upon their return. Those students were colloquially referred to as sea turtles – returning home with the world on their backs. But things are different now. [2475]*

But there was another reason for believing that numbers of departing students would decline and that China would become a net destination for international students. Interest in China from the rest of the world was growing, and so was the number of places in Chinese universities open to foreigners. Many more courses in Chinese institutions are now taught in English – making them more attractive to overseas students.

One further trend was also evident: the growth in ‘transnational’ education. The University of Nottingham, for example, was one of the first foreign universities to set up a branch campus in China, at Ningbo. Students across Asia, including Chinese, now had an alternative, and cheaper, route to a foreign degree and perhaps the opportunity to study for at least part of the time in the UK.

The inflow of international students has indeed grown rapidly. The Chinese Ministry of Education is hoping to have 500,000 foreign students by 2020. [1912]

Why has the outflow increased?

However, the numbers of outward bound students have also increased much faster than expected. While the flow of Chinese students going overseas slowed in 2006, it then sharply increased, and has since been growing at a rate of 20-25% or more a year. Chinese undergraduates to the US rose by 43% in 2011. [2668] A recent survey of Shanghai’s key high schools found that over 40% of students are considering undergraduate study overseas. [3302]

The reasons for the continued increase in demand for overseas study seem to be complex, but understanding the underlying causes will help us understand the likelihood of shifts of behaviour in the future.

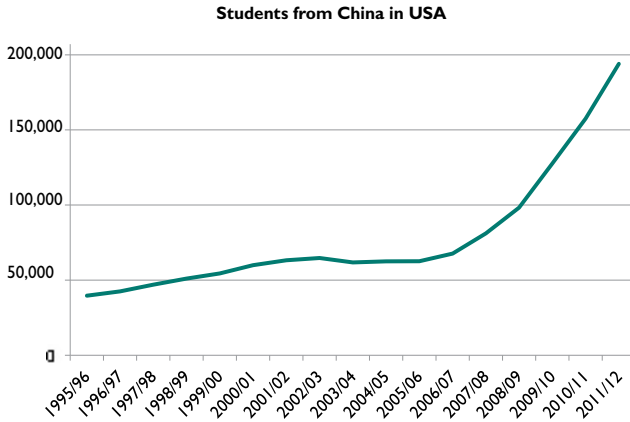


Figure 15 The growth of students from China studying in the US increased sharply from 2006. (Institute of International Education, 2012)

The growing middle-class in China, who are better able to pay the costs associated with overseas study, is one such driver of increased demand for overseas study. This trend is amplified by the one-child family policy, which means that parents are able to concentrate wealth and resources on one child alone.

Parents, now better educated themselves, may also be more keenly aware of failings in the Chinese education system. They see a home system emphasising competitive tests, rote-learning, and memory skills. But are aware that employers in knowledge-intensive industries – the employment destination for many graduates – now want practical experience, problem-solving abilities, and critical judgment. In other words, many employers looking for highly-skilled workers are finding candidates with overseas experience more attractive.

By opting for an alternative education route, parents may also be able to spare their children the pressure of the dreaded *gaokao* exam. Students must take the *gaokao* in the province where they have *hukou* even if it is not where they live or attend school. Successful students are then put into the quota system for university entry in that province. This makes it difficult for students in the provinces who wish to enter elite centres in Beijing such as Tsinghua and Peking Universities.

But it is not only those students seeking top national universities who face a problem with the quota system. Many children of migrant workers have trouble even studying at their preferred local university. They may have had to take *gaokao* in a distant province which is the place of their mother's *hukou*.



Figure 16 Dr Kuan Huang, the first Chinese to study abroad, came from Zhuhai and went to Morrison's School in Canton before studying medicine at Edinburgh University. After graduating in 1855 and obtaining a PhD in 1857, he returned to practise in Hong Kong. A statue of him, donated by the city of Zhuhai, now stands outside the Confucius Institute in Edinburgh, inaugurated in 2006. [3400]

China's parents are getting richer

The rules surrounding *hukou* affect all potential students, including children of the growing number of very rich parents. According to one survey (GroupM Knowledge – Hurun Wealth Report 2013) there are now over 438,000 people in the mainland delta cities whose net assets exceed six million CNY. An analysis of their spending on education concluded that around 80% intended educating their children overseas, and that 80% of these would choose an English-speaking country. In fact, the report found that the rich in Tier 1 cities (including Guangzhou and Shenzhen) showed a preference for a US destination, whilst those in Tier 2 cities (including Foshan and Dongguan) preferred the UK.

China's overseas students are getting younger

It appears that Chinese students are now younger than ever when they first travel overseas. A recent article in *China Daily* claims that 'Old views are changing on overseas education'.

➤ A poll for the latest China Education Xiaokang Index found almost 40% of Chinese believe the best time to study abroad is now at undergraduate level, while about 21% said it is during high school. The traditional idea – that students go overseas after they have bachelor's degrees – gained only 17% support, and about 4% said it should be at post-doctoral level, according to the report compiled by Xiaokang, a State-run magazine. [3210]

How the choice of destination for overseas study is made

Middle-class and wealthy Chinese parents see many advantages to placing a child overseas and are prepared to commit a large proportion of the family income to support this decision. Children's education already accounts for around 25% of such families' annual expenditure. For most very rich families, sending their child overseas is seen as an opportunity to invest in property and perhaps aim towards long-term migration. Those countries which allow a student to stay and work after graduation are thus especially attractive; those with strict immigration policy less so.

- 1 The family, not the student, usually decides. This is traditional in China. Although the younger generation increasingly have their own aspirations, the financial commitment required for overseas study means the whole family continues to play a decisive role.
- 2 Is a family member already overseas? Contacts and social networks, including diasporic ones, are important in decision-making.
- 3 Is there a trusted intermediary? Where no prior relationships exist, a family may use a local agent – an educational consultant or counsellor – to smooth the way, assist with applications, and use prior relationships with particular schools and universities to provide introductions.
- 4 Where is the institution in international league tables? Although league tables have a mixed reception in the west, they remain influential in China, though what matters is an institution's ranking in the particular subject. (The first global league table for universities was invented in China, by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, in 2003). Reviews and discussion in social media and commentary on educational portals within China appear to be more influential than sales tours by the institutions themselves.
- 5 Is there a local pathway to an overseas institution? Some high schools in China now have special sections where they prepare students for qualifications such as SAT which offer an alternative to the Chinese *gaokao* exam for entry to overseas universities. There are also coaching colleges which prepare students for interviews and help with applications. Some colleges in Hong Kong cater for this market by offering different preparation for UK universities and US universities, emphasising the different qualities each institution seeks from candidates.
- 6 Richer parents will place a child in a private school overseas to ensure they are properly prepared for college. The richer the family, the younger the child is sent overseas.

This can be seen in education conferences, fairs and exhibitions: whereas the market first catered mainly for one-year postgraduate study (MAs in the UK and MBAs in the US preferred), and was followed by the rise of the undergraduate market, the boarding schools in the west now gather to offer services to wealthy Chinese.

The '4-2-1' family pyramid, in which four grandparents and two parents focus their spending on a single child, helps explain why more middle-class families can now afford to send their child for study abroad. But in the next generation, the pattern may reverse. In more cities, two 'single-child' couples are allowed two children themselves. They may also find they are expected to support up to eight grandparents and four parents, as well as other extended family, as well their own children. Family economics will change again.

In the past, relatively few students who went overseas for study returned to China, despite penalties imposed on families. In recent years an increasing number of students have been returning to China after study. [1957] This may reflect more difficult employment conditions for students abroad (including tougher immigration regulations), but it may also indicate growing employment opportunities at home. As Chinese enterprises move up the value chain, they require more experienced, English-speaking graduate employees, and are actively attempting to attract students with overseas experience. Shenzhen and Hong Kong have both emerged as key cities offering employment opportunities for returning graduates. Perhaps these cities also show less resentment against returnees than other parts of China. In Shenzhen, after all, almost everyone is a migrant.

ENGLISH, JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

The economy of the Pearl River Delta was built on trade between China and the west. From the earliest days of the Portuguese trade in the 16th century, which brought silk, rice, tea and porcelain to Europe, commerce has been the lifeblood of the delta economy.

The original 'thirteen factories' in Canton were constructed outside the city walls, and strict rules were imposed by the Chinese on the movement of foreigners. A caste of 'minders' arose, called the 'linguists' who acted as intermediaries between foreign and local merchants. The factories were not places of manufacture, but where the local 'factors' or wholesalers established their warehouses. There remains a 'Thirteen factories Road' (Shisanhang Lu) in Guangzhou, though it is now some distance from the river. The successor to the *hongs* (merchant businesses) is in many ways the new Canton Fair complex, which receives several hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to its trade fairs.

Manufacturing became important only after World War II. Hong Kong had for a century or more relied on its role as an intermediary in world trade with China, but fears that China had become part of the communist bloc gave rise to international sanctions and a collapse in such trade. At the same time, business leaders with capital,



Figure 17 'Thirteen factories road' still exists in Guangzhou, though it is now some distance from the river.



Figure 18 *The Grand Lisboa casino in Macau: one of many which now dominate the Macau economy.*

fleeing the new communist regime from Shanghai, set up new manufacturing businesses in Hong Kong. This created a new industrial-led, and largely Chinese owned and managed, economy in Hong Kong.

When the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty was agreed by Britain in the 1980s, many Hong Kong businesses began transferring their factories to mainland China, where labour and land was much cheaper. This led to the business model often described as ‘front shop, back factory’ which describes how management, finance, logistics, design, marketing and retail components of businesses have been kept in Hong Kong, whilst the largely unskilled jobs have been relocated to mainland China. This separation was accelerated by the designation of Shenzhen, on the border with Hong Kong, as a Special Economic Zone, with many tax advantages.

Employment in the Pearl River Delta is thus now diverse. Trade remains an important component, but manufacturing is also a major contributor to employment and the economy in the delta region.

Meanwhile, the services sector has been growing rapidly, both in specialised, high-level sectors such as banking and finance, and in broad-based retail and hospitality services catering for growing numbers of tourists and business visitors, sectors which themselves may have both local and international connections.

Alongside this diversity, we can see how specialised manufacturing and services cluster in different cities: the economy of Macau, for example, is dominated by the casino

business. Heavy manufacturing (such as car factories) takes place in Foshan and Guangzhou, and electronic assembly in Shenzhen and Dongguan. But each of these cities includes a number of townships, each of which typically specialise in different areas. There are single towns which specialise in LED lighting, for example, or manufacturing of denim clothing, or printing.

This pattern means that employment opportunities and skill requirements in the delta now vary city by city and even town by town. And as the regional economy restructures in response to changes in the global economy, particular towns are likely to suffer more than others. Some may even become ghost towns, as factories close and migrant workers move elsewhere.

English in the workplace

The division of labour between Hong Kong and mainland China has been a major factor in the continuing economic development of the region. It has also, however, contributed to the historic need for English skills in the Hong Kong workplace and the corresponding perceived lack of demand elsewhere in the delta. The next chapter explains how this situation is now rapidly changing, as the economy of the delta becomes more like Hong Kong.

An extremely useful insight into perceived needs for English in the Hong Kong workplace is, meanwhile, provided by government sponsored research by Sclar ten years ago. The Hong Kong workplace language programme provides a rare example of a local evaluation of the workplace needs for English proficiency.

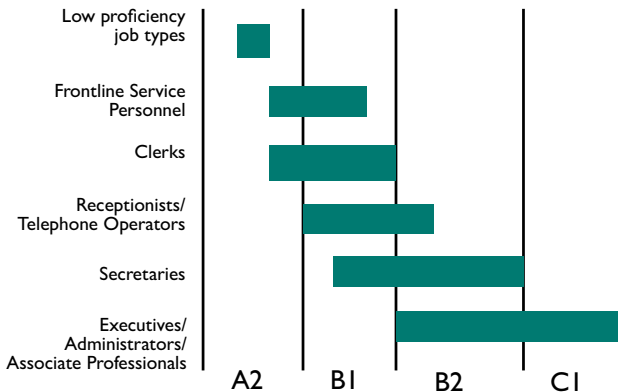


Figure 19 *Expectations of spoken English proficiency according to job types using the CEFR. Based on Hong Kong Workplace English Campaign, 2003.*

The research, which led to training programmes and a public awareness campaign, suggested that there were few, if any, job functions in Hong Kong which did not require some level of English. Although the programme established its own proficiency levels, they have since been mapped to CEFR levels, allowing us to make international comparisons.

In the past, workplace English has been seen as a form of 'English for Special Purposes' (ESP) in which particular skills are required, such as making presentations to colleagues, or writing emails. Recent research, however, seems to indicate that workers increasingly need more flexible skills – those associated with at least CEFR C1 level. For example, a recent report by The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) concluded:

What are the English language communicative needs of the 21st century workforce? Those courses which have traditionally been called "business English" and "English for specific purposes" have mainly emphasized developing future workers' skills in the classic business tasks of formal presentations, letter and email writing, formal negotiations, etc. However, recent studies highlight the importance of English for informal interaction and socializing in workforce contexts. English learners urgently need to be sensitized to communicative strategies for establishing relationships and maintaining rapport in the workplace (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Forey & Nunan, 2002). In meetings, the ability to take part in discussions is considered much more important than actually carrying out formal presentations. (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012)

Such research suggests that the requirements for English amongst professionals in Hong Kong were underestimated by the Workplace English project in 2003. On the other hand, a minimum requirement of CEFR level A2 for even 'low proficiency' job types seems excessive – and certainly not achieved in practice even in Hong Kong today.

The growing demand for multilingual workers

One of the constraints on multinational companies setting up regional headquarters in mainland China is the need for managers to be fluent in Cantonese, Putonghua and English. Such trilingual abilities are increasingly sought

after in all professions. This need has been created by the expanding need for Putonghua in delta workplaces. Even in Hong Kong, the role of Putonghua may be eroding the status of both Cantonese and English. As one mainland worker in the finance sector recently explained:

➤ *'I earn more money than most of the Hongkongers' and 'I always ask them to speak Putonghua to me', one of my Beijing friends said with pride. ... Top investment banks and hedge funds prefer to hire mainlanders – over Hongkongers, ABCs and Westerners – for their China business knowledge. In Central, Putonghua is becoming a popular language, not only in shopping malls, but also in offices. [5847]*

The Hong Kong economy, especially in the financial and legal services sector, has long relied on imported talent from Britain and the USA. The majority of these workers – especially those brought in on three- to four-year contracts – do not speak Chinese. This is increasingly seen as a disadvantage. At the same time, the supply of proficient and qualified English speakers, especially mainlanders who have studied and have work experience overseas, is becoming more plentiful.

The growing integration of the Hong Kong economy with the rest of the Pearl River Delta has created a further reason why job opportunities for monolingual expat English speakers appear to be diminishing.

Hong Kong has prided itself on its rule of law, based on English common law. However, after the agreement to return sovereignty to China in the late 1980s, the Chinese language has played a progressively greater role in the Hong Kong legal system, with both languages regarded as equally 'authentic' in legal drafting.

In keeping with the Basic Law's provisions on bilingualism, all legislation in Hong Kong is enacted in both Chinese and English, and both versions are accorded equal status. Thanks to the bilingual legislation programme begun in 1989, authentic Chinese texts have been completed of all pre-existing legislation which had been enacted in the English language only, and Hong Kong's statute book is now entirely bilingual. (Hong Kong Department of Justice, nd)

Now that most court cases involve both English and Chinese, there has been a substantial fall in the number of monolingual English-speaking lawyers in Hong Kong.

> With more court cases being heard in Chinese, lawyers who know only English say the amount of work available for them has dropped, causing some to earn less, go into early retirement or move abroad. [5482]

These constraints appear to be affecting employment elsewhere in Hong Kong, where the use of Chinese (both Cantonese and Putonghua) is growing in public and commercial life and trilingual employees are increasingly sought after.

English amongst migrant workers

The majority of the millions of migrant workers engaged in factory work in the delta do not speak English and do not need to. It is also likely that the first wave of such migrants had rarely reached the stage of education at which English teaching began.



Figure 20 Many of the factories in Dongguan and Shenzhen have large dormitory buildings within their compounds where migrant workers live in crowded accommodation.

However, Leslie Chang (2010), in a ground-breaking ethnographic study of young migrant women working in the factories of Dongguan, noted the importance of English to this group of young workers (see panel). For almost all, learning English was seen as a route to self-improvement. Some hoped to escape the repetitive drudgery of the assembly line by transferring to a factory office or even – the ultimate dream for many migrant workers – returning home to establish their own business, perhaps even becoming a factory owner themselves.

Others saw learning English as a means of becoming a ‘better person’; a part of the transition from rural to urban identity and so also improving their marriage prospects.

Acquiring a sound functional proficiency in English was often less important than the skill to ‘blag’ their way through a job interview, or to pass themselves off as a more educated person.

English amongst Leslie Chang's 'factory girls'

English also underlay the working life of Dongguan, where it was the language of business for the thousands of factories catering to foreign clients. This didn't mean people actually understood English; they learned just enough to function within their specific industry. Often they spoke in abbreviations and acronyms, a truncated language that would have confused any American. (Chang, 2010:247)

'If I learned English,' she told me, 'I could enter new circles.' By then, I knew her well enough to translate that remark: English might be another way to find a husband. (Chang, 2010:248)

Now Liu Yixia had a job teaching English to factory executives—which surprised me, although it shouldn't have. In Dongguan, barely knowing something qualified you to teach it to others. I asked her what she planned to do next. (Chang, 2010:252)

Chunming said. 'This year I will either learn English or start my own business.' (Chang, 2010:252)

'How about the travel industry?' I asked her. She placed her palm flat against the top of her head. 'Look at me. I don't meet the minimum height requirement. Tour guides must be at least 1.6 meters tall.' Right—that was another dumb suggestion. I had forgotten about all the ways in which height could affect the utility of English in a place like Dongguan. (Chang, 2010:254–5)

It felt strange to me to sit in a Dongguan factory and watch young people so constrained by their own timidity. The city was built on making do and getting by; the secret of success was learning just enough to talk your way into a clerk's job or a teaching position or whatever else you wanted. But in Liu Yixia's classroom I saw the limits of that way of thinking. Learning a foreign language properly took time, and there were no shortcuts. You could not fake your way into English. (Chang, 2010:260–1)

Whilst Chang suggests migrant workers may want to learn English primarily for show, many jobs are now appearing in the services sector in the delta – from retail to hotels – which can command higher pay and greater prospects for candidates who possess a knowledge of English.

However, interviews with hotel workers in Shenzhen suggest that where a job requires English, local employers typically assess communication skills informally by holding part of the interview in English. Independent certification of English proficiency does not seem to be regarded as important. This may be related to poorly developed employment legislation – or at least poor enforcement. The employment culture which Chang describes appears widespread: formal credentials are given less importance than *prima facie* ability to do the job and immediate availability. A new recruit can easily be sacked at the end of the week if they prove unable to perform the job.

It is impossible to understand the changing role of English in the Pearl River Delta today without understanding the profound economic restructuring now taking place in the region, and the extensive social, political and educational implications of this transition.

China manages its economy through five-year plans, created by central government and cascaded down to provincial and municipal levels. Each plan provides a shared understanding of the country's economic road map; it sets the direction in which enterprises, institutions, and government departments should aim, encouraged by incentives such as tax breaks, development land and revised regulations, such as those governing *hukou*.

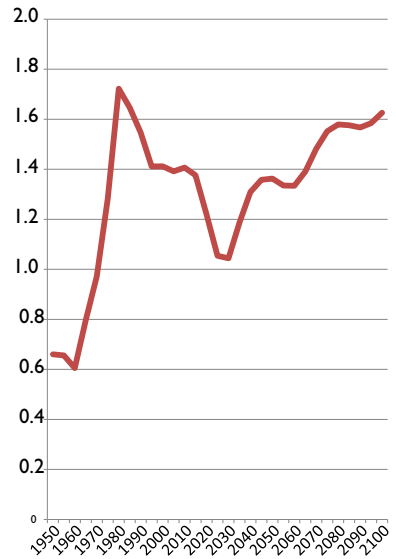
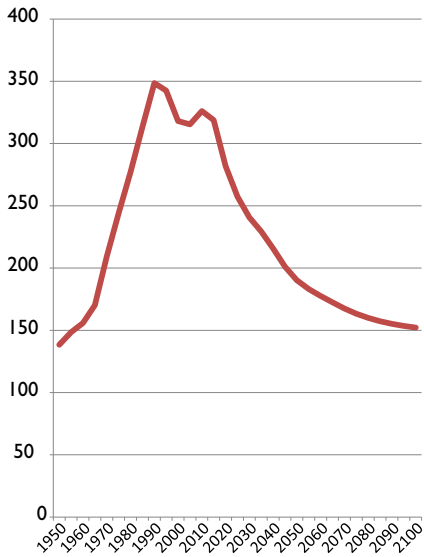
China has now embarked on its 12th five-year plan, for 2011–2015. At local levels, details continue to be finalised and its influence is likely to extend beyond 2015.

What does the current plan mean for the delta?

China's ambition is to move 'up the value chain' in economic production which has clear implications for the Pearl River Delta. Its glory days as the 'factory of the world' making cheap goods for export are already numbered. The factories which remain are now investing in design and building their own brands rather than manufacturing for other brands, whether it be Apple, Miele or Adidas. The former Guangdong party secretary, Wang Yang, described this process as 'emptying the cage and setting the birds free'.

To encourage this shift, legal minimum wages have been regularly increased. This is effectively pricing low-margin factories out of business, which are shifting elsewhere. New regulations are intended to reduce pollution and environmental damage – again increasing costs for some kinds of manufacturing.

The causes for this transformation are complex, and relate both to 'top down', policy-led directives and demographic and social changes which have led China into its next stage of economic development as a services-based economy, catering largely for domestic consumption rather than export.



The demographic decline of young workers

The ‘one child’ policy in China has had a dramatic impact on the number of children moving through school and entering the workforce: nationally, the total population between 15–29 years is in sharp decline, and is expected to halve in the coming decades.

This demographic decline is magnified in the delta, as migrant workers below the age of 30 (i.e. those who possess the stamina for long hours of repetitive work) are increasingly leaving the area, as work opportunities are growing nearer their homes in other provinces.

The ‘Lewis turning point’

In 2011, Foxconn announced it would install one million robots within three years in its factories [445]. This suggests the delta has reached what economists refer to as the ‘Lewis turning point’: the point where labour costs surge because of a shortage of workers and it becomes cost-effective to invest capital in machines to replace human labour.

One example is a Hong Kong-owned factory in Dongguan which makes moulds for plastic toys. The owner established a new plant in Hong Kong where an expensive German-made machine ‘requires just two technicians to operate but produces the same number of

Figure 21 Projections for population aged 15–29 years in China (left) and Hong Kong (right) in millions. (United Nations)

moulds that would normally take 60 workers to produce at the group's semi-automated factory in Dongguan' [186]. Fewer workers may be needed, but they must have the education and skills to undertake computer-aided design and operate a complex machine.

A concentration of fewer, more skilled and higher-waged workers will stimulate consumption and the use of local services such as health services, leisure venues, restaurants and educational courses. This new pattern of employment and consumption suggests there will be a growing demand for English, especially at the higher levels associated with graduate employment.

Where are the factories going?

The factories employing cheap labour are now leaving the area. But where are they going? And what is replacing them? The answers to these questions will help define the next phase of economic globalisation, as well as help us understand the changing need for English in the region.

Some factories are relocating to the provinces in China where migrants originally came from: Foxconn, for example, has established a new manufacturing base in Zhengzhou, in the central province of Henan, where it already employs 120,000 workers. Wages are lower there than in the delta, but so is the cost of living, giving employees higher disposable incomes. [3016]

Some factories have moved to neighbouring countries. Foxconn is building an operation in Indonesia, which may provide jobs in the region for up to one million workers [3113]. Many textile and garment factories are shifting to Bangladesh, while some toy factories have relocated to Vietnam. In this new geography of outsourced manufacturing, Singapore may be challenging Hong Kong as a regional financial and educational hub.

The speed of factory closures, although fast, is constrained by the complex supply chains which are disrupted when, for example, component manufacturers and end assembly lines are geographically separated. However, the dispersal of supply chains across ASEAN countries, which has already adopted English as its official language and which will be launching a new ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 is likely to lead to a greater use of English as a working *lingua franca*. The factory closures are symptomatic of two further



Figure 22 The old flatted factories and 'industrial buildings' in Kwun Tong, Hong Kong are gradually being replaced by office blocks. A similar economic transition is now taking place elsewhere in the Pearl River Delta, transforming both employment and urban landscapes.

economic shifts, both of which are giving rise to an increased need for English. Many developing economies, at the stage of development which this part of China has now reached, experience a long-term shift away from the primary sector (typically agriculture and fishing), through the secondary sector (industrialisation) and eventually towards an economy in which the tertiary sector (services) dominates, both in terms of contribution to GDP and employment.

The 'Fisher-Clark' model of economic development (named after two economists working in the early 20th century) seems to capture well what has happened in the Pearl River Delta.

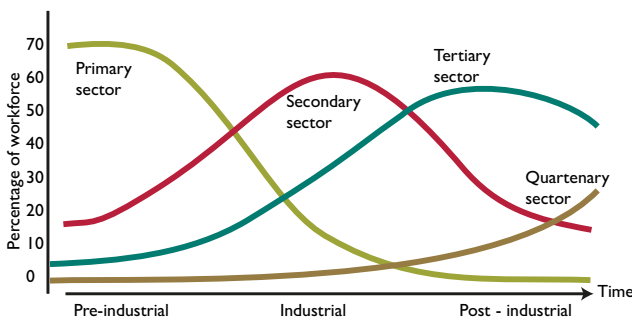


Figure 23 Economies tend to develop in similar ways, in which the services sector eventually dominates. This model is sometimes referred to as the 'Fisher-Clark' model.

The implications for English language are fairly clear: whilst the primary sector does not require much in the way of communication skills of its workers, the services sector does. The high-level services, such as those in

financial services and research and development, require higher level skills in English, as can be seen from the Hong Kong Workplace English project (described in the previous chapter). A second trend – towards globalisation – means that the kind of jobs which did not require English a decade or so ago, now do. For example, shop assistants in areas where there is increased tourism or business visitors need English to communicate with customers. This effect is felt variably throughout the region: even in Hong Kong (see Part two), there are large differences in requirements for English in different parts of the city.

In research I carried out in 2010, I calculated the impact of the changing structure of Hong Kong employment in recent decades on needs for English in the workforce. I took the lower end estimates for basic service jobs (such as shop assistants) and upper end expectations for professionals. Using the data provided by the Hong Kong government on the structure of employment, I was able to show that a ‘missing middle’ was developing in workplace requirements for English. That is, many jobs in the services sector now require basic proficiency in English, especially in routine interactions. But the increasing number of professional and administrative jobs in Hong Kong require a flexibility and confidence in English which goes beyond the intermediate B levels.

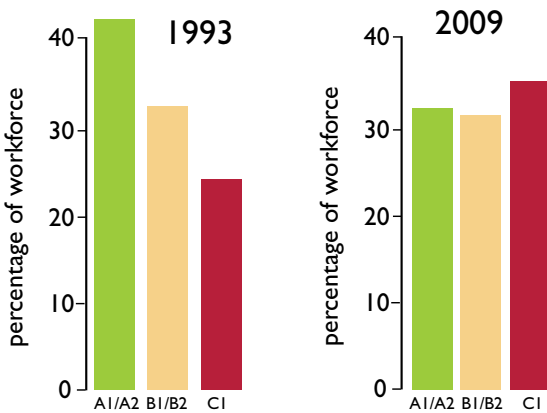


Figure 24 An analysis of the structure of employment in Hong Kong suggests that there has been a significant shift towards the need for at least C1 levels of English in the workplace.

As we learn more about the role of English in other parts of the world, such as Brazil or India, it is becoming clear that this tendency towards a bimodal pattern (in

which there is least requirement for intermediate B level English users) may be increasingly common. If so, it raises serious questions about how educational systems can best meet this demand, without building in patterns of unequal access to English learning.

As the economy of the Pearl River Delta restructures, it is beginning to look more like that of Hong Kong. In other words, we can expect a similar growing demand, especially in cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, for graduates with high levels of English proficiency.

This fact has already been alluded to by leaders of the new global companies in the region, such as the Shenzhen-based genome decoding service provider, BGI.

➤ *“Our education system has to be changed fast ... we need a more challenging, more creative education system. Otherwise we still, for most Chinese companies, are followers – following the UK and the States to try to catch up.”*
Wang Jian, founder of BGI, Shenzhen [5852]

A key question arises of where this supply will be found. It is likely that, like Hong Kong (see Part two), many of these graduates will be migrants – either foreign professional workers, or ‘returnees’ (Chinese who have studied and worked overseas).

Figure 25 Throughout the delta cities, urban villages are being demolished to make way for office buildings and shopping malls.





Political and social integration

The current five-year plan envisages closer integration of the whole delta area in economic, political and physical terms. When high-speed rail links and the Zhuhai–Hong Kong bridge are completed, no delta cities will be more than an hour's journey time apart.

Yet many Hong Kong businesses and institutions, such as universities and hospitals, already work across the boundary. China is seeking to expand such cooperation to use Hong Kong's expertise and finance to accelerate the shift to a knowledge-based economy in the rest of the Pearl River Delta.

There are three major new development areas in the Pearl River Delta which will shape the future integration of the region. The first is Nansha, an area in south east Guangzhou with an area the size of Singapore; the second is Qianhai – a new business district in Shenzhen which is intended to rival that of Hong Kong and which will have special tax and other privileges; the third is the island of Hengqin which adjoins Macau.

In the last two cases, the new developments are intended to blur the borders between a SAR and a SEZ, using the capitalist resources of the former to develop a knowledge economy in the latter. For example, a piece of land on the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong known as the Lok Ma Chau loop, is planned to become a higher education campus, managed by Hong Kong institutions but serving students from the mainland. In the case of Hengqin, the University of Macau is being relocated to a part of the island which will be treated as being within Macau's jurisdiction, connected to Macau by an undersea tunnel.

Figure 26 *The new Hong Kong legislative complex at Tamar places the Chief Executive's building (centre) next to the PLA headquarters (right).*



Part two

English in the urban
landscape



The study of 'language landscapes' is a relatively recent research approach, which explores how the study of language use in public places helps us understand the role and status of those languages in local communities.

The impact of globalisation means that few public places in the world now remain untouched by English, and so the use of English figures prominently in language landscapes research. The study of language landscapes can thus help us understand better the changing role of English in the lives of the people who live in the delta cities.

The process of globalisation, and growing use of English, plays out in characteristically local ways in the Pearl River Delta, which has risen – and is now declining – as the world's foremost manufacturing hub. Language practices which were once typical in Hong Kong and perhaps Macau (the two former European colonies), seem to be now spreading elsewhere in the delta. But the appearance of English in the landscape is uneven. Each city seems to have areas in which English has visibly penetrated, whilst other neighbourhoods seem relatively unaffected.

The following chapters explore this theme, with a special focus on Hong Kong. They sketch out ideas for further research in the delta region, and in other parts of the world.

Figure 27 (previous page) Guangzhou city centre – at Opera Square.



Many voices in the landscape

The built environment is filled with language: road signs, warning notices, advertising hoardings, and informal fly-posters which advertise personal services, second hand furniture or lost animals. Business signs – especially in Hong Kong – struggle to command attention by being bigger than rivals, or are suspended more precariously over the street, or are illuminated more brightly in neon, or use the latest LED technology from the delta factories.

The urban spaces of Hong Kong, especially, are in this way noisy. As you walk or drive through them, it is difficult to avoid the sense that you are being hailed and shouted at as you pass. The languages and mix of languages found in the written landscape reflects the complex linguistic lives of its inhabitants, the regulations of different authorities, and the wide variety of social, economic and political activities which take place in the city.

Linguists who study language landscapes sometimes refer to them as ‘heteroglossic’: that is, the landscape speaks with many voices. Official signs, for example, represent a voice of authority; such notices usually directly reflect official language policy. Advertisements tell us through their choice of language about the consumers they are targeting. Ephemeral materials, created by ordinary citizens or hawkers, reflect more directly the languages of local communities.

Language landscapes reflect the social, economic and political activities of the diverse communities which live,

LANGUAGE LANDSCAPES

Figure 28 *The landscapes in the Pearl River Delta are constantly changing. Here, old factories in Kwun Tong district of Hong Kong have been demolished and a new promenade created, facing Hong Kong’s old Kai Tak airport, now itself being redeveloped as a cruise liner terminal. Such change reshapes the flows of people and the economic and social activities which take place within public spaces.*





occupy and move through urban spaces. The authorship of the texts which appear in these spaces is complex: varying from informal, vernacular, ephemeral notices, to highly stylised signage which reflects local language policy or which carries the force of law. The language of advertisements and business names arises from interactions between various parties: the consumer, the seller, and regulatory structures, for example. Although one cannot look at a landscape and read off these in any simple way, they create a look which is often distinctive and which forms part of the identity of a place. It follows that as English changes its role in a community, this will be reflected in the landscape.

Figure 29 *The language landscapes are filled with handwritten and ephemeral material as well as formal signage. Such unauthorised voices provide an insight into local linguistic communities. These notices on a railing in Kwun Tong, Hong Kong, are all written in Chinese.*



Figure 30 *Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) who studied the linguistic landscapes of Hong Kong, noted how signs often accumulate, forming 'semiotic aggregations'. (Central, Hong Kong)*

A third language: icons

Public spaces across the delta are subject to many prohibitions and warnings. These are given a distinctive appearance across mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong by the inclusion of icons which indicate the activity or danger in question. In Hong Kong, this often creates a three language formula (Chinese; English; icon). So widespread is this convention that even informal signs attempt to look official by reproducing it.

Icons convey meaning in complex ways: they represent the activity in question pictorially, but they also incorporate conventional or stylised elements which makes them partly symbolic. Rarely, a prohibition notice appears without any accompanying text (see Figure 31). This probably marks it out as a community, rather than an official, notice.



Figure 31 A notice, presumably directed to dog walkers, found in mid-levels, Hong Kong Island.



Figure 32 (above) Prohibition signs, Chater Park, Hong Kong Central.

Figure 33 Informal notices gain authority through the trilingual formula: here, Chinese, English and icon. (Building site, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Local identities: mainland China

Across the Pearl River Delta, the language of official signs reflects the voice of national or local government: but the 'official' language is by no means uniform. This is a region which exemplifies the idea of 'one country, several systems', and where the differences in language across the region give a distinct visual identity to the different territories.

For example, in mainland China, public notices use simplified characters, rather than the traditional characters of Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, most official notices and signage are bilingual. However, more public signs in mainland cities are now becoming bilingual, either through official policy (perhaps to make cities look 'international') or because the increasing flow of foreign visitors makes English a pragmatic choice.

In Guangzhou, in May 2012, a new regulation governing road signage came into force, requiring signs to be bilingual [1064]. But a question arose, as in other Chinese cities. Should a road sign in Guangzhou say 'Linhexi Rd', as overhead signs appear, or 'Linhexi Lu', as the roadside signs currently indicate? The latter sign is in pinyin (the standard mainland romanisation of Chinese), and is provided by the city's 'committee for geographical names', whilst the overhead signs are installed by the traffic police, a different department with different language policy. This shows one way in which signage can reflect internal administrative processes in local government.

This also reflects an ongoing debate in mainland China as to whether signs should carry pinyin or have the Chinese words translated into English. In Hong Kong, the romanisation found on many signs is not pinyin, but a variety of older forms of romanisation.

Shenzhen has suffered from a related problem which is also felt in other parts of this fast-developing urban landscape. In 2006 a spokesman for the traffic police complained that new roads were built so quickly that it was impossible to keep signs accurate: 'New roads and streets have emerged so rapidly that old signs appear unsuitable a few years after being erected' [2965].



Figure 34 Commercial City shopping mall in Shenzhen shows the intrusion of English in the urban landscape.



Figure 35 Rubbish bins in the Guangzhou metro are labelled in both Chinese and English.



Figure 36 English is worn rather than spoken or written, here in Dongmen shopping street, Shenzhen.

Local identities: Hong Kong

Hong Kong has a 'bilateral, trilingual' policy, meaning that official signs should be in both English and Chinese. The written form of Chinese in Hong Kong employs traditional characters, not the simplified characters found in mainland China. This creates a distinctive visual identity to all official signs in Hong Kong, whether written on the road, bus, or street sign.

Hong Kong is also replete with signs which are not official, such as business signs, advertisements, informal signs by local residents and, though infrequently, graffiti.



Figure 37 In Lau Kwai Fung bar area in Hong Kong Central, English is prominent on signs.



Figure 38 In the more traditional area of Jordan, Kowloon, there is less English.

Local identities: Macau

Macau, site of Portuguese trade dating back to the 1550s, uses the official language of Portuguese in road signs, public notices and business names. This helps create a distinct 'look' for the streets and conveys a sense of historic continuity with the old colonial town.

Although English is widespread in Macau, it has no official status, unlike in Hong Kong.



Figure 39, 40, 41
The combination of Portuguese and Chinese, with English as a third language, gives the streets of Macau a distinctive identity.



Soundscapes

The study of language landscapes can be extended to spoken language. In lifts, trains and stations, ferries and other public spaces, announcements are routinely made. In Hong Kong on the MTR, for example, announcements are trilingual, in Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. These announcements provide a constant reminder of place, signalled by the choice of languages, the order in which they appear (English was moved to third place after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997), and the accent of the speaker (in Hong Kong the English announcements are made with a British accent, those in neighbouring Shenzhen with an American accent).

Some announcements travel with passengers, such as those in lifts or on board trains. Others are fixed to particular spaces – for example, the safety announcements on escalators reminding you how to stand safely repeat in an endless loop as you pass through the area. Often, announcements from adjoining spaces – such as the platform, the escalator and the train standing with open doors – can be heard at the same time.

Just as in the written domain, an area more usually studied in language landscape research, we can find in the soundscape a complex mix of voices, varying from formal and official to informal and ephemeral. As you pass by the entrance to a shop unit, you are likely to be hailed by an assistant intent on attracting you to look inside the shop. A foreigner is likely to be addressed in English, a Chinese person in Hong Kong in Cantonese, or in Shenzhen in Putonghua.

As you walk through public spaces throughout the delta, there is typically a press of people around you, whose voices also form part of the experience of place. Even if, as a visitor, you cannot easily distinguish between Cantonese and Mandarin, they sound different as a result of their differing tones and phonology. Everywhere, people walk alongside you or just behind, speaking on mobile phones to unseen friends, or chatting with companions.

Speech, of course, is not the only sound in the landscape. There are many others, such as distinctive traffic noise, the rumbling of wheeled cases around bus and railway stations, the sounds emitted by pedestrian crossings, and shuttered entrances opening or closing. All such sounds help define and characterise particular urban spaces.

AN ENGLISH LANDSCAPES SCALE

It is clear to the most casual foreign visitor that whilst written English is ubiquitous in many parts of the Pearl River Delta, it varies in quality and quantity. This variation reflects the complex underlying distribution of language users, the social and economic practices found in different urban spaces, and government policy. For example, when Guangzhou decided to regularise its bilingual signage, it focused only on areas of high visitor traffic. The *China Daily* commented:

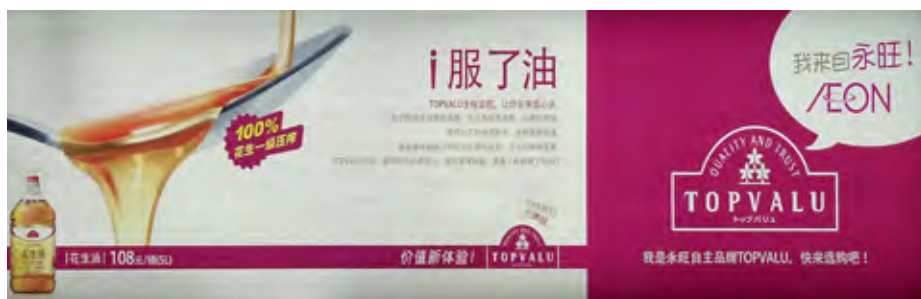
> 'With the goal of developing Guangzhou into a modern, international metropolis, we recognize the need to set up bilingual public signs, especially in the public areas of hotels, scenic spots, airports, long-distance bus stations, passenger wharves, subway stations and urban roads.' [1064]

This news item gives us one insight into why we see more English in the urban landscape in some places rather than others: authorities expend resources only where they think bilingual signage will serve a function.

Degrees of English

The first intrusion of English into the landscape is often in advertising. English words appear, especially in slogans, in a way which a native speaker may not easily be able to make sense of. Such use tells us something about the intended readership: people who wish to be addressed as potential English speakers but who may not know the language well.

Figure 42 An advertisement in Guangzhou shows English words embedded in Chinese copy. This would be classed as Level 1 on the scale.



At the other end of the scale, it is possible to find advertisements and notices which are entirely in English and which, if removed from their context, would show no trace of their origins in a mainly Chinese-speaking community.

Figure 43 Sign in Pacific Place shopping mall, Admiralty, Hong Kong. A monolingual, 'Level 6' environment.



The scale (right) describes a continuum of English usage in the language landscape which can be applied in Hong Kong and the rest of the delta region. Figures 42 and 43 illustrate first, how English often first appears as single words or phrases, and second, how in some local environments, mainly in Hong Kong, traces of Chinese in navigational signage can completely disappear.

Level 1 usage in official signs also occurs, where the English is – somewhat surprisingly – restricted to the title. Two examples are given, the second an unusual one from Hong Kong.



Figure 44 (above) A notice in a shopping precinct in Kowloon Bay is unusual for a semi-official notice in Hong Kong in not being fully bilingual.



Figure 45 (left) A notice in Guangzhou East railway station. Only the words 'Public Notice' are in English.

Levels 0-2 are typically found where signs are aimed at readers whose first language is not English, but who may have some knowledge of English (say up to A2 in CEFR).

An English Scale

0 **No** English is visible in any signage in an area. Globalisation means that few large areas are likely to fit this category. For example, shops may display goods whose wrapping includes a list of ingredients in English. Nevertheless, small areas – perhaps parts of a residential street – may be English-free zones.

1 **Hints** of English. The local language of the area is dominant. English – perhaps single words – may be evident in business names. Advertising or ephemeral promotional material may include slogans or strap lines in English, while the rest of the copy is in the local language.

2 **Limited** bilingualism. Basic navigation signs – such as *Exit, Toilets, Taxis, Bus Station, Metro, Parking* – contain English translations alongside the local language.

3 **Bilingual** languages given equal weighting. Navigational signs, public information, transport timetables, prohibition notices, advertising material, street signs, tourist information, emergency procedures: these notices are given in local language and English.

4 **Dominance** of English. The local language is becoming less visible, and may be set in a smaller typeface on printed material. Most public signage and most advertising is in English. Some adverts may appear entirely in English.

5 **Almost** entirely English. Ordering of the public environment is almost wholly in English and it is the local language which occasionally intrudes. Navigational signs, advertising, shop names, are in English. Nuance is expressed through English in advertisements by using loan words and expressions from other European languages in ways which reflect English native-speaker connotations.

6 **Monolingual** English. No use of a local language. A full range of English registers – formal, informal, non-standard and so on – may be used. This level may be reached in small enclaves, but is rarely found in large geographic areas.

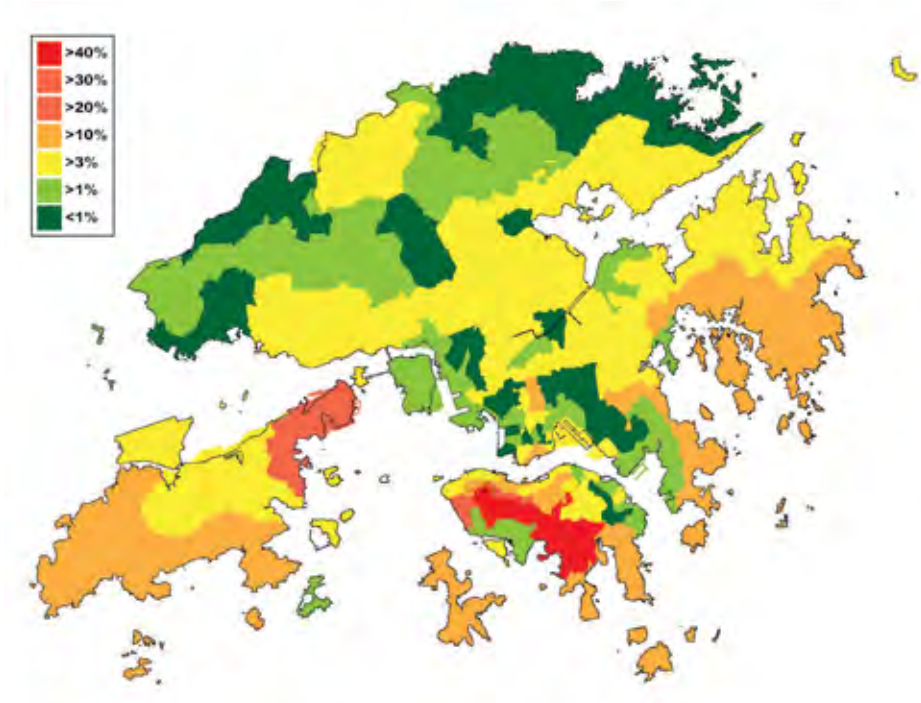
Level 3 may be aimed at a dual audience: possibly people who are monolingual in one or the other language. In such cases, all information must be duplicated. In other words, the sign must be fully bilingual.

Monolingual English speakers, or at least those who cannot read Chinese but who have high proficiency in English, will feel comfortable from Level 3 and above. Bilingual readers whose English is at B2–C1 will be comfortable with Levels 3–5, but may struggle with the nuances often employed by Level 6.

Areas where English speakers reside might be expected to display more English in signs and notices. The map below shows percentages of the population in Hong Kong who report English is their primary language, in a 2006 survey. More obvious than the hotspots of English speakers are those districts which almost completely lack them (shown dark green on the map).

The variation of English on signage cannot, however, be explained entirely in terms of the ethnic mix of residents. In a later chapter, I discuss more dynamic explanations, such the flow of people through the urban landscape.

Figure 46 *Percentage of local population in Hong Kong who are native English speakers, according to a 2006 survey.*





In areas where bilingual signage is the norm, finding a public notice only in Chinese is the semiotic equivalent of the dog which did not bark in the night: the lack of English is salient. A Chinese-only notice suggests that it is not addressed to, or intended to be read by, English speakers. On Lamma Island, home to many English speaking expatriates, a fire safety notice at a grave site is only in Chinese. It helps define the area as local.

Figure 47 A sign in Chinese only on Lamma Island.



Figure 48 (left) The name may be in English but you would not bet on an easy English interaction inside.

Interpreting the language mix

For the most part, residents and visitors negotiate each complex linguistic landscape with relative ease, despite the fact that subtle interpretive skills are often required.

For example, the fact that a shop has a business name in English is unlikely to mislead a local into imagining they will meet someone inside who speaks English. But an informal notice, which looks as if it may have been created by the business owner, suggests both a symbolic welcome to an English-speaking visitor and a greater likelihood of being able to carry out and complete a transaction in English.

Official signage not only reflects the intended audience,



Figure 49 (Above) A more informal sign which may encourage an English speaker to investigate.



Figure 50 Road signs on Lamma Island, Hong Kong.

it may also reflect internal working practices in the local government departments responsible for the signs. Do they employ native speakers, or have a proof-checking stage? The signs above both display a semiotic dissonance between the construction of the sign (which connotes the use of costly official resources) and the form of English used, which connotes a lack of resources.

The name of Rednaxela Terrace in Hong Kong Central district is said to be the result of a 19th century Chinese sign writer forgetting that English is written left to right. (Its backwards name is Alexander Terrace). Many place name signs reflect local linguistic history, patterns of language contact, and tell stories of this kind.



Figure 51 Rednaxela Terrace is said to be the result of a 19th century Chinese sign writer forgetting that English is written left to right.

During the academic years 2010-2012 I taught an undergraduate course in 'World Englishes' at City University, Hong Kong. As part of the students' course work, I set a practical investigation into the local use of English. Students first attended my lectures which included discussions of research methodology, the idea of 'language landscapes', and sociolinguistic patterns of English use. They were encouraged to interpret the notion of 'landscape' broadly, and tutorials included the design of packaging and ephemera.

Rules of the research project

Working in groups, students negotiated their topic and the means of carrying it out. I made only one stipulation: students must actively collect their own data in locations around Hong Kong.

Each group presented their research in the form of a collaboratively written Wiki, containing reports, images, recordings, discussions, observations, and analysis. The Wikis were then opened for peer review by the other student groups.

The exercise was carried out with great energy and enthusiasm by over 200 students during three semesters, and generated nearly 40 distinct projects.

I was impressed by the variety of approaches the students took to creating profiles for the English used in many diverse contexts in Hong Kong, and the perceptive insights they provided into aspects of language in Hong Kong – many of a type that an outsider-researcher like myself would find difficult or impossible to gain.

Here I provide just two examples of students' work – referred to as Group 1 and Group 2 – to indicate the potential of this approach in understanding the varied role of English in local communities.



Figure 52 Students in Group 1 researched English use in eleven supermarket chains in Hong Kong. (Student Wiki)

Group 1: English in Hong Kong supermarkets

In this research, students examined three dimensions:

- 1 Did English proficiency change due to store location? For example, between Hong Kong Island and the New Territories where few foreigners go?
- 2 Was there a difference in English proficiency according to staff seniority? For example, between 'managers', 'staff' and 'cashiers'?
- 3 Did the shelf labelling for products cater for English-speaking customers and if so, to what level?

For each dimension, students constructed a multi-level index. For example, they assessed shelf labels and price tags according to *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Manner*, and *Target Audience* (see box).

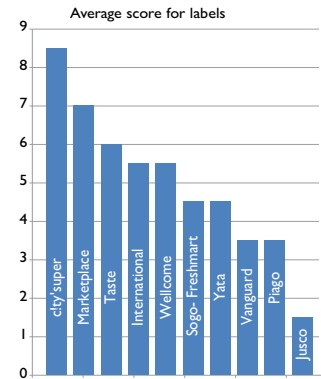


Figure 53 (above) Graph showing score for labels according to student created criteria.



Figure 54 (left) City'super, IFC Mall, Hong Kong Island. One of the most 'English' of Hong Kong supermarkets.



In order to investigate the reading friendliness of the English words on the price tags in each chain of supermarket, we decided to look at 4 different characteristics of the price tags – their *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Manner* and *Target Audience*. We also assigned a score out of 10 to each characteristics to indicate the level of reading friendliness of the price tags.

(1) Quantity

Sufficiency of information. This field is graded by whether the price tag has all the proper information that is needed for an English medium shopper to determine the product, in this case, the product's brand, product name and quantity of product. For a shopper to recognize a product from the price tag, the above information is deemed necessary.

(1 - very little information; 10 - very rich information)

(2) Quality

Accuracy and relevance of the English words. This field is graded by word choices on the price tags which indicate whether they can give correct and proper information of products. Products with names in abbreviated forms are sometimes unclear and are deemed of in low quality as they obstruct shoppers from getting the correct information from the price tag conveniently.

(1 - not accurate and relevant at all; 10 - very accurate and relevant)

(3) Manner

Clearness. This field is graded by the organization and layout of information on the price tags. Even with sufficient information that gives the customers a clear and correct idea of the product, the information on price tags should also be designed for easy access, such as the font size of the words, the layout as in whether the text are grouped and placed in rational and consistent formats.

(1 - very unorganized and inconsistent; 10 - very organized and consistent)

(4) Target Audience

This field is graded by whether the price tags are reading friendly for foreign customers (especially English speaker) or not. Such as the comprehensiveness of the English on the tags, the discrepancy between Chinese and English on the tags and whether the English parts are in focus or not.

(1 - very "localized" price tags; 10 - very "internationalized" price tags)



Source: Wiki for Group 1, composed June 2011



Figure 55 *Students in Group 2 researched English use in four tourist destinations, including the bar area of Lan Kwai Fong in Hong Kong Central.*

Group 2: English in Hong Kong tourist spots

Group 2 assessed the role of English in four major tourist destinations in Hong Kong:

- 1 Lan Kwai Fong, a well-known bar and night-club area in Central
- 2 Wong Tai Sin temple complex, frequented mainly by Chinese tourists
- 3 'Ladies Market' popular street market frequented by tourists
- 4 'Victoria Peak', a major destination for visitors and tourists seeking the 'typical' panoramic view over Hong Kong.

Group 2 used various research techniques in each locality. They made observations of the language landscape, interacted with service providers such as shop assistants to assess English proficiency, and interviewed foreign tourists to obtain subjective impressions of how easily they were able to manage encounters in English.

In the Lan Kwai Fong bars, the student researchers noted that the English proficiency of staff – bouncers, guards, bartenders and so on – was high when contrasted with street vendors outside who 'can usually produce a few phrases regarding the prices, product names and colour in attempts to do transactions'.

Student project • Language use in tourist destinations

The researchers noted too, the high number of employees who were not Chinese speakers. But they also identified some bars which seemed to cater almost exclusively for local people. In these bars, the language environment was almost exclusively Chinese.

In the temples of Wong Tai Sin, the researchers found a range of languages on offer in printed information and tourist brochures. They discovered, however, that at face-to-face level, the English language ability of diverse temple attendants, marshals, officials and fortune-tellers was variable. Pretending they could only speak English, the students also recorded their fortunes being told to assess fortune-teller speaker proficiency.

At the Ladies Market, the student researchers made an interesting observation that the tourists they interviewed seemed happy with the ease of communication, although the vendors' English proficiency seemed low. The group suggested that tourists may have low expectations of the English of market traders, thus 'Hong Kong English' may be part of the expected touristic experience.

“ In Lan Kwai Fong, we did not have to pretend to be English-speaking – We needed to speak in English so as to communicate well. This is how Lan Kwai Fong being distinct from other chosen locations. Most of the service providers are foreigners, hence we, in fact, had to make orders in English. For some of the non-local waiters and waitresses, their English level may even be higher than ours. ”



Figure 56 A fortune teller who offers to foresee struggles ahead using English, Mandarin, Japanese, and Cantonese.



Figure 57 Wong Tai Sin temple complex is an extensive area visited mainly by Chinese devotees and tourists.



Figure 58 Map of stalls in the Ladies Market produced by student researchers.

The researchers also found, by talking to traders in different parts of the market, that English proficiency seemed to be distributed unequally – traders at the edges had poorer English than traders at the centre. This could be the result of greater conversational contact with the flow of tourists channelling through the main routes. It may also be an effect of controls within the hawker community, or a function of rental rates (if higher rates are charged for central stalls, then they will be rented by traders who feel able to to maximise income from tourists).

“

Most of the shop keepers in the Ladies Market are local Hong Kong people who obviously have not received much language education and have learnt their English through communicating with foreign customers. Therefore, the predominant language is still their mother tongue – Cantonese – although it is a famous tourist spot. As the Ladies Market is a local street market, it does not need to be highly-internationalized in order to give an exclusive image. Perhaps this is the reason why the foreign visitors interviewed are satisfied with the English usage there – they did not expect people in a “local street market” to speak perfect English. And we do think that the un-unified language use and the varied English standards are the local features that some tourists are looking for. ”



Figure 59 Ladies Market, at the intersection of Tung Choi Street and Nelson Street.

Within communities, across community boundaries, people flow and circulate. Such flows are rarely random. Some are highly predictable, bringing distinctive patterns of communication and language competencies into or out of particular parts of the city at regular times each day, each week, or at certain times of the year. This chapter builds on the previous discussion of how English is distributed unequally across the urban landscape, introducing a dynamic approach which takes account of such flows and their rhythms.

Language flows

One of the more obvious flows in Hong Kong is formed by the commuters who bring a tidal wave of English into the business districts, twice a day, five days a week. For example, in Central and Admiralty districts on Hong Kong Island, an 'English-rich' stream of people flows inwards during a two-hour period from 7am, then ebbs outward again around 6pm. The people who make up this crowd are mainly the professional white-collar office workers in the tower office blocks, including many of the expats who do not speak Chinese (but who may be bilingual in a variety of other languages in addition to English). These people flow from other residential areas in the city, such as Discovery Bay on Lantau, Yung Shue Wan on Lamma Island, as well as the areas marked as 'high English' on the map in Chapter 8, such as Mid-levels. This flow contains many people who speak English as either their first language, or as a second language. They are employed in the kind of managerial and professional jobs for which the workplace English project described in Chapter 5 considered a minimum of a C1 level of English was required.

Slightly later (the shopping malls in Hong Kong tend not to open before 10–11am), come the people who serve the English speakers in shops and cafes in the business districts. This stream will contain many speakers of lower English proficiency, perhaps A2–B1 level, arriving from all over Hong Kong. The two groups together help



Figure 60 In buildings like ifc 2 in Hong Kong Central, large communities of high-proficiency English speakers assemble each working day.

create a concentration of English usage in the central areas during the working day. In office towers, such as ifc 2 (International Finance Centre), a community of thousands of workers, virtually all with high levels of English, assemble anew each day.

And later again in the day, perhaps not until the afternoon, the staff who work in the bars and bistros in areas like Lai Kwai Fung will arrive. These workers share something in common (in their mix of language proficiencies) to the early stream of office workers – as we saw in the student project in Chapter 9, the bar and bistros provide employment for foreigners who do not speak Chinese.

Newspaper hawkers already respond to these flows: free English language copies of *The Hong Kong Standard* or the Hong Kong edition of *China Daily* are given out early in the morning at points of maximum flow, such as the top of escalators and walkway entrances.

Peak flows of high-proficiency English speakers (C1+) into Hong Kong Central may be earlier in the morning than the peak for lower proficiency English speakers (A1/A2).

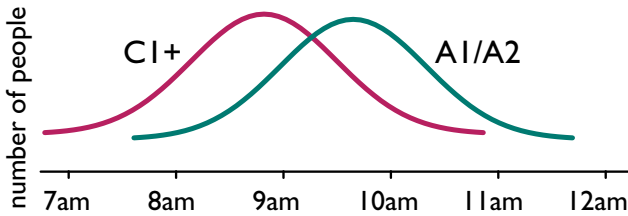


Figure 61 The crowds moving through the streets of Hong Kong Central may have different profiles of English proficiency according to the time of day.

This notion of time-related flows of people with different language repertoires and English proficiencies is explored in the following pages.

I: The annual migrant exodus

➤ *In Zhaoqing, a city in the west Pearl River Delta, local authorities said more than 100,000 motorcyclists left the city Jan. 20. The highways leading out of the city were so crowded that helicopters had to be summoned to help control traffic. [502]*

Perhaps the most remarkable of episodic flows in the region is the annual exodus of migrant workers at Chinese New Year (Spring Festival), who return home to see families. Across China, over 100 million people disperse from the cities to provincial towns in an annual migration which strains transport systems. The numbers published for journeys undertaken seem to defy the imagination: during the 2012 Spring Festival, it is reported that the national railway booking site received over an astonishing billion visits per day.

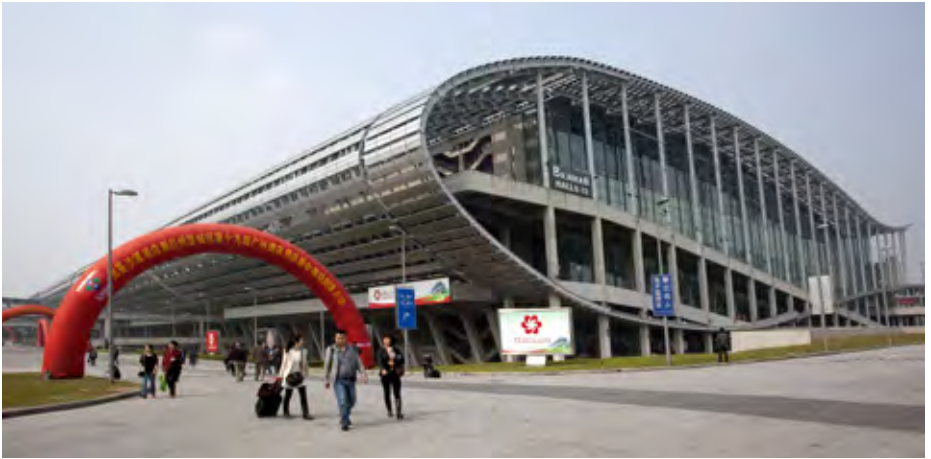
The Spring Festival marks moments of significant life change for migrant workers: marriages may be agreed, divorces carried out and, increasingly, the factory-owners of the delta wait anxiously to see how many of their workers will return.

This annual migration temporarily changes the language profiles of the factory cities in the Pearl River Delta. As large numbers of, as local, Cantonese-speaking people once again predominate.

2: The Canton fair

Twice a year, since 1957, the Canton Fair in Guangzhou (or, to give its full name, the China Import and Export Fair) has attracted a huge number of overseas buyers to China, seeking new sources for goods and components of every imaginable kind.

The spring fair in 2012 is reported to have attracted 210,000 visitors, to 59,000 sales booths. The huge twice-yearly inflow of foreign visitors has required local hotels and restaurants to improve facilities for English users. Outside Hong Kong, this may be the largest use of English as a *lingua franca* in the delta.



Other major trade fairs in the delta region include the China Hi-Tech Fair held annually in Shenzhen, which claims to have attracted over 500,000 visitors since 2004, and the biennial international Air Show, held in Zhuhai.

3: Graduate flows

The Hong Kong economy depends crucially on graduates with high proficiency in English; these people sustain the operations of banks, finance houses and other 'high-end' tertiary sector employers who now characterise the economy. Yet a surprisingly low proportion of such employees graduate from local universities. Each year, it seems, there is significant churn; many graduates leave Hong Kong, and new ones arrive. Many new arrivals are returnees – Chinese from Hong Kong or elsewhere who have studied or worked abroad.

Figure 62 One of several exhibition halls in the vast new Canton Fair complex, Guangzhou. Fairs here attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

An example of such ‘churn’ is documented by Hart and Tian (2010), who show that 48,000 graduates flowed into, or were locally produced in, Hong Kong during 2006. Virtually all English speakers in Hong Kong with C1+ level English (see the discussion of the CEFR) will be in this graduate flow, yet only just over half – 26,000 – actually joined the workforce, while 12,000 left Hong Kong.

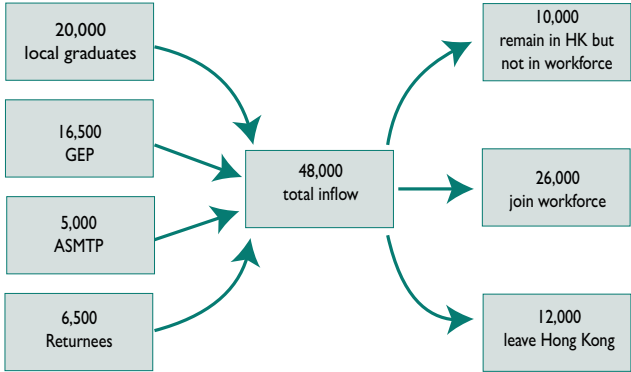


Figure 63 *Estimated flows of graduates in Hong Kong 2006. (Hart & Tian, 2010:76)*

The idea that a large number of C1+ English speakers might exit Hong Kong was supported by a study in 2010 by the think tank ‘Civic Exchange’. They found that 32% of all graduates and 52% of postgraduates had ‘considered leaving’ Hong Kong because of air pollution. Another barrier for expat English-speakers coming to Hong Kong is an acute shortage of places in English-medium international schools: many places have been taken up by local Chinese families.

This churn leads to problems in recruitment and retention of English-speaking graduates; it suggests how quickly Hong Kong’s C1+ workforce might disappear if conditions became more attractive elsewhere. Graduates with high proficiency in English and with work experience in Hong Kong are very mobile in a globalised world.

Historically, the expat workers in Hong Kong’s financial services have been native-English speakers from Britain or the USA. I have the impression that the proportion of workers from Latin America and Europe is increasing. This may reflect a declining attractiveness of Hong Kong for native-English speakers, it may reflect the increasing number of professionals who speak English as a second language at a high level of proficiency, or it may reflect the growing globalisation of Hong Kong business.

4: Lamma Island

Lamma Island is home to a community of around 6000 people, of whom about one third are non-Chinese. The only connection to the rest of Hong Kong is by ferry, a journey of about 25 minutes. Hence a commuter 'corridor' exists, stretching from Central piers on Hong Kong Island to the pier at Yung Shue Wan – the main habitation on the island – continuing down the narrow single street of the village, onwards to Hung Shing Ye beach, a popular destination for day visitors to the island.

When a ferry docks at Yung Shue Wan, a pulse of people is sent down the single shopping street. At regular intervals, this street fills with shoppers and people chatting, then all but empties until the next pulse.

The linguistic make-up of these groups squeezing through the village, past the shops varies by time of day. For example, in the early morning, an incoming stream of mainly middle-aged, Cantonese-speaking men file down the village street from the ferry pier to their workplace at the Hongkong Electric power station. At the same time, in the reverse direction, a flow of children attending English-medium schools on Hong Kong Island and an outgoing stream of both male and female office-workers head towards the ferry.

In the afternoon and evening these flows reverse. Day workers on Lamma leave the island; from 3pm, children return from their English-medium schools speaking English to each other; the early evening brings back office workers and teachers, many of whom make up most of the island's expatriate population of English speakers.

On Sundays and holidays come tourists, and a different ferry schedule with higher fares. Many of these day tourists come from mainland China, speaking Putonghua, rather than Cantonese.

Lamma Island is thus home to speakers of many languages, and it attracts visitors from many places. However, the linguistic constitution of the flows through its main street varies during the day, affecting both the language of conversations within groups of visitors and the language of interactions with local shopkeepers and other residents.

Despite its complexity, the rhythm of this multilingualism in the public spaces of Lamma Island is a normal part of daily life, regarded as unremarkable by both shopkeepers and other residents.



Figure 64 *Lamma Island is a small community accessible only by sea, yet the linguistic rhythms of the day are surprisingly varied.*

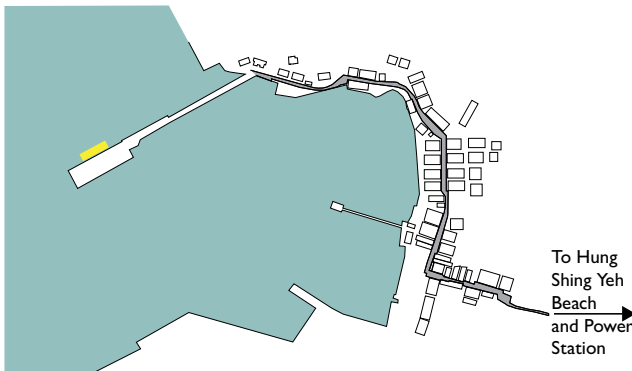


Figure 65 *The arrival of the ferry sends a pulse of hundreds of people down the single street of Yung Shue Wan – the main habitation on Lamma Island, Hong Kong.*



Figure 66 *On weekday mornings on Lamma Island the incoming pedestrian streams (facing camera) are demographically and linguistically different from the outgoing streams. This photograph is taken after the main commuter rush (which at this location peaks soon after 8am), when it is easier to see the composition of the stream.*

5: The maids on Sunday

The business districts of Hong Kong Island acquire a new linguistic identity each Sunday, and other public holidays, when Filipina maids fill the walkways and parks. These urban spaces then become dominated by the languages of the Philippines, such as Tagalog, Cebuano and Ilocano. A wide variety of social and business activity takes place – religious worship, health services, employment advice, legal support, financial and travel services.

The Worldwide Plaza shopping mall in Central reflects this flow; it provides money changers and remittance companies; shops selling snacks, phones and clothing; clothing suitable for maids. Notices and adverts here are in Filipino and English, but not often in Chinese.

Not far away, in Causeway Bay, Malay-speaking Indonesian maids gather in Victoria Park. Here notices can be found in Malay and the Sunday streets are lined with people holding placards in Malay. This partly reflects a historic settlement: 'Causeway Bay's connections to Indonesia go back much further than today's weekend crowds of (mostly Javanese) migrant workers in Victoria Park might suggest. Indonesian Chinese have had a significant impact on this district since the late 1940s'. [3127]

One reason for this unusual congregation of domestic helpers is the visa restriction which requires all Hong Kong maids to live with the family who sponsors them. This means that maids are unable to meet each other in their own homes. Furthermore, many families prefer their domestic helper to stay out of the house during their day off. The visa restrictions also prevent domestic helpers from obtaining permanent resident status (available to other expat workers) after seven years working in Hong Kong. These factors have prevented a Filipina or Indonesian residential district from developing in the same way as has happened for South Asians.

Following restrictions announced by both the Philippines and Indonesian governments on the future availability of domestic helpers, the Hong Kong government is now looking to Bangladesh for a new supply of maids. [5607] New training centres have been established in Dhaka, where around 200 maids each month will be trained in 'Cantonese, English and cooking' and sent to Hong Kong from summer 2013. It will be interesting to see what impact this has on the local language landscapes.

Filipinas in Hong Kong

Each Sunday in Hong Kong, thousands of speakers from the Philippines, predominantly female, aged between 20 and 50, congregate in urban spaces. These spaces – such as here at the HSBC bank headquarters – are temporarily transformed from Chinese-English to Filipino-English.



Economic processes play a part in creating this language flow: the Worldwide Plaza – offering Filipino-English snack bars, advice centres and clothing shops – draws maids into the area. But economic processes are also created by the flow of maids: they generate demand for travel agents, remittance companies, and employment bureaux.



Many Filipinas have a Christian background, and often join gospel groups in nearby parks on Sunday. A notice at St John's Cathedral Hong Kong, near the area where the maids meet on Sunday, acknowledges this by addressing them in Filipino.



Flows, corridors, streams and timetables

This chapter has introduced a number of concepts which might be usefully further explored in further empirical work. First is the idea that people with different language repertoires flow across the urban landscape along certain, often well-defined routes, which I have called ‘corridors’. The route from the airport into Kowloon and Hong Kong Island forms one such corridor; another is the route from Hong Kong Island to Lamma Island. Such flows can be recognised in the landscape by patterns of language use on signs and in advertisements, or the use of particular languages in service encounters such as in shops.

However, the notion of corridor is not sufficient in itself to capture the underlying and complex patterns of language flow. A concept of ‘stream’ may help further. Within a particular corridor, which can be defined in geographical terms, we may find multiple streams of people, each possessing a particular language repertoire, temporarily sharing space with other travellers, as they move from different origins to different destinations. Within a corridor these streams may intertwine, separate, rejoin and so on. For example, in Hong Kong, the Airport Express carries an ‘English-rich’ stream, but in the same geographical corridor (indeed, on an adjacent railway track) the ordinary MTR carries a stream which is much richer in Cantonese speakers. The differences between streams reflects different origins (the Airport Express terminates at the airport, the commuter line at the nearby residential town of Tung Chung), but also the number of stops and a difference in price (the Airport Express is about ten times the cost of the commuter line).

Similarly, across Hong Kong, bus, tram, taxi, and MTR traffic between the same two points may each carry demographically different streams of people.

Furthermore, the constitution of these streams may vary according to the time of day, day of the week, or time of year.

Once we conceptualise language landscapes as involving streams of people, flowing along corridors according to timetables, it becomes possible to understand a little better the complexity and dynamic nature of language landscapes in the city and opens up a whole new and exciting territory for research.

Figure 67 (previous page) *Filipina maids meet under the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank headquarters.*

Figure 68 *Worldwide Plaza shopping mall is filled with small shops and money transfer services catering for Filipina maids.*

Figure 69 *A notice outside St John's Cathedral in Hong Kong Central includes Filipino for the benefit of the thousands of Filipina maids, mostly Christian, who gather in the area on Sundays.*

Postscript

After the main research for this book was carried out, it became apparent that, at least in Hong Kong, the language landscape has already been changing – and in ways which provide insights into local social, economic and political developments.

Take, for example, a typical street scene, such as that in Mong Kok in Hong Kong. This street, like many others, appears to maintain its ‘look’ over a period of years. But a closer examination shows that there is constant change. Signs that are frequently replaced – such as advertising hoardings and ephemeral handwritten signs – are most likely to reflect changes in the community, whilst other more permanent signs retain a memory in the landscape of earlier times.

POSTSCRIPT
AND
CONCLUSIONS



Figure 70 A street scene in Mong Kok: the overall appearance may endure, but some individual signs change surprisingly often.



Figure 71 A detail from the above picture (from the bottom right of the above photograph), shows handwritten signs of a kind which change most frequently.

One development worth monitoring is the increased use of simplified Chinese characters in signage and advertisements in Hong Kong. This is a sensitive issue in Hong Kong and often provokes negative public reaction – underlining the identity issues involved. My sense is that such signs are increasing in frequency – but usually they appear for only a short time. Whenever I have been told about such signs by colleagues, by the time I arrive with a camera they have disappeared. Nevertheless, this flickering of simplified characters in the Hong Kong landscape – often on large, bold hoardings, or shop windows – provides a constant reminder to the local population, already nervous of the challenge to their identity as Hong Kongers, of the growing economic and cultural power of the mainland people on their border.

This continuing political undercurrent perhaps also explains the recent appearance of signs written in Cantonese. Usually, writing in Hong Kong is in ‘Standard Chinese’ – though using traditional characters. A recent notice on MTR trains, however, addresses travellers in a form of writing that incorporates Cantonese vocabulary, characters and grammar – written Cantonese. Unlike almost all other official notices on MTR trains, this notice is not bilingual.



Figure 72 Some recent signs on Hong Kong MTR trains use written Cantonese, without English.

Some conclusions

In this book, I have explored the changing status of English in a part of China which is undergoing rapid economic, social and political transformation. I have demonstrated how a study of public discourse – as visible in newspapers and blogs, and on signs and advertisements in the urban landscape – can be used to monitor the complex changing role that English now plays in education, employment and evolving social identities in the Pearl River Delta.

In the first part of the book I focused on the use of news (largely internet) sources, showing how they provide a rich, though partial, source of information about the macro trends we are interested in – economic, demographic, social, educational. Such sources also provide invaluable insights into public attitudes towards English.

This provided a wider context for the study, identifying some of the main issues affecting the learning and use of English in the region.

In the second part of the book, I presented a view of the urban language landscape as dynamic, multilayered, and ever-changing, and so capable of making visible social, political and economic change. This dynamism derives in part from the co-existence of many voices. We can understand much from monitoring whose voices these are, how prominent they are, where in the landscape they appear, the language and accent in which they speak, and how they contrast with, or complement, other languages and semiotic codes.

Hong Kong, it must be admitted, is a particularly rich research site in this respect. In mainland China, some cities seem in comparison semiotically ‘quieter’. Data here may be a little sparser, and more subtle, but it is nonetheless present.

Some trends to watch

We can expect to see changes affecting the status of English in the following areas:

- i) the continuing integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the economic and social life of the delta;
- ii) the changing economic structure of the region, as it becomes less dependent on exports, and the manufacture of low-margin goods;
- iii) the continuing rise of a middle class with greater disposable income;
- iv) the internationalisation of education in mainland China;
- v) education reform, including reform of high-stakes exams;
- vi) the rising alarm in Hong Kong over the perceived threat to their separate identity.

Interestingly, some trends associated with English may, in fact, be heading in opposite directions in Hong Kong and in mainland China. In Hong Kong, for example, I sense that the role of English in public discourse is actually decreasing, whilst on the mainland it seems to be increasing (albeit from a much lower base).

Meanwhile, in the mainland, it seems greater importance is now being attached to a functional proficiency in English, in contrast to the past almost exclusive focus on the needs of the education system. Perhaps the growing importance of functional proficiency in English reflects a growth of interest in overseas study, but also the increased availability of employment in new 'high value' enterprises across the delta.

Taking the approach further

This book has been exploratory. It raises questions and possibilities rather than providing answers. It suggests new methods for collecting information, and it offers new ideas about where we can look for data.

At the same time, it offers scope for development of both the methodology and its theoretical basis. For example, the analysis would clearly benefit from the inclusion of Chinese-language sources, such as Chinese newspapers and discussions on *weibo* and other popular social networking and microblogging sites.

The approaches used in this book are not intended to replace other, more established methods, such as survey and ethnographic research. However, they can complement more traditional methods in several ways:

- i) the methods are particularly helpful in monitoring change in communities as it takes place;
- ii) they can incorporate a sensitivity to different levels of English proficiency and to different language profiles;
- iii) they provide excellent potential for future collaborative research with local partners – such as university departments, private educational providers, and examination authorities.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations appear in this book

ABC	American Born Chinese
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBC	British Born Chinese
BGI	Beijing Genomics Institute (Company in Shenzhen)
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CELTA	(Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
CEPAS	Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme
CET	College English Test
CNY	ISO code for Chinese currency (also known as Yuan, or Reminbi)
ECR	Education Commission Report (Hong Kong)
EDB	Education Bureau (Hong Kong Government)
ESP	English for Special Purposes
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKU	Hong Kong University
IELTS	International English Language Testing System (An English test co-owned by the British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment, and IDP, Australia.)
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO is not strictly an abbreviation in any language)
KG	Kindergarten
LED	Light Emitting Diode (electronic lighting component)
MA	Master of Arts (1–2 year full-time equivalent postgraduate degree)
MBA	Master of Business Administration (Business studies equivalent of MA)
MTR	Mass Transit Railway (Hong Kong)

P3	Primary 3 (school class of children usually aged 9)
PG	Postgraduate
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRD	Pearl River Delta
S1	Secondary 1 (first year secondary school, children usually aged 11)
SAR	Special Administrative Region (of China)
SAT	Scholastic Assessment Test (US college admission test)
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TEM	Test for English Majors
TIRF	The International Research Foundation for English Language Education

I would like to acknowledge my thanks to the very many people who helped me during the course of my research for this book. I wish to make especial mention of the following:

Cambridge English Language Assessment

Dr Nick Saville;
Stephen McKenna;
Dr Mike Milanovic;
Dr Xiangdong Gu;
Dr Roger Hawkey;
Rebecca Peckham;
John Savage;
Nathalie Fitch;
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Profiling English in China

The Pearl River Delta

David Graddol

In *Profiling English in China: The Pearl River Delta*, David Graddol explores the changing status of the English language in a part of China undergoing rapid economic, social and political transformation.

Breaking new methodological ground, David Graddol demonstrates how a study of public discourse – in newspapers, blogs, signs and advertisements in the urban landscape – can be used to monitor the complex changing role that English is now playing in education, employment and evolving social identities.

He argues that researchers need to distinguish between different levels of English proficiency more sensitively and illustrates how the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) can be used as a research tool by sociolinguists.

Profiling English in China: The Pearl River Delta is intended as the first of a series of books exploring the changing social, economic and educational contexts in which English is learned and used. David Graddol presents methods of inquiry which will be useful for researchers working in other parts of the world. The book will be essential reading for anyone seeking a wider understanding of the role of English in globalisation and economic development.



David Graddol is Director of the English Company (UK) Ltd. He was employed for many years in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the UK Open University. During much of the period of research for this book he was Visiting Associate Professor at City University, Hong Kong. He has worked as a consultant on many ELT projects in South America, South Asia and China.

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ISBN 978-1-908791-07-8



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