

Globalism and cultural tensions

Discursive constructions of the English language in China's print media

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Based on a corpus of 200 articles from the *People's Daily* and the *People's Daily Overseas Edition* collected from 2010 to 2012, we examined the representation of English, applying framing theory (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The results indicate four dominant frames shared by both newspapers: exclusion/oppression, warfare/protection, yardstick/benchmark, and bridge/needs. Both papers perceive the English language as a resource while constructing a Chinese identity fundamentally in competition with a Western identity reinforced by the English language. However, while both papers project the image of China as a unified, benign country proud of its linguistic and cultural heritage, the *Overseas Edition* seems more conscious in representing China as a motherland in need of protection from the threatening socio-cultural force of English. The article seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on language and identity in China, English and globalization, and the perception of English in the expanding circle.

Keywords: English in China, construction of English, language ideology, Expanding Circle English, newspaper discourse, framing, *People's Daily*

1. Background

In nineteenth century China, when there was no alternative modern schooling, English occupied a clear role as a language that enabled access to modern education in mission schools (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002, p.54). In modern China, at least since the late 1970s, English language education has also been accorded much importance. Proficiency in English is increasingly perceived as a key that can provide access to material resources and professional success and it is viewed by the Chinese government as “having a vital role to play in national modernization and development” (Hu, 2005, p.5).

While earlier commentators claimed that it was practical to learn English and downplayed any threat it may pose to the Chinese identity (Pierson, Fu & Lee, 1980; Pennington & Yue, 1994), later discussions tend to situate teaching English more in the context of globalization whose influence on the status of English in China is hard to miss (Chang, 2006; Fang, 2011). If any evidence is needed, one only needs to witness the waves of Chinese students studying abroad in English-speaking countries, the sprouting of numerous intensive programs to prepare Chinese students for taking standardized English tests, the emergence of camps of Chinese fans of *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* novels waiting for the release of new books and films, and the phenomenon of English test scores as a deciding factor in one's college entrance home and abroad (ShangGuan, 2004, pp. 152–153).

Despite the increasing attention to the role of English in Chinese education, research on the Chinese representation of and attitudes towards the English language in China's global renaissance is relatively scarce. Pan (2011), who investigated the attitudes of Olympic community English learners in China, concludes that most learners and participants view English as a benefit. However, as the study points out, there is also a growing discourse of "English as a threat" as well as a palpable anxiety about native Chinese culture being weakened by English. In an analysis of Chinese citizens' attitudes towards the use of Chinese English in public media, Busse (2011) contends that the ambivalent attitude on language hybridity reflects an ambivalent cultural identity. And in a more recent study of a series of language debates ignited by a 2009 blog entry of the senior editor of the *People's Daily*, Xi (2013) argues that the inherent ideology of "one nation and one language" visible in these debates indicates the growing concern over the status of the Chinese language vis-à-vis the perceived encroachment of English.

Following Xi (2013), the present study aims to cast more light on the way major Chinese newspapers frame the role of English in China and the inherent language ideologies embedded in their commentaries. Journalists have more latitude in expressing their personal opinions in blog entries. When they write for their newspapers, however, it can be assumed that the opinions expressed hew more closely to the official narrative of the paper and the ruling party. By investigating how influential newspapers discuss and represent the status and role of English in the Chinese context, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on language and identity in China, English and globalization, and media construction of English in the expanding circle, of which China is the largest country.

For the purpose of this investigation, we chose two newspapers: the *People's Daily* and the *People's Daily Overseas*. Published and monitored by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Huang, 2003), the *People's Daily* is the official mouthpiece for the political views of the Party with an intended audience of readers in mainland China. Despite the embrace of capitalist market

economy in China as well as the relatively relaxed control over the *People's Daily*, this newspaper remains the standard bearer of the Party's policy, and the paper that sets the policy tone for the rest of the Chinese papers (Yin, 2006; Dong, Chang & Chen, 2008; Huang & Chen 2009; Ng, Ye, and Lee, 2011). The *People's Daily Overseas* [henceforward the *Overseas Edition*] is controlled by the same committee but with an intended audience of Chinese or Chinese-descendent readers living or working overseas. While the *People's Daily* claims to have a steady circulation of almost three million copies (*People's Daily Press*, 2013), circulation figures for its subsidiary the *People's Daily Overseas* were reported to be less than 200,000 worldwide. It was, therefore, recently announced that the *People's Daily* would abandon its overseas edition in favor of investing more in the online edition.

The study is concerned with addressing the following two research questions:

1. Do the *People's Daily* and its overseas edition view English in China more as a threat or an opportunity?
2. To what extent do these two newspapers converge or diverge in their view of the English language?

Such a study will be of interest to scholars of language ideology, globalization, and media studies as well as the general readers interested in language in communication issues pertaining to China and Chinese culture and identity.

2. Methodology and analytical framework

2.1 Methodology

Articles were collected from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2012 from *People's Daily* and its *Overseas Edition*. We chose to focus on these three years because they represent a period of China's most recent effort in negotiating a unified Chinese identity, both at home and abroad, between an idealized notion of Chinese conventions and the unstoppable global force of the English language. One example of this negotiation is the issuance from the State Administration of Radio Film and Television in April, 2010, which banned CCTV (China Central Television) from using English acronyms in broadcasting, interviews, and subtitles ("CCTV bans English acronyms," 2010). In the year 2010 alone, the government also invested 150 million dollars in the Confucius Institute, which is nearly a third of the total investment since the opening of the first Confucius Institute in 2004 (Li, 2013).

The search keyword used in the news database is “英语” (English), which yielded 932 results in *People's Daily* and 832 results in *People's Daily Overseas*. Due to the restriction of time and scale of this research, only every third result

was selected as the basic data pool. As a result, what remained are 310 results in *People's Daily* and 277 results in *People's Daily Overseas*. Since not every article including the keyword is one that provides relevant discussion on the status or representation of the English language, we adapted Demont-Heinrich's method (2008) to qualitatively categorize the relevant articles and determine the intensity and scale of the discussion. In this classification, there are three types of articles in relation to the prevalence of the discussion of the English language:

- EC (English Central): The article's main focus is on the English language itself.
- ESC (English Somewhat Central): English is discussed as one aspect of the argument or report. The article is still complete without the English section.
- EP (English Peripheral): English is only mentioned once and it does not impact the completeness of the article when removed.

For this research, mainly EC and ESC articles were included. EP articles were not included unless they characterize and evaluate a certain person in terms of his or her fluency and competence of the English language. That left us with 59 EP articles from *People's Daily* and 16 EP articles from the Overseas Edition, and a total corpus of 123 articles from *People's Daily* versus 77 articles from *People's Daily Overseas*. Below is the breakdown for each category:

Table 1. Number of articles and their categorization in terms of the centrality of the English language

	EC	ESC	EP	Total
<i>People's Daily</i>	12 (9.7%)	52 (42.3%)	59 (48%)	123
<i>People's Daily Overseas Edition</i>	19 (24.7%)	42 (54.5%)	16 (20.8%)	77

After close reading and coding, the collected articles were closely examined to uncover their diverse constructions of English.

2.2 Analytical framework

To ensure that the analysis is guided by a productive structure, we applied the “framing theory,” or “framing” to our treatment of the data. Entman (1993) refers to framing as “selection and highlighting,” or “selection and salience” (p. 52). Chong and Druckman (2007) explains it as offering “the best rationale for contending positions” when relaying information about an issue to an audience (p. 116). Frames, in this sense, are rhetorical devices or organizing principles often used in the media to simplify complex issues, but they also serve a manipulative

function as they selectively construct reality by heightening awareness of certain issues while mitigating others (Albakry & Warden, 2013, p. 4).

The function of frames in shaping opinions through rhetoric-aware narration echoes the belief held by Fowler (1991) that language in the news is hardly “neutral” and it always aims to form ideas and beliefs. As a form of content analysis that pays particular attention to key words, phrases, tone of coverage, and images to identify the major thematic threads of news articles (Yang, 2014), framing analysis examines what is presented as the most important and relevant factors to consider for an issue. It has to be stated, however, that in any textual interpretation and classification, there is bound to be an unacknowledged subjective factor, but despite the element of subjectivity in the coding process and the possibility for overlapping in some frames, this content-sensitive analysis can serve as a good tool for teasing out dominant thematic strands and providing a means for investigating “symbols, endorsements, and links to partisanship and ideology” (Chong & Druckman, p. 111).

3. Results and discussion

Close reading and quantitative analysis reveal four dominant frames shared by *People’s Daily* and the *Overseas Edition: exclusion/oppression* (E/O) highlighting the notion of marginalization of minority speakers and those who do not possess sufficient command of English; *warfare/protection* (W/P) highlighting images of combat and defense in the linguistic rivalry between Chinese and English; *yardstick/benchmark* (Y/B) highlighting competence in English as a marker of excellence and the success of English worldwide as a point of reference for what the Chinese people aspires to do; and *bridge/needs*(B/N), highlighting English as an agency for professional and academic success. See the breakdown of the occurrence of these frames summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Categorization of the dominant frames in the two newspapers

	Negative Frames		Positive Frames	
	E/O	W/P	Y/B	B/N
<i>People’s Daily</i> (123)	4 (3.3%)	15 (12.2%)	63 (51.2%)	41 (33.3%)
Breakdown of EC,ESC,EP	(1 EC, 3 ESC)	(6 EC, 9 ESC)	(1 EC, 3 ESC, 59 EP)	(4 EC, 37 ESC)
<i>People’s Daily</i> <i>Overseas</i> (77)	9 (12%)	21 (27%)	28 (36%)	19 (25%)
Breakdown of EC,ESC,EP	(4 EC, 5 ESC)	(14 EC, 7 ESC)	(3 EC, 9 ESC, 16 EP)	(3 EC,16 ESC)

The trends, as table 2 illustrates, seem to be toward more positive framing, as far as the total numbers of articles and their percentages are concerned. However, a sizable number of the more positive frames, especially in the *yardstick/benchmark*(Y/B) frame, belong to the more peripheral (EP) category. Overall, though, the frame trends were stable across the three sampled years (2010–2012). It is also worth mentioning that the more positive representation of the English language occurs in the area of business or economy, while the cautious attitude toward the English language happens in the context of preserving what is considered traditional Chinese. The various sections below provide discussion and illustrations for each of the identified frames.

3.1 Exclusion/Oppression

3.1.1 *People's Daily*

Not only can English, in this frame, serve as an agent of racial and cultural tyranny for minority groups, it can even divide a whole nation by excluding half of its population from certain communication means. Under this frame, English represents the power embedded in the mainstream culture and the privileged class.

Here is an excerpt from an article discussing the rationale for minimizing the mixing of English acronyms with the Chinese language:

Not everyone knows what “NBA” is. There are hundreds of millions of English learners in China and that makes China the largest English-learning country in the world. However, even if these hundreds of millions of people understand “NBA” and all other English acronyms, there are still hundreds of millions of people who don’t. Most people don’t understand English, especially people who are over 45 years old and who live in the countryside or remote areas. Mass media should speak Mandarin because that’s what most people understand and write in Chinese characters because that’s what most people know.

(“Why doesn’t CCTV say ‘NBA?’,” 21 April 2010)¹ (EC)

This article is only one of the many conversations responding to a notification issued in early April, 2010, by the State Administration of Radio Film and Television. The notification requires CCTV – China Central Television – to avoid English acronyms in broadcasting, interviews, and subtitles (“CCTV bans English acronyms,” 2010). The written document of this notification was recorded in December

1. The original passage: “不是人人都知道‘NBA’”。中国有几亿人学英语，是全世界学英语人口最多的国家，但即使这几亿人都懂‘NBA’，懂所有的英语缩略语，还有几亿人不。懂。在45岁以上的人口中，在广大农村和边远地区，不懂英语的人更是大多数。作为大众传媒，应该说大多数人都懂的普通话，写大多数人看得懂的汉字”。The article title is: “央视为何不说‘NBA’？”

2010 on the website of the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China (GAPP), and the regulation was intended for all media and publications in China. In this document, GAPP announces that this further regulation is to honor the tenth anniversary of the issuance of the People's Republic of China National Common Language Law, which provides the foundation for the normalization and standardization of the Chinese language and letters in China. GAPP further lists the reasons for this most recent regulation as a legal, linguistic, cultural, and moral response to the social impact of a "corrupted" Chinese language. The details of this rationale will be discussed later under the frame of warfare/ protection, since many of the keywords from the rationale also emerge in the newspaper articles we classified in that frame.

Rather than objecting to language mixing based on the impaired status of the Chinese language, as reasoned by the GAPP document, the article is concerned with the deprived rights of the vast population who may have little to no understanding of the English language. Although the article acknowledges the popularity of the English language in China, it questions the possible exclusion of non-English learners from the information and communication to which they are entitled. By explaining CCTV's action, as a result of the government's regulation, the article reassures the reader that the government will maintain the unity of the population despite the linguistic challenge posed by the potential excluding power of the English language.

Perhaps the most critical representation of the English language occurs when it is framed as a means to oppressing minorities in one of its inner-circle countries, the US:

Since the late nineteenth century, the US has been advocating an education that featured white pattern and a mandatory English-only policy. Currently most speakers of Native American languages are seniors who live on the reservations. It is estimated that, 50 years from now, if the US government does not take any action, there might be only 5% Native American population who can speak their own languages. ("The 2011 US human rights record," 26 May 2012)² (ESC)

Although the article belongs to the category of ECS, which indicates that English is not the central issue of the article, it still depicts the English language harshly. English here represents the aggressive majority that deprives the minorities of their linguistic, cultural, and ethnic heritage. The report suggests that the prevalence of English has already harmed and will continue to harm other languages

2. The original passage: "19世纪末开始, 美国全面实施白人模式教育, 推行强制性的唯英语教育。现今讲印第安语的大都是生活在保留地的老人。据估计, 如果美国政府不采取措施, 50年后, 可能只有5%的印第安人会讲本民族语言"。The article title is: "2011年美国的人权纪录"

and cultures if it is not resisted. It is worth noting that the discussion of the English language appears in a report on the US human rights status, which in itself indicates that the representation of the English language is very much a political issue. In fact, since 1992, China and the US have been engaging in a “condemnation-rebuttal drama”, indicting each other for breaching human rights (Yin, 2007, p. 75).

Both examples above convey a sense of urgency: if no action is taken, the division and ethnic deprivation caused by English will be exacerbated, not only in the expanding circle of the English language but also in its inner circle (US) itself. By framing the English language with the imagery of barrier, communication breakdown, and historic and future loss of national or ethnic identity, the articles reinforce the binary and political nature of the language discussion.

3.1.2 *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*

It is noteworthy that all of the articles under the frame of exclusion/oppression in the *Overseas Edition* are depicting the use of English language in American society. Similar to the articles in *People’s Daily*, these stories present the English language as a tool for marginalizing other languages, cultures, and even customs and social practices. The following is an excerpt from a report on how Asian minorities in the US are linguistically excluded in a high school graduation ceremony:

In 2008, two students of Vietnamese descent in Louisiana expressed their gratitude to their parents in Vietnamese at a high school graduation ceremony. However, these two students were immediately required to speak only English in their graduation address. This is a blatant violation of the students’ rights to freedom of speech and ruthless exclusion of ethnic languages and other cultural factors.

(“California, US: Anti-language discrimination now has legal support,” 18 April 2011)³ (EC)

English here is associated with the power that can “Other” linguistic minorities, the power that can announce others as inappropriate and out of line, and the power that can put a stop to non-mainstream linguistic or cultural practices. The juxtaposition of “gratitude” and “parents” with “ruthless” and “blatant” provokes a kind of emotion that is easily registered with the Chinese belief in honoring one’s parents, thus rendering the incident more culturally offensive. The phrase “rights to freedom of speech” is a bit ironic given the general belief that the US is the protector of freedom of speech.

3. The original passage: “2008年，美国路易斯安那州两位越南裔学生在高中毕业典礼上，用越南语向他们的父母致谢，但却被立刻要求毕业致辞只能用英语。学生言论自由的权利被赤裸裸地侵犯，语言等异族文化元素受到无情排斥”。The article title is: “美国加州反对语言歧视从此有了法律依据”

Another example illustrates the cultural exclusion caused by the dominance of English, experienced by a Chinese person in the US:

Before coming to the US, I understood the claimed American notion of “ethnic melting pot” as the harmonious amalgamation of its various peoples; after arriving in the country, I discovered the hidden meaning of the “ethnic melting pot” – in the eyes of conservatives, the melting pot is going to dissolve your original culture and keep only Anglo-Saxon culture, like the idea of “English only” and so on. My visit in Canada showed me that Canada advocates “cultural combo” (or cultural mosaic, cultural salad), striving to maintain the cultural characteristics of immigrants.

(“Who are we’ – the ultimate question from a Chinese in the US,” 10 August 2012)⁴ (ESC)

The first-person narrative frames the issue of linguistic and cultural diversity in the US as an unfulfilled or disillusioned ideal. What is usually associated with a “melting pot” – tolerance, diversity, and harmony – turns out to be the English language and Anglo-Saxon culture subduing and devouring other immigrant cultures. Moreover, by exposing the deceitfulness of the American metaphor, the article also draws the reader’s attention to the more inclusive Canadian metaphors for the treatment of immigrants, without spelling out the entailment for those metaphors. It is not difficult for the reader to observe that in the Canadian metaphors—“cultural combo,” “cultural mosaic,” and “cultural salad”—the various ingredients or elements are rarely mashed together. In this way, each component keeps its own flavor while contributing to the overall taste of the entity.

If *People’s Daily* tries to construct a national identity for its mainland Chinese readers by both establishing a positive image of China and at the same time exposing the undesirable side of the American society, the *Overseas Edition* directly focuses on the exclusive and oppressive effect of the American policy for its overseas Chinese audience. One can speculate that the *Overseas Edition* attempts to relate to the Chinese descendants’ living-abroad experience and provides suggestions for their “ultimate [identity] questions,” as one of the titles of the news articles put it. It seems that both newspapers are concerned with the threatening power of the English language and in particular the US power reinforcing it, but the *Overseas Edition* seems to be a stronger carrier of the dispute between China and the US.

4. The original passage: “美国号称‘民族熔炉’，来美之前，将其理解为各民族和睦融合；来到美国后才发现，‘熔炉’背后有文章——在保守势力眼中，熔炉就是将你原来的文化融化掉，留下的只有盎格鲁撒克逊文化，比方说提出‘独尊英语’等等。去到加拿大，发现加拿大提倡的是‘文化拼盘’（或是文化马赛克、文化沙拉），力求保留移民的文化特性”。The article title is: “我们是谁——在美华人终极之问”

3.2 Warfare/Protection

3.2.1 *People's Daily*

Although the exclusion/oppression frame also suggests a conflict between different languages and ethnicities, the emphasis is more on how the English language could play an active role in denying speakers of other languages of a linguistic, cultural asset to which they are entitled. The frame of warfare/protection, in contrast, mainly depicts the perceived crisis from the angle of the reaction, or behavior of speakers of other languages. Both newspapers, in this respect, guide the reader's thinking along the lines of extreme conflict and contention, where the linguistic and cultural territory of a nation is at risk of being taken over by English. However, the approaches of the two newspapers differ when constructing the perceived crisis. The *People's Daily* explicitly highlights the images of combat and defense (with images of battle, invasion, disarming, and guarding, etc.) whereas the *Overseas Edition* establishes the Chinese language as a territory whose purity and integrity should be protected. Here is one example, charged with warlike images, from the *People's Daily*:

The belittling of the Chinese language and the blind worship of the English language have reached a mind-numbing point in society today. It is incorrect to say that the English language is invading us with a strong arm. It is more accurate to say that we, as heirs of our culture, have disarmed ourselves for the invasion. In fact, this blind worship of Western languages indicates a denigration of our own culture and a lack of self-confidence.

("Mother tongue, native culture, and other issues," 9 August 2010)⁵ (EC)

As it is clear from the excerpt, the intensity of the commentary and its militaristic tone are explicit. Words such as "invading," "disarmed," and "invasion" paint an incompatible relationship between English and Chinese. Words and phrases such as "belittling," "denigration" and "blind worship" demonstrate little middle ground between English and Chinese. The emotional attachment or the preference to the use of the English language is depicted as a degrading, despicable surrender to the Western culture and a moral, ethnic betrayal to the Chinese culture. Overall, the explicit and implicit images of war remind the reader of the ideological battle that is always perceived as happening between Socialist China and the Capitalist West.

5. The original passage: "今天社会对汉语的轻视和对英语的盲目崇拜,已经到了非常麻木的状态。眼下不是英语的强势入侵,而是我们的文化传承者面对入侵自动解除了自己的武装。对西方语言的盲目崇拜,实际上表现的是对民族文化的轻视和自信力的缺乏"。The article title is:"母语文化及其他"

3.2.2 *People's Daily Overseas Edition*

While *People's Daily* uses images of battles and defense under this frame, the *Overseas Edition* focuses on the image of a vulnerable, unified Chinese language in need of protection. All articles under this frame are EC ones. The excerpt below echoes the sentiment about the endangered purity of the Chinese language in relation to the international power of English:

Some people incorrectly believe that to be in line with international conventions is to be in line with English, without paying much attention to the *protection* of the *purity* of their own language.

(How do returnees view “the battle of Chinese language,” 17 April, 2010)⁶ (EC)

When compared to the GAPP rationale for the further regulation of the Chinese language in media and publication, as mentioned earlier, it is not difficult to see that these texts share similar keywords, tone, imagery, and sentiment (see footnote; GAPP, 2010).⁷ There is a sense of urgency in both the GAPP rationale and the *Overseas Edition* articles. The intertwined state of the two languages is portrayed as devastating, hostile and “impaired,” whereas the effect of the mixing is described as “confusing,” and “abuse,” since it deprives the Chinese language of its linguistic and cultural “essence.” Such loaded words evoke nationalist feelings about the cultural heritage of the Chinese language while calling for protection measures.

3.3 Yardstick/Benchmark

3.3.1 *People's Daily*

Unlike the previous two frames which portray the English language as an invading or impairing force to national identity, the other two frames, yardstick/benchmark and bridge/needs present English in a considerably more positive light. Within the

6. The original passage: “一些人错误地认为，与国际接轨就是与英语接轨，而不注意保护本民族语言的纯洁”。The article title is: “海归如何看‘汉语保卫战’”

7. The original passage: “...各类出版物中，外国语言文字使用量剧增，出现了在汉语中随意夹杂英语等外来语、直接使用英文单词或字母缩写、生造一些非中非外、含义不清的词语等滥用语言文字的问题，严重损害了汉语言文字的规范性和纯洁性，破坏了和谐健康的语言文化环境，造成了不良的社会影响”

...in various kinds of publications, there has been a surge of foreign language and letters. A free mixture of Chinese with English and other foreign languages and direct inclusion of English words or acronyms have created some *confusing* words that are neither Chinese nor foreign. This abuse of language and letters has *gravely impaired the normalization and purity* of the Chinese language and letters, *damaged* our harmonious, healthy linguistic and cultural environment, and *inflicted* undesirable impact onto the society.

frame of yardstick/benchmark, English serves as a reference for the professional excellence of Chinese workers in the *People's Daily*, but in the *Overseas Edition* the eminent status of the English language becomes an exemplar with which the Chinese language and culture should catch up.

In *People's Daily*, all but four articles under this frame are from the EP category. English is neither the center of the article nor does it provide examples to support or expand the topic. However, all these EP articles are sketches or reports on people who are considered extraordinary in their occupations. Their proficiency of English or their diligence in learning it is cited as a proof of their professional commitment. The following is a passage from an article under the feature series "Song of Laborers," sketching the pilot of a salvage helicopter, whose diligence in acquiring English proficiency is praised:

In order to master the skills for piloting the salvage helicopter, he used to put up bits of paper with English professional vocabularies everywhere: bed, desk, and bathroom. ("Pan Wei, 375 people salvaged," 23 April 2012)⁸ (EP)

In another passage from a different article, fluent English is cited, in passing, as an asset to Chinese medical staff engaged in a humanitarian aid exercise:

Chinese medical staff washed out shards of glass, treated the wounds, while talking amiably with the patients in fluent English, which greatly calmed the patients and helped accomplish the first-aid task successfully.

("Demonstrate military power, enhance cooperation," 1 November 2012)⁹ (EP)

In this passage, the Chinese medical workers are characterized as calm, kind, capable, and efficient. Their ability to speak English fluently and pleasantly plays an important role in enhancing their professional competence. These feature articles intend to praise the virtue of exemplary workers and encourage others to follow. Many of the stories belong to themes or headings that typically serve as models for Party ideals: "Ode to the Party Flag," "Song of Laborers," and "Walking with Lei Feng."¹⁰ What is remarkable is that while these feature articles fall under the genre of representing the continuation of the Party spirit, the presence of English also suggests that English is indispensable if one wants to contribute to the socialist

8. The original passage: "为掌握救助直升机驾驶技术, 他的床上、桌上、卫生间曾贴满专业英语词汇纸条"。The article title is: "潘伟 海上救助375人 劳动者之歌)"

9. The original passage: "中方医疗人员一边为伤者清除玻璃碎片、处理伤口, 一边用流利的英语与伤员亲切交谈, 平复了患者的紧张情绪, 顺利完成了急救任务"。The article title is: "扬军威 促合作"

10. Lei Feng (雷锋) is the Party-promoted cultural icon in the 1960s in mainland China for selflessness, hard-working, and devotion to Mao Zedong and the people of China.

society. For all its ambivalent and sometimes hostile attitudes towards English, the Party is selectively open-minded about the global power of English, whose power and utility have penetrated to the core belief of the Party.

3.3.2 *People's Daily Overseas Edition*

On the surface level, the articles in this frame advocate that Chinese culture be introduced more to the international audience. However, there is a sense of urgency, insufficiency, and competition embedded in these callings. There is much to be done and many obstacles to overcome while spreading Chinese culture and language. In this case, English is often a point of reference as a successful example of cultural spreading or a vehicle that could serve in promoting Chinese culture.

One of the obstacles mentioned is the lack of Chinese-into-English translators:

There are many people in China today who are users of English, but most of them only translate English into Chinese, to the degree of *having swept the corners of foreign works*. [...] However, there are few people who help translate our culture for audience overseas.

(“A cool contemplation on the heat of Chinese culture overseas,” 23 March 2011)¹¹ (EC)

Since the context of this excerpt above is about English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation, we can infer that the “foreign works” in the passage mainly refers to works that are written in English. In other words, the passage is comparing the progress of Chinese culture translation to both the large amount and the wide range of English-into-Chinese translation – Chinese pales in comparison.

The following are examples that decry the lack of sufficient, high-quality promotion of Chinese culture compared, explicitly or implicitly, with the cultural efforts of the US and Britain:

... in contrast with the cultural promotion done by other nations, the current influence of Chinese culture internationally is not, either in quantity or in quality, comparable to the status of China.

(“Rely on the effort of multiple agencies to create equal communication,” 5 November 2012)¹² (EC)

11. The original passage: “现如今，中国会英语的人很多，可是基本上都是在做‘英译汉’的工作，连外国犄角旮旯里的东西都给翻译过来了... 但是却没有多少人把我们的文化翻译出去”。The article title is: “中国文化海外热的冷思考”

12. The original passage: “而与其他国家的文化国际传播相比，中国文化走向海外，无论从规模上，还是从内容上来说，都与中国的国力不相称”。The article title is: “多方努力建立对等交流”

But our work of culture promotion has just started, which apparently cannot be compared to the powerful spreading of the English language done by the US and Britain. (“One student is one seed,” 7 November 2011)¹³ (ESC)

When discussing the contemporary promotion of Chinese culture and the idea of China “going global,” it is crucial to look at the Confucius Institute as an example of the Chinese government’s effort to spread the Chinese language and culture. As far as 2012, Hanban, short for China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, has established 400 Confucius Institutes and 500 Confucius classrooms in 108 nations and regions (Hanban, 2012; see also Zeshun, 2012). According to a recent study by Li (2013), the Chinese government has invested 500 million dollars from 2004 to 2012 and 150 million dollars for the year 2010 alone. So far, at least, these efforts do not seem to have yielded satisfactory results. Although the Chinese government has recently begun some great translation projects, such as the Chinese-English *Library of Chinese Classics*¹⁴ (with its book launch in 2007) and the translation projects for the Five Classics¹⁵ (announced by Hanban in 2009), the systematic promotion and translation of Chinese writings and culture is still relatively recent (Niu, 2013, pp. 242–243). In this respect, the US and Britain are still undeniably in the lead.

The imperative of participating and improving the cultural promotion in the face of competition against major global forces is echoed in the articles from *People’s Daily Overseas Edition* under the frame of yardstick/benchmark. These articles may seem at first to be conveying the importance of spreading Chinese culture as a way for the overseas Chinese readers to maintain their cultural roots and their connection to China. However, they are all framed with the rationale that China is in competition with other Western countries in terms of spreading its culture and language. The prevalence of English, and cultural factors that center on English, seem to act as a kind of yardstick by which the Chinese cultural could be measured (see Zhang, 2012).

13. The original passage: “但我们的文化传播工作才刚刚起步，与美国、英国英语的强势传播相比自是不如”。The article title is: “一个学生就是一颗种子”

14. 110 selected Chinese classics of scholarly writing, history, literature, science, and military matters.

15. Five Confucianism classics: *Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, *Classic of Changes*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

3.4 Bridge/Needs

3.4.1 *People's Daily*

In this frame, English is presented as something the non-native English speakers will need to succeed in this globalized economy. Despite their differences, both papers acknowledge the bridging power of English and advocate the importance of spreading the power of this resource to as many Chinese areas as possible. Rather than being a barrier or a threat, English is constructed more as a resource or a bridge to academic, professional, commercial, and cross-cultural success. Most of the examples from this frame show that the word “English” collocates with “opportunity,” “enhanced,” “effectively,” “information,” and “understanding,” all of which indicate that the English language is an indispensable agency to economic success or a bridge for promoting the understanding of Chinese culture and its literary heritage.

Even though some of the discussion occurs around the same issue of mixing English with Chinese, an article under this frame reveals a much more open and flexible attitude:

In this process [of globalization], they used product names such as Haier and Lenovo, which are very much internationally recognized. Currently when advertising in the domestic market, they are also increasing the use of foreign names to enhance the promoting effect through unified brand names. “[...] it is reasonable and necessary to adopt a Logo that mixes English and Chinese and even to promote a product mainly by its English name,” states Li Guangdou. However, it is over-compensating when some of the Chinese names look like foreign names [...] (“Why domestic products are obsessed with ‘foreign names,’” 15 July 2011)¹⁶ (EC)

Rather than reading the phenomenon of language mixing as a moral issue or a threat, this article emphasizes the commercial value of the English language in an international market. Instead of condemning language mixing, the article calmly acknowledges, describes, and justifies the mixing as a choice suitable for the globalized economy. There is more pragmatic consideration for commercial needs rather than the invocation of cultural crisis. However, the article draws a line in the sand: having both English and Chinese brand names for one product is “reasonable and necessary,” but making Chinese names sound like foreign names spelt out with Chinese characters is not. In other words, the main consideration of the

16. The original passage: “在这个过程中，它们使用了Haier、Lenovo这样的名称，这样的名称在国际上很受认同。现在在国内宣传的时候，它们也更多地使用洋名字，通过这样统一的品牌名称来加强推广效果。“[...]采取中英文相结合的Logo，推广时甚至以英文名称为主，有其合理性和必要性”。李光斗说。另外一部分起中文名的时候看起来就很像洋名字，这样就有些矫枉过正...”。 The article title is: “国货为何热衷取‘洋名’”

argument is based on marketing, but it does not completely abandon the idea of a “pure” and ideal Chinese language. Interestingly, the word “Logo” in the original Chinese text is itself in letters, an endorsement of the notion that mixing languages is truly a trend that does not impede communication – a conclusion opposite to that drawn in the exclusion/oppression frame.

3.4.2 *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*

In the *Overseas Edition*, English is also presented as a bridge that benefits the society. However, 13 out of the 19 articles here focus on one education practice in China: volunteer teaching in underdeveloped areas in (usually Northwestern) China to alleviate the shortage of teachers supply (支教). Under this frame, the presence of the English language serves a two-fold purpose: to convey the power of English as a connection between the underdeveloped regions and the world, and to remind the overseas readers, some of whom might also be planning to return to China, that their knowledge and experience with the English language could help meet the educational needs of many impoverished areas in China. Below is a passage portraying the education projects for rural Chinese pupils, launched by Rao Jiren (James Jao), a Chinese-American businessperson, diplomat, and educator:

As someone who once studied in the US, Rao Jiren places in public education great value on cultivating English competence and a global vision, so that the children could set their eyes and hearts on the world despite living in the countryside [in China].

(“With one heart, returnees from everywhere repay the society,” 26 July 2012)¹⁷
(ESC)

The excerpt conveys that the English language and English education have become a bridge for the rural Chinese children to get in touch with the wider world. The implied message is that rural Chinese children have the need of learning about the outside world and that English education, through the hands of generous and capable returnees, will serve as the bridge for meeting the needs. Besides depicting renowned professionals, the newspaper also provides sketches for students who completed their studies overseas and now are devoting their time and talent as volunteer teachers in remote Chinese rural areas or mountain areas. Liu Yangyang is one of them and he reports on how poorly prepared the pupils are:

The elementary school pupils could barely answer any of the questions I asked. They started having English lessons in the fifth grade, but many of them did not

17. The original passage: “作为一名留美海归，饶及人在公益教育中特别重视英文水平和国际视野的培养，以便让孩子们纵使身处乡村，亦能放眼全球，心怀世界”。The article title is: “同心回馈社会 各地海归行动”

even know how many letters there were in English. As for junior high school students, they could not spell the words that they were supposed to master¹⁸. (“Let’s grow up together – report series for returning study-abroad students as volunteer teachers,” 6 July 2012) (ESC)

The contrast between what the students should have mastered in English through their local education and the little progress they have actually made indicates that these rural students are being deprived of a satisfactory learning outcome, probably because the education resources are scarce. In other words, the status of English among these impoverished areas represents the great need for a better education environment there. Essentially, the *Overseas Edition* is both praising the volunteer teachers for their devotion to a cause, and reminding the readers that there is a great need in bringing better English education to the vast countryside and remote areas in China.

4. Conclusion

Our close look at the discourse of Chinese newspapers reveals that the attitude toward English in China, at least as far as the discourse of the *People’s Daily* and its international edition is concerned, seems to waver between whole-hearted support and caution. There is a dialectic tension between the desire to reap the benefits of global capitalism which owes a good deal of its energy to the power of English as a communicative tool and the need to shield the country from the potential disruption of English as a cultural force. The attitude shifts are, thus, perfectly understandable given the perceived degree of discrepancy between the country’s sociopolitical structure and its global economic aspirations (Lee, 2012; McCrum, 2010).

Through the frames of exclusion/oppression and warfare/protection, both newspapers attempt to construct the image of China as a unified, benign country, tradition-loving, and protective of its linguistic and cultural heritage, without having to define or elaborate on the contents of those traditions and heritage. However, the narrative starts to differ slightly between the two newspapers under the frames of yardstick/benchmark and bridge/needs. For its mainland readers, who directly experience China’s active participation in the capitalist market order, *People’s Daily* constructs a Chinese identity in which enjoying the benefits of English is compatible with developing a socialist cause. In comparison, *People’s*

18. The original passage: “小学生基本上是一问三不知。他们五年级开始上英语课，可是很多人却连有几个英文字母都不清楚。而很多初中生，都拼不出被要求掌握的单词”。The article title is: “咱们一起成长（海外学子回国支教系列报道2）”

Daily Overseas Edition depicts a motherland in need and attempts to instill in its overseas readers a sense of urgency and cultural responsibility. This orientation is not surprising, given that the overseas readers could be perceived as more likely to lose their cultural heritage and ethnic connection with the motherland.

However, separating the narratives may mask the underlying interaction they have in reality, and risk simplifying the meanings that emerged from the frames. Not only do the ideological and instrumental frames of English in Chinese commentary compete with each other, they are also meant to balance each other for the readership of the same newspaper. More than simply being “positive” or “negative,” then, these frames show a country struggling with the potential ramifications of embracing language globalization and opening up to the neo-liberal ideals of encouraging a market economy (see Bianco, Orton & Yihong, 2009; Blommaert, 2010; Majhanovich, 2014). There is a great deal of complex interplay of construction and essentialism in these discursive frames, but implicit in them is the unresolved tension between essence and utility, or the ideological value of the Chinese language as a marker of cultural identity and the instrumental value of English as a global language of power and wider communication.

The relatively small number of articles for analysis in this study could be a potential limitation, but it is also a strength allowing for a more fine-tuned analysis that inserts the Chinese government’s official voice into the existing discourses about language and identity. It is hoped that the present study contributes to language ideology research and sheds more light on China’s grappling with its diverse constructions of English as a global language. However, for a fuller picture, future studies of both party media and market-oriented media in different major Chinese cities are needed. Such studies should include reader reactions to media representations in order to give a wider understanding of public opinion and the issues surrounding the attitudes towards the spread of English and its increasing importance in the People’s Republic of China.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank two anonymous reviewers whose constructive comments helped us refine this paper, and the managing editor of the *JAPC* journal, Dr. Herbert Pierson, for his prompt replies to our queries. Mohammed Albakry would also like to acknowledge the support of the Chinese Language Council International and Hanban for granting him an Understanding China Fellowship.

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