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**GOOLAM HOOSAIN PANDIT**

**TITLE:**

*Global Student Migration patterns reflect and strengthen the hegemony of English as a global lingua franca: A case study of Chinese students at three tertiary institutions in Cape Town in the period 2002 - 2004.*

**SUPERVISOR: Natheem Hendricks**

A research essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.

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***Global Student Migration patterns reflect and strengthen the hegemony of English as a global lingua franca: A case study of Chinese students at three tertiary institutions in Cape Town in the period 2002 - 2004.***

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**A. KEY WORDS:**

**English domination**

**Linguistic hegemony**

**Chinese student migration**

**Academic mobility**

**Economic globalization**

**Higher education**

**Exchange network**

**Emigration**

**Changing boundaries of learning**

**Social mobility**



## B. ABSTRACT

***Global Student Migration patterns reflect and strengthen the hegemony of English as a global lingua franca: A case study of Chinese students at three tertiary institutions in Cape Town in the period 2002 - 2004.***

The foremost objective of this research paper is to examine how, through the prism of student migration patterns, the domination of the English language is extended and entrenched. Using the example of Chinese students in South Africa, the paper explores some of the reasons that underpin South Africa's growing appeal as an international study destination. The research specifically focuses on the period 2002 – 2004 which witnessed Chinese students arriving in unprecedented numbers to pursue higher education in a post-apartheid South Africa. The trend, which has become more marked in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York, witnessed a heightening of international security and new global alliances being formed. In effect it gave those students seeking to study overseas the opportunity to broaden the scope of their targeted destinations. With Chinese students constantly on a quest to find international qualifications and finding it harder to get into the US (Foroohar, 2004) South Africa was, along with other non-traditional destinations, presented with an opportunity to showcase its academic offerings.

That South Africa, which is not a native English-speaking country, offers visiting students an opportunity to enhance their English proficiency as a precursor to further tertiary education raises the fundamental question: Why are Chinese students choosing to study in South Africa given its very definite status as a 'developing' country, battling with issues of social transformation, economic and political reconstruction and social ills such as poverty and crime?

What is certain is that South Africa is a very popular destination for tertiary education, but what has not been established is why Chinese students choose South Africa when countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada continue to offer an alternative to the perceived belligerence of a post 9/11 US which is, traditionally, the destination of choice. My interest in the arrival of Chinese students stems from my own involvement with Chinese students as an ‘English as a Foreign Language’ tutor in the period 2003 – 2004.

While there is a paucity of writing on the phenomenon of Chinese student migration to South Africa, research in the area is practically absent. International studies of student migration trends concentrate on first world host countries while placing South Africa on the ‘periphery’ of student migration patterns (Chen and Barnett, 2000). This essay while not refuting South Africa’s ‘periphery’ status contends that recent developments in South African higher education, offset by a changing political landscape, have created a premise for future research in the area of student migration.

Using data generated in interviews and questionnaires, the researcher has located the study within the broad framework of liberationist theories that view the current trend in student migration patterns – from the developing world to the information-rich West – as a perpetuation of an unequal global linguistic arrangement in which the English language is consolidating its dominance.

The findings of the case study show that South Africa has now appeared on the global radar of students seeking cross-border study opportunities, marketing itself internationally as a cost-effective, English destination.

### C. ACRONYMS

ADS	Approved Destination Status
ANC	African National Congress
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FET	Further Education and Training
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAE	South African English
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WSSE	World Standard Spoken English
WTO	World Trade Organization

## **D. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**GOOLAM PANDIT**  
**MAY 2005**



## E. DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own unaided work that is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the Degree Masters in Education. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution and all the sources quoted are acknowledged accurately and in full.

**NAME** : .....

**DATE** : .....

**SIGNED AT** : .....

**SIGNATURE** : .....



*“... the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against (the) collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves...It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people’s languages rather than their own.”*

(From: Ngugi Wa Thiong’o: Decolonising the Mind, 1986)





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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces the key issue of the research, which is the emergence of a significant number of Chinese students at three tertiary institutions in Cape Town. It surveys the international context in which student migration occurs. Furthermore it examines the diplomatic arrangements between South Africa and China and finally this initial section will remark on how the lure of English as a medium of communication is presented to foreign students. The case study, which informs the research, is premised on the contributions of Chinese student migrants, their teachers, administrators and government officials who willingly gave of their time and energy to provide its essential data. The data, generated in unstructured interviews, informal discussion and questionnaires, gave the paper its content and the premise for its thesis. The researcher argues that through its participation in the international trade in education services South Africa has become a surrogate in the cause of advancing English as the global lingua franca.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

The cross-border flow of education is an age-old phenomenon. In fact a recent study makes the point that as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century already the English King Henry III had extended an invitation to French students to undertake their studies in England (Woodhouse, 2001). Today it is estimated that some 1,6 million people have left their countries of birth to seek opportunities for further study elsewhere (Berthet and Arnaud, 2004). With advances in information technology, the connectedness brought by the internet, the international flow of trade and finance, the rapid flow of ideas, knowledge and education, those seeking cross-border education are able to see almost immediately what is available across the globe.

In all of this the information highway has become a potent tool that is able to do what no other medium of communication has been able to do hitherto. In particular, through this medium, educational institutions can advertise their educational services worldwide and even in the most remote corners of the globe people can learn about the education opportunities on offer elsewhere. But what distinguishes education in this epoch is its link with rampant economic globalization.

Educational institutions, following commercial enterprises in the global economy, are paying increasing attention to internationalization, which is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions. In what is commonly referred to as the marketization of education, institutions of learning such as schools and tertiary institutions are increasingly becoming sites for branding and the targets of corporate expansion. Within this new educational reality, learning is seen more and more as a commodity, a service to be bought and sold on the international market.



The commercial implications for higher education are therefore hugely significant. In fact, with the general trend of student flows being from developing countries to industrialized nations, the trade in higher education is estimated to have generated, across the globe, some \$30 billion in 1999 with the US being the largest beneficiary followed by the UK and Australia (American Council on Education, 2002). While commentators and analysts acknowledge that the tragedy of September 11, 2001 affected migration patterns (Feroohar, 2004) <sup>1</sup>especially from the developing world, what has remained indisputable is the US's status as the world's premier host destination for students seeking international higher education qualifications. Although the US is 'scrutinizing visa applications' more stringently and there is considerably more 'red tape within its immigration system' (Feroohar, 2004: 1) the US has still retained its dominance as the

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<sup>1</sup> The Xinhua News Agency of Nov 7 2003 reported that after Sept 11, 2001 tightened its control over the entry and exit of foreigner students and imposed stricter examination of students' visas.

destination of choice, playing host to 61 765 Chinese students making up 11 percent of international students in the US (Bishop, 2005).

What current student migration patterns clearly highlight is that the internationalization of education seems to be driven by market forces. Academic institutions realize that, in order to enhance their global reach, they need to build cross-border links and they have to 'treat intellectual property as a commodity' while adopting 'strategies of profit-driven corporations' (Berthet & Arnaud, 2004: 3). But student migration, studied within the paradigm of the globalization of higher education, reveals quite starkly new global inequalities one of which is the proliferation of the English language at the expense of indigenous languages. This is the stark global linguistic dilemma that faces many countries in the developing world, South Africa included. And while South Africa has a history of playing host to visiting students and academics over many decades, it is with the advent of democracy, a changed diplomatic environment and new trade relations that South Africa emerged as a more significant global destination for international students seeking higher education.



### **1.3 CHINESE STUDENT MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

As a study located in the social arena of human migration, the research explores qualitatively some of the reasons that Chinese students have turned their attention to South Africa. In addition to eliciting student responses to set questions and in unstructured interviews, the research has also drawn in the opinions of teachers, administrators and bureaucratic officials involved at the diplomatic level of negotiations between the South African government and the Chinese government. While cognizant of the fact that little, if any academic work, has been done in the area of Chinese student migration to South Africa, and recognizing that the flow of students from China is a new development in the process of consolidating international relations, the study draws on the plethora of writing on global student migration emanating from other parts of the world.

Clearly, Chinese student migration cannot be viewed in isolation. As a phenomenon of human movement it is firmly located within the debates on the global migration of people, goods and services, not least of which are the many views on the domination of the English language and the parallel spread of western capitalism. While those who migrate may see their migration in terms of improving the quality of their lives, contemporary writers have located the cross-border provision of education as a commodity in a hegemonic capitalist global economy in which the acquisition of English is a fundamental prerequisite for participation in that economy. Ironically, the perception actively promoted in developing nations is that a command of the English language is a critical requirement for functioning in a capitalist world. This is what analysts have at various stages in the debates referred to as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1997) or 'new forms of colonialism' (Kim, 2002: 141). For the purpose of this research though and, given the African backdrop to the study, it would be opportune to reflect on a poignant observation made by Ngugi wa Thiong'o on the appropriation a foreign language:



Colonial alienation ... starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies (Wa Thiongo, 1986: 28).

This remark is clearly made as a reference to the many facets of colonial conquest, one of which was the forced appropriation of the colonial language by indigenous populations. Its contemporary relevance is to be found at a cognitive level where many in the developing world still associate the ability to speak English with access to the world economy, to the new information highway and, by implication, to power. That this argument is challenged by scholars in the developing world comes as no surprise as they witness a disconcertingly vigorous movement especially by the more socially and

economically mobile classes away from indigenous languages to English which, in turn, is rapidly assuming the proportions of a global lingua franca.

Contemporary literature shows that the general trend in student movement is from non-English speaking countries to countries where English is the language of teaching and learning. While arguments can be made to the contrary, the case study at the heart of this research project will be used to contribute to the discourse on the significant rise in South Africa's status as an English host destination for foreign students.

#### **1.4 THE EMERGENCE OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa has had a long and intriguing association with the People's Republic of China (PRC), at diplomatic level as well as in the economic and political spheres. During the apartheid era the underground liberation movements, the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), had enjoyed very little support in the West, but had significant support in the PRC. At the same time the apartheid state had forged economic and diplomatic relations with capitalist Taiwan.

In the aftermath of the unbanning of the ANC and the release of political prisoners in 1990 South Africa and the PRC agreed in August 1991 to establish unofficial representations in Pretoria and Beijing. These were retained up to the advent of the democratic South African state in 1994, which formalized ties with Mainland China, while relinquishing its relationship with capitalist Taiwan. Indeed diplomatic relations were formally established on 1 January 1998. Soon after, in April 2000, South African President Thabo Mbeki and his Chinese counterpart President Jiang Zemin signed the Pretoria Declaration which created the platform for high level bilateral agreements between South Africa and China <sup>2</sup>. But what paved the way for students to come to South Africa was an agreement signed in December 2001, in which Beijing granted South Africa Approved Destination Status (ADS). In effect what this means is that China has expressed a preference for trading with South Africa – along with Canada and Australia –

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<sup>2</sup> The total bilateral trade between the two countries was a significant R18,7 billion in 2001

and, for the first time, assigned designated travel agents to do direct destination marketing in China, thus significantly boosting travel to South Africa by Chinese tourists and students. As part of the new relationship and the cordial trade arrangements, the early 2000s witnessed a growing number of Chinese students arriving in South Africa to acquire English language skills and to further their tertiary education.

These young people came in large numbers from diverse areas of China to explore study opportunities. While a key objective of this research project is to establish why Chinese students choose South Africa as an educational destination, the case study, as its academic objective, explores the rising dominance of the English language, which is critical in any debate on the globalization of education.

While the country has over many decades played host to students from the African continent, it has of late also been tapping in to the very lucrative global market of hosting students from Asia, Europe and Latin America. Some can be deemed purely language travellers while others avail themselves of both language and further academic opportunities. What this means in effect is that after years of international isolation South Africa has emerged onto the global stage offering some 31 000 foreign students study opportunities in 2000 and in 2004 the figure for foreign students was approaching 47 000 (Study SA, 2004). With an increasing number of students arriving in South Africa from the People's Republic of China (PRC), an opportunity emerges to revisit the notion of cross-border migration of students and how the dominance of the English language in the global economy plays itself out alongside the new trends in migration patterns.



## 1.5 THE CASE STUDY

The international migration of students is a complex phenomenon, but drawing a sample of people into a case study allows one to explore the more pertinent issues, in this instance, issues such as the reasons Chinese students choose South Africa as their study destination.

More specifically, Chinese students at three tertiary institutions in and around Cape Town have been selected to participate in the study. The students who are registered at Northlink College which houses the language school, Peninsula Technikon (now Cape Peninsula University of Technology or CPUT) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) make up a sizable percentage of the of the total number of students <sup>3</sup>who arrive in South Africa each year in terms of the individual agreements concluded between the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) and the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE)<sup>4</sup>.



The students are all in South Africa on study permits and in terms of the entry requirements they have to be registered at an institution of higher learning. The student respondents in this case study had all first registered for the English as a foreign language (EFL) programme at Northlink College after which some of the respondents proceeded to the CPUT while others enrolled at UWC.

In the period 2003 – 2004 the researcher had the privilege of being involved with the Language School at Northlink College and came to know many Chinese students. Consequently these acquaintances constituted the core of the respondents in the study. From within the group, eight individuals, all post-graduate students, made up the focus group.

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<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere the exact figures for the period 2002-2004 are given.

<sup>4</sup> According to an official of the Chinese Ministry of Education, based in Pretoria, a series of agreements were concluded between Heads of SA universities and Technikons and the CSCSE between 2001 and 2004 which covered, inter alia, the number of enrolments and the recognition of prior qualifications.

## 1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is located within the broad resistance framework set out by Phillipson (1996), Canagarajah (2003), Alexander (2004), Kim (2002), Stroud (2003) and Painter (2002).

Within resistance theory, language is understood to be socially constructed and it reflects and embodies the values of the community that uses it. In saying that language is value-laden, the assumption is that through language we are able to interpret and define the world around us. Those who use the language internalize the values that are dominant as well as the prevailing ideologies that are deeply rooted in every community. This, resistance theorists argue, is how language acquires its hegemonic position.

Foremost among those who challenge the dominant position of English is Robert Phillipson (1996) who talks of ‘linguistic imperialism’ as the English language spreads its tentacles to the remote corners of the globe and as neo-liberal market forces create the prospect of immense capitalist wealth for those who participate in the activities of the market. The argument is that it is the powerful Anglo-American alliance that drives the cause of English as a prerequisite to participation<sup>5</sup>. This alliance and its agencies realize, as Stroud contends, that ‘... control over linguistic resources is indirectly also control over economic and social advancement ...’ (Stroud, 2003: 17)

The case study of Chinese students, which is the premise of this research project, demonstrates the far-reaching impact of the spread of English. In what Alexander & Bloch (2004) call the ‘juggernaut of English’ the demand for English from non-native speakers is significant and has presented unprecedented entrepreneurial opportunities for those willing and able to sell the service of ELT. But alongside the spread of English and the globalization of education there is growing inequality, which Kim (2002) defines as a ‘new international division of intellectual capital as a consequence of the fact that the actual benefits from the knowledge-based are unevenly distributed throughout the world’

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<sup>5</sup> At this point it is worth citing the example of a Texas based oil company drilling for oil off the Angolan coast and using cheap Angolan labour who, in 2003, sent their executives to Northlink College to investigate the possibility of sourcing English language tuition for their Angolan employees.

(Kim, 2002: 148). This inequality is quantitatively demonstrated by the following statistic:

In sub-Saharan Africa the number of students enrolled in higher education is one per 1000 inhabitants, in contrast to North America where the ratio is one per 50 (Kim, 2002: 149).

As Chinese students flock to South Africa in pursuit of an international English education, the stark realities of South Africa's own language contradictions are brought into sharp relief. That English is the first language of fewer than nine percent of the population raises the important question of how the country is able to market itself in Asia and elsewhere in the developing world as an 'English' destination.

### **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

With the study being as small as it is – 27 respondents in all – there are bound to be limitations, which should be highlighted. The students in the case study constitute a fraction of the total number of Chinese students who have migrated to South Africa. As a consequence of the small size of the student sample and this being a quantitative study, the results are not intended to be generalisable.

Secondly, as a former teacher in the EFL Programme of Northlink College the researcher is acquainted with five of the participants in the case study which might bias the interpretation and analysis of the data.

In acknowledging these limitations, this research attempts to use the example of the migration of Chinese students to examine the assumption that in marketing itself as an English language destination, South Africa is in fact aiding and abetting the worldwide dominance of the former colonial language.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the case study does provide a sound basis for further research on Chinese student migration to South Africa.



## CHAPTER 2

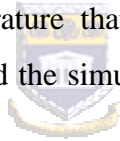
### LITERATURE REVIEW

*The omnipresence of English can be inconvenient and suffocating and induces a sense of disempowerment and exclusion. In a sense, all language rights are against English, which in the modern world is such a powerful language that it needs no protection at all.*

(Judge Albie Sachs quoted in Silva: 6)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces some of the more recent views on international student migration as well as some of the research literature that deals with the complex issue of the ascendancy of the English language and the simultaneous marginalization of some of the world's indigenous languages



Two broad theoretical perspectives are examined and interpreted to inform and locate this study of student migration and language hegemony. On the one hand student migration and linguistic dominance can be explored from what is essentially a neo-liberal, centre position that regards migration to the English-speaking world as a way of connecting the disparate nations of the developing world with a profoundly altruistic Anglo-American capitalist West. In this way, the argument goes, knowledge of English is at once liberating and empowering (Crystal, 1997) as it affords access to global commercial enterprise.

Diametrically opposed to this position is the voice of those who provide a perspective from the developing world (Alexander, 2004 and Canagarajah, 2003), a more radical, liberationist view that regards the movement of students to English-speaking parts of the world as a self-defeating exercise and a subservience to the domination of English, an

acquiescence that can best be described as a new form of domination or in the words of Kim (2002: 141) a ‘new form of colonialism’.

Resistance theorists regard the spread of English as having negative implications for developing communities, as it increases marginalization, poverty and cultural alienation (Phillipson, 1996). With geographical borders becoming more permeable in the face of education globalization, international education is becoming a ‘key site for conferring legitimacy on specific practices of language, and for distributing control over linguistic and non-linguistic resources’ (Stroud, 2003: 18). Noting the fact that there are academics in the periphery who use English, the colonial language, to assert the rights of their indigenous languages, Canagarajah (2003) defines resistance to linguistic domination as ‘deconstructing what passes for culture, discovering the contradictions in the dominant culture, and developing the liberatory traditions of marginalized communities to tap their oppositional potential’ (Canagarajah, 2003: 32).

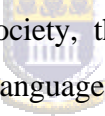
This current study of student migration – of migration from a non-English country to what is believed to be an English destination – is firmly located within the ongoing debates that emanate from the centre and the periphery. However, given the contemporary global arrangement in which the economies of the North dominate world trade and in which academic voices from the developed centre are given greater prominence, this study positions itself within the resistance debate, essentially presenting a view from the peripheral South.

## **2.2 THE HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

In his seminal work on the rising domination of English on the international landscape Robert Phillipson (1996) argues a compelling case of language hegemony that is tied to economic position. The push and pull factors in student migration, he asserts, are linked to the dominant position of the English language which he says ‘has been successfully promoted, and has been eagerly adopted in the global linguistic marketplace’ (Phillipson, 1996: 7). Taking this position further Canagarajah argues that the notion of hegemony

articulates how the dominant groups are always involved in building consent to their power by influencing the culture and knowledge of subordinate groups (Canagarajah, 2003: 31).

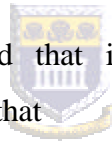
This debate on the hegemonic tendency of the English language is also advanced by Pak-Sang Lai (2003), who although concentrating his study on the former British protectorate of Hong Kong, contends that there is a perception in Chinese society that links proficiency in English to economic success and professional career advancement (Pak-Sang Lai, 2003: 330). Indeed, within Hong Kong society, as with many other centers in China, English is regarded as a better link to the outside world as ‘the major medium of communication’ and it is within this discourse that English assumes its value as ‘linguistic capital’ (Pak-Sang Lai, 2003: 330). Even though Hong Kong has returned from its colonial protectorate status Pak-Sang Lai contends that English is still highly regarded by both the ordinary people and elite classes in Chinese society and that with


 the advent of globalised ICT society, the importance of English ... is highly valued as an internationalized language whereas its past legacy as a colonial language is downplayed cautiously by the ruling elites (Pak-Sang Lai, 2003: 329).

Kim’s argument (2002) that global student migration patterns are highlighting new inequalities and manifesting a new form of colonial inequality can be linked, theoretically, to the debate on the dominance of English as the global language in ICTs. In fact he points to conventional educational practice that elevates ‘English as the global language of higher education – adopted in non-English speaking sites for practical reasons – economically and culturally’ (Kim, 2002: 150). In much the same vein Pak-Sang Lai (2003) argues that a view that is prevalent especially among Chinese parents in the big commercial cities is that being taught English at school will ‘give them more symbolic capital and more economic, social and political advantages’ (Pak-Sang Lai, 2003: 322).

This increasingly dominant position of the English language is thus a double-edged sword whose ascendancy is, on the one hand, advanced by a rampant Anglo-American capitalist market and on the other it could be viewed as self-inflicted as ‘ideas also tend to be internalized by the dominated, even though they are not objectively in their interest’ (Phillipson, 1996: 8). A compelling voice in the resistance tradition is Neville Alexander’s (2002, 2004). In a collaborative paper he writes from the former colonial South describing the global surge of the language as the ‘juggernaut of English dominance and hegemony’ (Alexander and Bloch, 2004: 3). That the issues of domination and hegemony are separate has to be understood in the context of the latter feeding off the former. The global domination of the English language is inextricably linked to the spread of Western capitalist development led by the USA and Britain and advanced in surrogate fashion by a country such as South Africa where the language is in fact not the premier language, but indeed only used as a first language by 8,2% of the population<sup>6</sup>.

Alexander and Bloch (2004) contend that if one wants to understand language domination, then one has to understand that



the dominance of English, which is driven by market forces – aided and abetted by British, U.S. and other pro-English agencies – is a phenomenon, the continuation of which is tied up with global political and economic developments that go beyond the specificities of cultural and linguistic dynamics (Alexander and Bloch, 2004: 2).

One of the effects that English hegemony has on speakers of other languages, including Chinese, the most spoken language on earth, is that speakers

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<sup>6</sup> According to the 2001 Census English is the first language of 8,2 percent of the SA population. Accessed from: [http://www.southafrica.info/ess\\_info/sa\\_glance/demographics/language.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/demographics/language.htm)



begin losing faith in the value of their home languages. They begin to ask themselves why they should bother maintaining and developing their languages when in any case, everything happens in English (Alexander and Bloch, 2004: 2).

In order to illustrate the insidious international proportions of the domination of English, Phillipson (1996) cites the example of Denmark where English has been elevated from its status as foreign language to 'second mother tongue' (Phillipson, 1996: 9). Equally in countries such as Singapore and South Africa English has begun to usurp indigenous languages to become the language of business and education. Indeed, in order to raise its global economic profile and in order to tap into the lucrative international trade in educational services South Africa has had to advance the global cause of English. Kim observes that 'to attract more foreign students where English is not in official use... more national governments are trying to provide more university courses offered in English' (Kim, 2001: 150).

In addition to its dominant position in the global economy, English also has a dominant position internationally, in science, technology and medicine, in youth culture and sport. Indeed Phillipson (1996) holds the view that with 315 million native English speakers in core English-speaking countries and anywhere between 100 and 300 million who speak the language either as a second language or foreign language, the language has become a desirable acquisition so much so that ELT has become a 'bigger weapon in the armoury of English-speaking peoples than star wars' (Phillipson, 1996 :9).

Privately owned and public education institutions in South Africa have bought into the lucrative sale of English as an international language. The result is that in the last decade there has been a proliferation of language schools throughout the country. The language schools specialise in English tuition and some, such as Northlink College, have direct linkages with Universities. Together these institutions embark on overseas marketing strategies, send delegates to attend international education fairs and direct key staff on reconnaissance and recruitment drives overseas.

Against the background of the international sale of ELT Phillipson's definition of linguistic imperialism has contemporary relevance: 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (Phillipson, 1996: 47).

That the growth of the English language has been so substantial is as a consequence of its colonial legacy. The language had accompanied colonial conquest and over time economic, political, intellectual and social forces propelled English forward so that it has, in contemporary society, become the language of science and technology and critically it 'is the language of the USA, a major economic, political and military force in the contemporary world' (Phillipson, 1996: 24)

The spread of English has been so wide and so effective that the English language mouthpiece, *English Today*, could trumpet in 1984 that

English has moved beyond its traditional home in the North Atlantic towards a unique non-national, non-regional, non-ethnic stature as the world's first truly global language. It has even been spoken on the moon. (Quoted in Phillipson, 1996: 275).

That English is the language of business and higher education in South Africa, is therefore no coincidence.

On the other side of the global language debate Crystal (1997) contends that language is inextricably tied to politics and that '... there is no more intimate or more sensitive an index of identity than language...' (Crystal, 1997: vii). Arguing for a global language that unites participants in the global economy he states that he believes in the 'fundamental value of a common language as an amazing world resource which ... enables us to find fresh opportunities for international cooperation' (Crystal, 1997: viii). A common language he says 'promotes a climate of international intelligibility' (Crystal, 1997: ix). While not denying the rights of linguistic minorities with their own identities and conceding that there is value in multilingualism Crystal (1997) maintains there is a critical need for a global language by the international academic and business

communities. As people have become more mobile, physically and electronically, the need for a global lingua franca is accentuated.

But while Crystal argues from a macro-centre perspective, academics such as Canagarajah counter from a micro-periphery position. For Crystal the emergence of English as a global language has not worked against minority languages, but has in fact ‘stimulated a stronger response in support of local languages’ (Crystal, 1997: 18). Canagarajah (2003: 180) critiques Crystal, as a

centre linguist, who argues for a World Standard Spoken English (WSSE) as a universal common dialect motivated by reasons of efficiency

that will largely be influenced by American English. Crystal, he says is not ‘troubled by the linguistic inequalities set up by his proposal’ which in fact will only serve to provide ideological and economic advantages to centre communities (Crystal, 1997: 180).

This research, located squarely in the resistance mould that emanates from the developing South, questions the notion that British imperialism and the accompanying spread of English were beneficial to colonized peoples. That academics such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o should be implored to look beyond the ‘unhappy colonial resonance’ (Crystal, 1997: 115) of the English language to its infinite benefits, as Crystal argues, is both flawed and spurious. It does not account for the way in which the ascendancy of English accompanies the devaluing of local languages and the exclusion from the global economy of large swathes of people in the developing world. A central tenet of this study is its acknowledgement that each and every language has an intrinsic value and that promoting English as a global lingua franca is in fact promoting the ‘domination of the world by Western capital, cultural and political interests’ (Painter, 2002: 3).

Crystal further makes the case for ‘identity existing alongside intelligibility’ in a bilingual situation where one language is the global language that provides access to the world community and the other is a regional language that provides access to a local community and finally that ‘a world of linguistic diversity can in principle continue to exist in a

world united by a common language' (Crystal, 1997: 19). This is rejected by Canagarajah who demands

a third way that avoids the traditional extremes of rejecting English outright for its linguistic imperialism or accepting it wholesale for its benefits ...the communicative and learning strategies of periphery students ... gesture towards an appropriation of the discourses, codes and grammar of English in terms of their own traditions and needs (Canagarajah, 2003: 174).

### **2.3 NEW GLOBAL REALITIES IMPACT ON STUDENT MIGRATION**

The transnational migration of students is a vast yet under-researched area of study in South Africa. Elsewhere, though, much has been written on the global migration of students. Indeed, traditional host countries such as the US, Canada and Australia have academic departments – the University of Berkeley in California being a case in point – who devote their considerable resources to researching international student migration patterns. Recognized as a legitimate area of research, several debates currently frame the discourse on the global movement of students and academics. It is within these debates that one can locate the recent phenomenon of Chinese student travellers to South Africa.

Prominent in the discourse on student migration is the view that transnational student migration is a natural feature of economic globalization. This view, that the world is unequally divided into 'core' countries and 'periphery' countries, is compellingly argued by Chen and Barnett (2000) in their quantitative study, which, while using World System Theory, places South Africa on the periphery of host nations. The premise of their position is that the knowledge-based global economy has polarized the world into 'information-rich' and 'information-poor' societies representing the developed world and the developing world respectively (Chen & Barnett, 2000: 436). The implications for education is that students in the developing world, that constitute the bulk of the periphery, are constantly seeking educational opportunities in the economically,

technologically and academically advanced centres in Europe, the US, Canada and Australia.

Recent studies, however, point increasingly to a shift in global study trends, a shift that has become more pronounced in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York. The period post 9/11 witnessed a tightening of security measures and increasing restrictions on entry into the world's premier study destination, the United States. In her online article Rana Foroohar (2004) argues that as the US articulates its fight against terror under the 'ruse of its Patriot Act of 2001' and that 'continuing red tape within the US immigration system' (Foroohar, 2004: 1) appear to be driving 'the best and brightest' (Foroohar, 2004: 2) elsewhere with Britain, Canada and Australia being the chief beneficiaries. She points further to the fact that the EU has overtaken the US as the most popular destination for the growing number of middle class Chinese students seeking a Western high school or university education in 2002 (Foroohar, 2004: 2) and that as a consequence Britain, Australia and Canada have benefited.



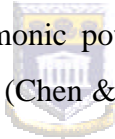
Shortly after the attack in New York in September of 2001 the US government promulgated the Patriot Act in 2001. Some of the key objectives of the Patriot Act are ostensibly to 'enhance domestic security against terrorism', 'enhance surveillance procedures', 'protect the northern border' and to 'enhance immigration provisions' (EPIC, 2001). While these stipulations clearly have serious implications for US immigration and are in the words of Foroohar (2004) 'bad news for highly skilled temporary workers and scholars that America most needs' (Foroohar, 2004: 1) it has implications for other host destinations as well.

What contemporary studies have yet to show is how a 'periphery' host nation such as South Africa has, quite recently, appeared as an alternative for Chinese students seeking to study abroad. An online article (Author unknown) entitled 'Chinese Students Span Globe' (2002) postulates that Chinese students have set their sights on a wider range of countries including developing countries such as South Africa. Current statistics indicate that some '80 000 self-funded Chinese students go abroad to study each year' and that in

2002 some '300 000 Chinese students were studying overseas in 103 countries, most at their own expense' (2002: 1).

Clearly, educational globalization and the identification of different cultures have contributed to this diversification of choice. In South Africa's case, its pre-eminent role in African politics, its emergence as a successful and stable democracy and its considerable sporting achievements have ensured that it garner for itself increasing attention from nations across the globe. As the obsession with the twin issues of terrorism and security become paramount and visa requirements become more stringent in the traditional destinations for students, Chinese students veer towards host countries where entry appears less complicated and where education is affordable and of good quality.

Although there have been shifts as a result of students seeking educational opportunities elsewhere, these are not significant enough to dislodge countries either from their peripheral or core status. Indeed the network of movement continues to 'not only reflect the hierarchical structure of the hegemonic powers in the modern world system, but economic changes over this period' too. (Chen & Barnett, 2000: 437)



Indications are that tertiary institutions in South Africa have realized that in order to participate in the very lucrative trade in educational services it would have to market aggressively in foreign destinations. Indeed, if as Kim (2002) argues that

...we are now witnessing a global convergence around market-oriented higher education systems driven by neo-liberal, knowledge-based economies  
(Kim, 2002: 143),

then South Africa has clearly staked its claim to a share of the network of student migrants. That Chen and Barnett (2000) chose to base their study on UNESCO statistics prior to 2000 and that their review periods reveal comparatively few students moving to Africa and South America are in fact what limits their study. Their claim that individual countries in the developing world drew on average fewer than 5000 students (Chen & Barnett, 2000: 450) each, thus confirming their 'periphery' status, should be set against

the statistic of 2004 in which South Africa hosted 47 000 foreign students (Study South Africa, 2004: 1).

This structural approach, in which the concept of hegemony is expounded, is also adopted by Chase-Dunn (1989, quoted in Chen & Barnett, 2000: 437) who argues that the core/periphery relationship in the international student exchange network is reflected in the economic, cultural and political global hierarchical arrangement. World System Theory on international student flows suggests that countries that have the resources and knowledge that others require or desire remain at the core of the world system while those who are handicapped by a lack of educational capabilities and a shortage of technical capacity cannot attract as many foreign students. Following this approach then South Africa is relegated almost permanently to the periphery of host nations.

Larsen and Vincent (2002) use a similarly quantitative approach to the trade in education services. In their study of migration trends, they make a clear distinction between the commercial and cultural approaches and how certain categories of international students are assisted financially, while Terri Kim's (2001) study examines the rise of the network society, a global phenomenon in which new alliances are forged in the developed world which feed off the migration of students from the developing world and thus creating what Kim calls a 'new form of colonialism' (Kim, 2002: 141).

So while economic globalization continues to spawn an unequal exchange between the powerful information-rich and the limited information-poor countries, contemporary studies have to search in other spheres to explain the emergence of a country such as South Africa as a host destination for Chinese students. One explanation could be that, as part of a new democratic dispensation, and in an attempt to overcome the socio-political, economic and linguistic divisions and inequities wrought by apartheid, the present government has elevated English to the position of lingua franca. Insofar education is concerned the 1990s witnessed a growth in the number of language schools offering English as a second (ESL) and as a foreign language (EFL). The combination of the availability of English tuition and being home to some of the most revered tertiary

institutions on the African continent has put the spotlight on South Africa as a credible alternative to some of the 'traditional' host destinations.

## **2.4 CHANGING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AFFECT CHINESE STUDENT MIGRATION**

With respect to the movement to South Africa of Asian, and Chinese students in particular, an entire new avenue of study waits to be explored. It is important at this point therefore to examine some of the factors that challenge traditional assumptions about host destinations and encourage new reflections on recipient countries such as South Africa.

In his online article entitled 'Europe attracts more migrants from China' (2003) Frank Laczko asserts that Chinese emigration is not only driven by the desire to escape poverty, indeed migrants tend to come from the more 'economically advanced' provinces (Laczko, 2003: 4). This sentiment is echoed by Irena Omelaniuk (2004) in her paper on Chinese migration who maintains that the economic boom of the last decade and rising standards of living acted as catalysts for young Chinese especially from the more affluent Fujian and Fuzhou provinces (Omelaniuk, 2004: 1)

Historically the flows from China became significant after the economic reforms of 1978 and especially after the promulgation of a 1985 law which allowed citizens the right to passports provided they could obtain invitation letters or sponsorships from overseas.

With the largest population on earth, of 1,3 billion, a limited number of places at tertiary institutions and compounded by stringent entrance examinations for universities the demand for opportunities to study abroad is fuelled. Additionally, rapid economic development means that more people can afford to pay for their children to study outside the PRC. But overseas study remains costly for the ordinary Chinese family and cost is a major consideration in choosing where to study.



A further critical factor shaping migration is China's decision to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. Membership of the WTO has implications for China's global competitiveness and has witnessed 'rising unemployment as inefficient state enterprises come under pressure from global competitors' (Laczko, 2003: 5). Membership of the WTO implies that the PRC has had to meet increasing demand for highly skilled professionals, which encourages the pursuit of international qualifications. Being a member of the WTO has focused the world's attention on the globe's largest consumer market which, driven by rapid economic development, is attracting many foreign educational institutions interested in recruiting students from China.

Omelandiuk (2004) contends that educated and entrepreneurial Chinese are constantly looking for overseas education and business opportunities in order to escape their low paid jobs in China. Those who cannot do so send their children in order to enhance their prospects.

Studying abroad is one of the main reasons that Chinese emigrate and it is increasingly used as a springboard for more permanent migration. For many destination countries visiting Chinese students account for the largest numbers of temporary migrants. However, current research point to the numbers that have been declining for countries such as the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland and have accelerated, at least for Chinese students, the search for alternative English-speaking destinations.

Recent studies show that in the US student numbers are down and there are fewer self-funded students from China (Foorohar, 2004). A major deterrent has been the tightening of criteria and procedures, particularly after 9/11. The Council of Graduate Schools have found that nine out of ten graduate programmes 'have seen a significant drop in international applications, particularly in areas like engineering and science' (Omelandiuk, 2004: 2). Compounding matters 'US officials recently imposed a new \$100 fee for student visas, which must be paid with a credit card or US bank account, which most foreign students do not have' (Omelandiuk, 2004: 2). These have impacted on a growing perception that the US is becoming 'less and less open.' (Omelandiuk, 2004: 2).

Given these changing trends in migration patterns one can conclude that higher education is truly becoming a global business, on the one hand controlled by national government as in the case of the US under the auspices of fighting terror, while in other instances higher education operates ‘beyond the control of national governments’ (Kim, 2002:143). Kim is further of the opinion that as more contenders enter the lucrative trade in education services ‘...academics are becoming internationally mobile knowledge workers’ and that universities ‘are less and less seen as national institutions of higher education ...’ (Kim, 2002: 143). These are for Kim what are changing the ‘boundaries of learning and provision’ and what we are witnessing now is new kind of imperialism that sanctions global inequalities through ostensibly legitimate global structures such as the IMF, the WTO and GATS. Through these structures the US, the UK and its allies seek to make all services, including education, a commodity to be traded for profit regardless of their fundamental importance as public or social goods. Within this new marketplace the social value of higher education is lost as ‘Learning has become a product to be bought and sold, to be packaged, advertised and marketed on a global scale’ (Kim, 2002: 144).

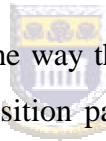


## **2.5 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

If foreigners such as Chinese students are intent on pursuing their studies in South Africa, the role of English, which is a significant drawback, needs to be examined more closely. As one of eleven official languages English has, over the period since the first democratic election, gained the kind of prominence that has caused consternation in many quarters. From the President to academics are expressing their concerns about the marginalization of the ten other indigenous languages.

Penny Silva argues that in South Africa English has ‘always existed in a complex multilingual and multi-cultural environment’ (Silva, u.d.: 2). While it is not the native language of the majority of people in government, South African English (SAE), unique in the way it is influenced by other languages and street expressions, is the language of government, but it is also the language of academia and is predominant in the media and

in corporate communication. Whereas in other post-colonial societies English has often been viewed with scepticism and hostility, imposed from outside and thus politically suspect, in South African society, contends Silva, Afrikaans provided the cover for SAE from this stigma in the apartheid period up to 1994 (Silva, u.d.: 5). It was Afrikaans, the 'language of the oppressor', through which apartheid had been enforced. Afrikaans was the language of the bureaucracy and the police force and ironically it was English that was chosen as the language of communication by the ANC and other liberation organizations during the freedom struggle. For the disparate linguistic groups who participated in the struggle for political freedom, English became the language of liberation and unity (Silva,u.d.: 5). As the language of ruling party, and dominant in the media, education and commerce, English has become enmeshed in political and social domination as it worked to exclude Afrikaans and other indigenous languages. Paradoxically, Afrikaans now finds itself alongside the indigenous languages in its opposition to the hegemony of English.



There is much that is contradictory in the way that English operates, and is perceived, in South Africa. While politicians and position papers are scathing in their attack on the dominance of English and call for a revitalization of African languages, in practice even the promotion of multilingualism has been conducted largely in English. Indeed, English appears to be the language of upward mobility and empowerment for the new black elite in South Africa. The choice of English as medium of communication by the ANC government exposes the contradiction in the official position. On the one hand it seems to ensure the dominance of English at the national level while a significant section of the ANC's constituency does not have access to the language and is increasingly being marginalized.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the focus was on the literature that informs the study, literature that spans the spectrum of writing from the centre perspectives of David Crystal (1997) to the more radical liberationist views emanating with increasing voice from the developing world

(Alexander, 2004, Canagarajah, 2003). While there is a concession that English has a decidedly unifying effect on those disparate groups who speak it, there is an equally compelling argument to be made for resisting the increasing marginalization of other languages and cultures that accompanies the growing domination of English.

The intention here was to explore the academic debates on the position of English and the trends in student migratory patterns. While the literature essentially discusses migration from the developing world to the developed, English-speaking centres, the emergence of South Africa as a study destination, located in the developing periphery, challenges the accepted notions of student migration. Further, the views of 'periphery' academics such as Alexander (2004), Canagarajah (2003) and others are likely to gain currency in the many debates that challenge English hegemony and dispel beliefs that command of English is a fundamental prerequisite to economic success in the global economy.

Certainly from contemporary debates it is evident that South Africa offers a unique opportunity to consider the interconnectedness of language and culture and as the battle for language equity rages in the social and educational domain, the arrival of Chinese students at South African higher education institutions begin to reveal the inconsistencies and contradictions in the language policy of the country.

In the next chapter the writer introduces the methodological approach that underpins the research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. In its design it is essentially qualitative but it also uses quantitative information to guide the study and is based on an analysis of student narratives during an interview process, the results of questionnaires, telephonic and electronic interviews and official documents. Qualitative interviews are in fact used as the primary strategy for data collection. The study is situated squarely within the methodological framework of a case study.

#### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR A CRITICAL APPROACH**

The rapid increase in the number of students from the PRC seeking study opportunities in South Africa warrants explanation within an academic as well as a socio-cultural context.

With the identification of Chinese students at two Cape Town higher education institutions and a Further Education and Training (FET) College the premise for a case study emerged.

Issues around global linguistic domination can be adequately viewed through the lens of student migration as students from the developing world are drawn towards the English-speaking world and as the global economy shows increasing signs of promoting English alongside the spread of market capitalism. In this marketplace global higher education too has become a commodity and its institutions are increasingly adopting the strategies of profit driven corporations. In the words of the South African Minister of Education:

we are seeing a new form of imperialism resulting in the commodification of higher education, in which academic programmes are developed not because of their intrinsic worth or because they contribute to

cultural, intellectual and social goals, but because they improve profit margins (Asmal, 2002: 6).

A qualitative study, in the view of the researcher, removes student migration from an empiricist, quantitative statistical paradigm and places it more firmly in its human context. This research therefore adopts a critical approach, located within the resistance discourse. It questions the legitimacy of neo-liberal market-principled educational discourse and uses the case study of Chinese students to explore ‘the disempowering effect of the hegemony of English’ (Alexander and Bloch, 2004: 2).

In all of this the researcher is central to the research process recognizing that, in the course of the research, the researcher’s own cultural and social biases might impact on the study.

### **3.3 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF STUDENT MIGRATION**



The research uses a qualitative approach to explore Chinese student migration. The basis of the approach is that one does not predetermine or delimit the directions the investigation might take. Instead, what it does, is allow the researcher to ‘tell the story’ from the participant's viewpoint, providing the rich descriptive detail that places quantitative results into its human context. Seale (2004) argues that qualitative methods are frequently recommended as offering greater sensitivity to meaning than quantitative methods, and these methods are appealing to people wanting to do small scale studies that have immediate human interest. Importantly for this study, too, is that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to place himself at the centre of the research process.

In assuming such a naturalistic approach to its subject matter the researcher is able to make sense of and interpret the phenomenon of human migration in terms of the meaning that student migrants bring to it. Against this background qualitative research begins by accepting that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the world and is

concerned with discovering the meanings seen by those who are being researched and with understanding their view of the world rather than that of the researcher's.

Qualitative research, with its emphasis on understanding complex and changing phenomena, is particularly relevant to the challenges of conducting research into the transnational migration of students.

### **3.4 DATA FOR THE RESEARCH**

The research used multiple methods of data collection, but its key research methods were interviews and questionnaires. Given the fact that the data generated were garnered from the perceptions and opinions of students, administrators and government officials it was essential that the researcher adopt a mechanism to interpret and analyse the information. Analysing the content required sorting the data into themes and linking these to the literature. It should be acknowledged though that the gathering of qualitative data in this way tends to both shape and limit the analysis.



#### **3.4.1 THE CASE STUDY**

It was decided to use a case study of Chinese students in South Africa as a basis for exploring South Africa's complicity in ensuring the global dominance of the English language. The students who were chosen to participate in the study are all recent migrants who are currently registered at the following institutions: UWC, CPUT and Northlink College.

Framed around a set of questions that seeks to establish why South Africa has become an attractive international study destination for Chinese students, the study traces the progress of Chinese students from their arrival in South Africa at the language school situated at Northlink College and ultimately on to either the UWC or CPUT. On these three campuses, 30 students were identified and required to complete a questionnaire. However, only 17 respondents, or 56,6%, were available to be interviewed and to complete the questionnaire. A further group of 10 individuals drawn from the ranks of

academics, administrators and teachers rounded off the respondents in this research. In all 27 individuals participated in the research project.

While six of the respondents had been in South Africa for only two months, the others had been here for two years and more. They were chosen from the growing number of students who arrive at Northlink College from China and then proceed to either CPUT or UWC. According to the criteria as laid out by CPUT and UWC, Chinese students should have attained an agreed level of English proficiency – in this case EFL level 5<sup>7</sup> – before proceeding to further study.

A case study, such as the group of students in this research project, is flexible and allows its findings to be applied across many disciplines. This was an added incentive to choose this particular research method. Student migration is a complex global issue and the statistics that are provided are often tainted with bias. The Chen and Barnett (2000) article, for instance, relied exclusively on statistics of student migrant numbers gleaned from UNESCO. Given the obvious limitation in the way that it excluded certain countries from its focus, a qualitative case study approach is able to address the complexities of cross-border migration, reduce it to a small sample and, through its results, create an understanding of the issue that would otherwise not have been possible. The Chinese students in this study offer local readers a glimpse into the reasons they undertake international study options.

In this instance case study research is useful as an exploratory tool and allows the researcher to establish the focus of the study by forming questions about international student movement through using a variety of data gathering methods – such as questionnaires, electronic interviews and unstructured interviews – to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and answers to the research questions. However,

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<sup>7</sup> EFL Level 5 is the Upper Intermediate English competency level which allows a speaker of a foreign language to qualify for his/her FCE (First Certificate in English) or for an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examination which is internationally recognized as the standard for entry to higher education in the English medium.



the case study is limited since it is confined to a relatively small sample of students at three Cape Town institutions and thus the findings are not intended to be generalisable.

### 3.4.2 INTERVIEWS

In addition to completing questionnaires, the seventeen respondents participated in an unstructured interview process, in which the subjects were allowed to express themselves freely. Byrne contends that the term 'qualitative interview' generally refers to in-depth loosely or semi-structured interviews and that qualitative interviews are particularly useful for accessing individuals' attitudes and values (2004: 182). The interviews proved to be invaluable in the process of data generation and its open-ended questions elicited notable variations in the responses.

While some of the administrators were interviewed at their places of work, telephonic and electronic interviews were conducted with a South African government official involved with the diplomatic mission to China as well as with a Chinese Education Ministry official based at the Chinese Consulate in Pretoria.



The interview process was used to generate discussion on the reasons that Chinese students choose to migrate as well as validate their responses in the questionnaire. It is in this part of the research that the role of the researcher assumes greater importance. Posing questions often received measured responses which in itself could be regarded as a limitation as students searched to provide 'correct' answers which were carefully phrased and communicated. The researcher was constantly aware of the participants' desire to provide answers that were grammatically correct demonstrations of their English ability. Where interviews were conducted with more than one participant at a time, students occasionally looked to their fellow respondents to concur with their answers rather than offer an own opinion. The assistance of a Chinese student to interpret did however inspire confidence and discussion in Chinese, often uninhibited and animated, could then be translated into English. This could be construed as a further limitation as some of the important nuances could have been lost in the translation.

### 3.4.3 QUESTIONNAIRES

The questions differed for each of the groups. The aim of the first questionnaire, Appendix A, was to elicit as much general information from the broad corpus of students. The questions would provide answers to their places of origin, their social status, their qualifications, the occupations of their parents and how and why they came to choose South Africa as their destination of study.

A second questionnaire was designed for those individuals who are responsible for registration, administration and tuition of the Chinese students at the three institutions. A key objective of Appendix B was to elicit answers to questions around marketing and recruitment strategies, university entry requirements, how Chinese students adapted in the country, how they fared academically and, critically, their views on the importance of English proficiency as a criterion for transnational student migration.



In one instance a group of six students were administered the questionnaire and supervised by their EFL lecturer, the other 11 students were interviewed randomly, as and when they were available. The members of the focus group also completed a questionnaire (Appendix C) and were individually interviewed and audio recordings made of the interview. The questions in Appendix C were designed to validate the questions posed to the general group in Appendix A. While the questionnaires gave useful insight into the students' places of origin, their social status and their motivation for studying overseas, its most apparent limitation was the students' search for stock and precise answers that lacked the elaboration and substantiation evident in the interview process.

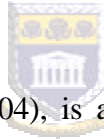
### 3.4.4 DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

Attempts to secure the input of government officials proved to be a significant challenge to the research process. In addition to the busy schedules of these officials their location

in Pretoria constrained accessibility. Electronic exchanges and telephonic interviews did however provide useful information about formal agreements between the South African government and the government of the PRC. These also elicited figures for the number of Chinese students who are currently in South Africa, but critically, it provided documentary evidence of agreements concluded between the two countries and the benefits that would accrue to a country that enjoyed Approved Destination Status.

### **3.4.5 THE FOCUS GROUP**

The focus group was made up of eight of the seventeen student respondents. All were postgraduate students who had been in South Africa for a period of two years or longer. They had been carefully selected on the basis that they had studied and/or worked in China before their arrival in South Africa and that they had had an extended stay in South Africa and were therefore deemed to be able to give more informed responses than the younger, newly-arrived students.



The focus group, suggests Tonkiss (2004), is at the core of the research project. This group assisted the researcher to explore the findings that emerged from the first questionnaire and initial interviews. Group discussions, facilitated by the researcher, produced substantial qualitative data based on group interaction and discussion. With the focus on the group rather than the individuals taking part in the discussion the researcher was able to ‘capture the inherently interactive and communicative nature’ of the group (Tonkiss 2004:198). Employing a focus group in this study was necessary to ensure the validity of the responses in the interviews and questionnaires. As a vehicle for cross-validation, this method of triangulation was used to generate deeper understanding of the issues around student migration.

Tonkiss (2004) argues further that the strength of using a focus group in qualitative research is to be found in the fact that in this approach ‘the unit of analysis is the group, rather than the individuals taking part in the discussion’ (2004: 194).

An inherent limitation of a focus group used in this manner though is its difficulty to access individual opinion. A further limitation was the tendency to exclude the researcher, albeit unintentional, when the group explored a response in their mother-tongue. Doubts can also be cast on the accuracy of the translation that clearly lacked the vigour of the preceding discussions in Chinese.

### **3.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

Chinese student migrants to South Africa are central to the research project. The research started with a literature review that explored some of the debates around the central issue of international student migration and also engaged with the diversity of opinion on the parallel spread of English alongside economic globalization. The readings also provided the foundation for the theoretical position of the paper.

In the days preceding the research students had been identified at Northlink College, CPUT and UWC. Contact was established with foreign students administrators at the three campuses as well as with officials of National Education Ministries in Pretoria. This was followed by the construction of a case study of Chinese students.

Questionnaires were developed and distributed to each of three groups, Chinese students, administrators and a focus group that had been drawn from within the larger body of participants.

The questionnaires and unstructured interviews were used to generate the qualitative data necessary to test the paper's key proposition that South Africa's representing itself as an English destination serves only to further advance the global domination of the English language.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an explanation for the researcher's choice of a qualitative, interview-based methodology. Qualitative case study research used in this manner removes student migration from a statistical, empiricist paradigm and locates it in its human context. Indeed the narratives of the Chinese students, juxtaposed as they were against government agreements and official statistics, allowed the language debate in South Africa to be explored from the unusual angle of international student migration.

In the next chapter the findings of the research are recorded following the interview process and the responses to the questionnaires.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

The data generated in the interviews and with the questionnaires will be discussed within the theoretical framework adopted in the first chapter. This chapter however presents and analyses the key findings of the research.

Students, administrators, teachers and government officials were interviewed and completed questionnaires which on a general level explored a range of issues related to the migration of Chinese students to South Africa while university officials and teachers involved with Chinese students elicited answers of a more quantitative nature, as figures were required for the number of visiting students, the academic directions that were generally taken and the marketing strategies adopted by the three institutions.

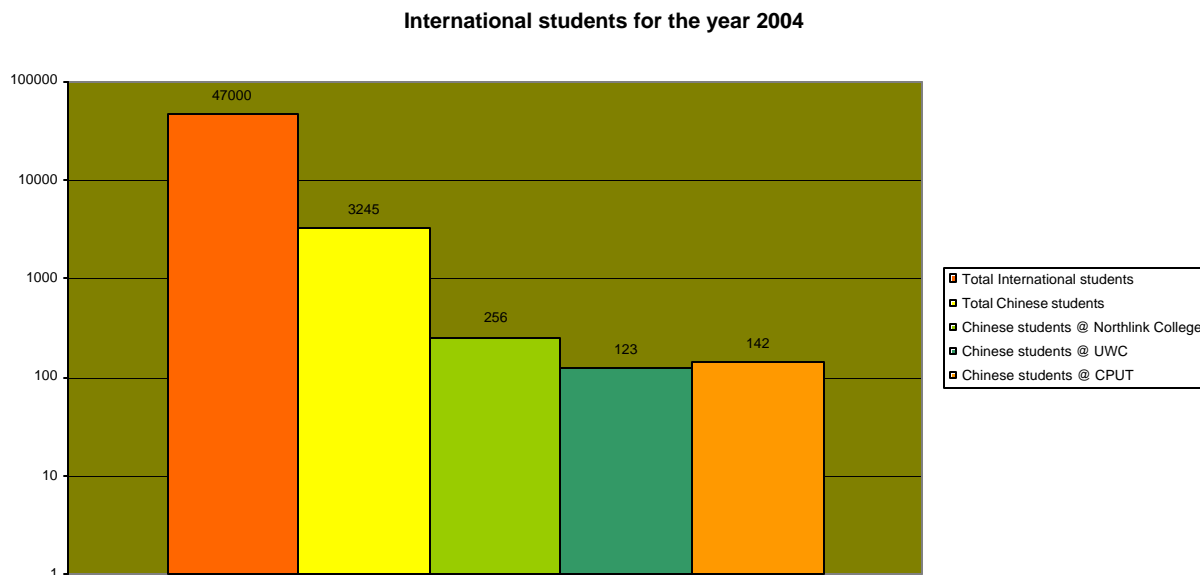
#### **4.2 STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH**

The number of Chinese students who registered at the three institutions over the period 2002-2004 can be broken down as follows:

Northlink College:	256 students
UWC:	123 students
CPUT:	142 students

These figures represent the number of students who had registered up to the end of the 2004 academic year. What needs to be clarified though is that the students would first have registered at the Language School at Northlink College and then proceeded to either CPUT or UWC. The number of students at the three institutions represent sixteen percent of the total number of Chinese students who arrived in South Africa in terms of the agreement between the two countries. Bearing in mind that by 2004 South Africa was

hosting 47 000 international students, the figures can be graphically illustrated in the following way:



<b>Students for the year 2004</b>	
<b>Institute</b>	<b>No. of students</b>
<i>Total International students</i>	47000
<i>Total Chinese students</i>	3245
<i>Chinese students @ Northlink College</i>	256
<i>Chinese students @ UWC</i>	123
<i>Chinese students @ CPUT</i>	142

Using these statistics one can revisit the work of Chen and Barnett (2000). In their research they had placed South Africa on the periphery alongside other host nations using the criterion that these countries had received fewer than 5000 international students in any one year. Given the figure for international students in South Africa for 2004 clearly a reconfiguration of their definition of what constitutes ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ is required. If one considers that in 2001 UWC had registered only three Chinese students<sup>8</sup>, then using this example, the indications are that South Africa has become a significant host for Asian students and for Chinese students in particular. Implicit in South Africa’s

<sup>8</sup> Information supplied by UWC Foreign Students Administration.

development as a host destination is the demand that studies such as those of Chen and Barnett and those conducted by UNESCO review their North American and European bias in favour of a more inclusive theory of global migration patterns.

The study revealed that students varied in age from 18 to 34. While some had only just completed high school in their home country others had obtained a university degree, a partial tertiary education or had a number of years' work experience. The research also established that Chinese students generally chose to study in the fields of Food Technology, Financial Management, Mechanical Engineering, IT and Linguistics.

Given the wide geographical location of the students, the participants represent a fair spread of the information sourced and a sound basis for drawing conclusions on the reasons that Chinese students choose to study in South Africa.

#### **4.3 DIVERSITY OF STUDENT GROUP**



The diversity of opinions, of aspirations, of social class and regionalisms that emerged from the study were a timely reminder that despite a common language Chinese society has its own stratifications.

The respondents in this case study came from several different provinces and cities in the PRC, from major centres such as Beijing and Shanghai to more remote and rural locations such as Urumchi and Inner Mongolia. Social divisions are apparent in, for instance, the many diverse occupations of parents with the more educated and affluent professionals and commercial class, showing a greater propensity to secure foreign education for their children. Consistent with Omelaniuk's (2004) argument that the more educated and entrepreneurial Chinese are constantly looking for expansion and business opportunities and coupled with the relative ease of exit from China nowadays, respondents stated that many who are educated choose to leave their low paid jobs in China to seek greener pastures overseas. Those who cannot do so send their children abroad to enhance their education and job prospects.



With the exception of one, all of the visiting students are responsible for paying their own fees<sup>9</sup>. Those who have work experience indicated that they had saved their resources for the specific purpose of pursuing academic opportunities overseas and hence fund their own studies while the younger respondents' parents or other family members finance their studies.

A critical indicator of their social position was their response to the question on their parents' occupations. One respondent's parents are doctors who work outside of the PRC and it was evident that he was less concerned about financial constraints, lived in a relatively expensive apartment and owned a luxury German car. Even where the parents of interviewees were professionals, such as teachers (two students), chartered accountants (one student) and financial managers (two students) they generally tended to live frugally and repeatedly cited the relatively low cost of studying in South Africa as the major reason why they chose to come here. Regardless of the academic and professional qualifications of parents or relatives, respondents pointed to the comparatively low salaries earned in China as a reason for pursuing overseas study and future employment, the acquisition of English proficiency and the subsequent possibility of higher wages in the Western world as further motivation to leave China.

In his research Laczko (2003) observes that a 1985 law granted ordinary citizens the opportunity to study overseas if they were invited and sponsored (Laczko, 2003: 1). The latter is clearly of little consequence as the students in this survey are self-funded. Chinese student migration is therefore not only driven by the lure of better prospects, indeed students come from all provinces and cities, but rapid economic development means more people are able to pay for their children (Laczko, 2003). Tough entrance examinations and the limited number of places at 'better' universities in China were the reasons advanced by two students for pursuing overseas study options.

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<sup>9</sup> Article 4 of the 2004 Agreement between the Education Ministries of SA and the PRC states that the two countries 'shall encourage their citizens to study as self-paying students'

#### 4.4 PARTICIPATING IN THE GLOBAL TRADE IN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

In spite of their negative views about the US after the Iraq war, for this sample of Chinese students the US was still the most desirable study destination. With the exception of two students, one who chose Canada and another England, as their first choices, students cited high tuition costs and the difficulty of getting into a reputable American university as the reasons they opted for South Africa instead. In the main, the 'traditional' host destinations featured highly on their list of places to study, with at least four respondents acknowledging that they still harbored intentions to study in the US, Australia and England in the future.

Teachers at the language school and administrators made an additional point that immigration laws were more relaxed and none of the students interviewed experienced problems with their visa applications. When a similar question was posed to a Chinese Embassy official, he cited lower tuition fees, the 'high quality' of tuition and the possibility of an English education as the critical factors in the Chinese government's decision to enter into an educational exchange agreement with South Africa.

What then are the implications of this case study for SA in the context of the international trade in educational services? Firstly, for Chinese students, regardless of their social and economic circumstances, the US remains, at least for now, the premier destination. Secondly, the cost of international study is the most significant factor when choosing a foreign place to study and thirdly the lure of studying in the English language remains strong.

South Africa has clearly adopted a commercial approach to its position in the trade in higher education. Having been granted Approved Destination Status South Africa set about securing diplomatic ties with China. In the formal agreement of June 2004 it was confirmed that China would encourage those seeking overseas opportunities to consider

South Africa<sup>10</sup>. According to the Pretoria-based Chinese Consul official in charge of education a series of education exchange undertakings were concluded between the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) and the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE). In terms of the agreement, the official explained, qualifications obtained in the homeland would be recognized and the ‘high quality’ of South African education would be sought to complete formal academic qualifications.

Although Chinese students pay double the tuition fees that local and other African students pay, the knowledge that they are paying more than their classmates is not regarded as unjust as they acknowledged the developmental needs of the country and, compared to other overseas destinations, South Africa still appears to offer value for money. The comparatively low cost of education and the opportunity to learn in English are cited as the most compelling reasons that China has placed South Africa on its list of foreign study destinations.

International student mobility also has much to do with marketing strategies and perceptions. Chinese students are particularly inclined to do research on the internet to assist in their decisions. At least two of the respondents had relied on family members who had been to South Africa to influence their decision. While Chen and Barnett (2000) argue for a relatively stable international student exchange network with core countries remaining at the core and periphery countries doomed to periphery status, it appears that South Africa has, at least in Africa, risen quite rapidly to a prominent position. Elsewhere in this paper it was noted that in 2004 SA hosted 47 000 international students and while the high prevalence of HIV/Aids and crime impacted on international perception, the Chinese respondents in this case study weighed this against an opportunity to enhance their English language skills, the low cost of study and the opportunity to gain an internationally recognized qualification.

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<sup>10</sup> Article 3 of the Agreement between the National Dept of Education and the Chinese Ministry of Education (2004) reads: ‘The Parties shall encourage various exchanges among their institutions of higher education for educational purposes including visits of academics, experts and students’.

#### 4.5 STUDENT RESPONSES REFLECT ENGLISH DOMINATION AND HEGEMONY

China's decision to join the WTO in 2001 appears to have fuelled the prospect of migration and with a massive international event such as the Olympics due to be hosted in China in 2008, Power (2005) suggests that China's 'English fever has been elevated to epidemic proportions' (*Newsweek International*, March 2005). So intense is the desire to learn to speak English that the language is now being learned at a younger age. While the data in this research revealed that Chinese learners have their first encounter with English at the age of 12 or 13 in middle school, Power (2005) states that that has changed within a short space of time as a result of the 2008 Olympic Games and membership of the WTO. The language has been introduced with much vigour at primary school level.

The importance of WTO membership and trading with the English-speaking world is captured in the response of one of the students:



*I think it is very important to speak English because, for our country, we have just [joined] the WTO. It needs a large number of people to speak English to foreigners.*

(Student 5, March 2005)

Membership of the WTO, an important symbol of Western capitalism, and the implied association of capitalist success with command of the English language, is evidence of what Painter (2002) describes as the intimate connection of English to forms of economic power, especially the 'domination of the world by Western capital, cultural and political interests' (Painter, 2002: 3).

The desire to learn English has taken root so profoundly in Chinese urban society that in 2004 primary schools in major cities began offering English already in the third grade (Power, 2005). So keen are the Chinese to learn English that they are importing English

teachers from India for the approximately 100 million children learning the language (Power, 2005).

This study with its focus on the micro level (as opposed to the macro studies of Chen et al, 2000 and Larsen et al, 2002) suggests that any academic debate on the global domination of English has to, therefore, be informed by the expediency shown by Chinese people. This is not the classic case of the language dominating as a consequence of or a means for Anglo-American economic expansion. The Chinese respondents were very clear that they would use the acquisition of English to enhance the ascendancy of China in the global world. Although China is still a developing country, it has over the last few decades become one of the most influential nations on earth. As a result of its vast and rapidly increasing economic power, China is expected to be the world's largest economy by GDP in the first decade of this century, and it has become more assertive in the international arena as a result of its status as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council and its increasingly dominant position in Asia.

More than half of the respondents expressed the view that mastery of the English language and participation in the global market affords an opportunity to challenge the domination of the US in the world economy. China, the students believe, is the only country that currently - and in the future - holds the resources and the determination to challenge US domination. So while there are debates that linguistic hegemony is consistent with world economic and political performance (Phillipson, 1996, Alexander & Bloch, 2004) as in the case of the UK and US, and while there is a case to be made for the argument that the core-periphery relationship is reflected in and determined by the present hegemonic relationship that characterizes the global world (Kim, 2002), Chinese students are presenting a new, more compelling case that they are not just passive absorbers of the language, the helpless victims of the new colonialism to which Kim (Kim, 2002) refers, rather the participants in the case study see English acquisition as an empowering tool with which to challenge, to educate, to trade and to penetrate new markets. One participant made the incisive remark that command of the English language implied that he could:

*...do business and travel all over the world.*

(Student 2, March 2005)

Hardly any consideration was given to the fact that English is only used as a first language by a small percentage of the world's population. Indeed this is precisely what defines English hegemony. If, as the respondents in this study argue that English acquisition equals economic and social power, then the implication for their own language must be disempowering. That the respondents attach greater significance to English as the language of global commercial prosperity could be a sign that they are '...losing faith in the value of their home languages' (Alexander and Bloch, 2004: 2).

#### **4.6 SOUTH AFRICA AS AN ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH DESTINATION**

As in the case of the bigger group the students came from different cities and had different reasons for choosing South Africa as a study destination. Only one student had made a prior application, but had been refused entry to study in England:



*I was refused entry to England. I don't know why my application was turned down. But I'm happy about my choice. South Africa is a cheaper study destination. Many parents want their children to learn English.*

(Student 3, March 2005)

This last point was to be echoed by other members of the focus group in response to the question: What motivated you to choose South Africa? Six of the eight students cited an opportunity to learn English and to learn in an English environment as critical to their choice of study destination. That South Africa was a 'cheaper' alternative and that entry requirements were less stringent are listed as secondary reasons:

*First, English is (the) government's language in South Africa. When I study here ... I can improve my English.*

(Student 2, March 2005)

*First, SA is an English-speaking country and the study fees are cheaper than [that] of other countries.*

(Student 10, March 2005)

When the question was broached on who funds their studies, the focus group replied that, with the exception of one student, they are entirely self-funded. Three students who had worked in China were paying for their own studies while the rest were sponsored by their parents. One student at CPUT received financial assistance from the institution. From the discussions and the questionnaire, it is evident that there is a perception among Chinese students that the acquisition of English is liberating and offers unlimited access to global economic institutions and the social world:

*It [English] will help me to get a job easily ... and I can go anywhere in the world.*



(Student 3, March 2005)

*English is absolutely very important. If you can speak English you can travel all over the world...English is the most popular language...*

(Student 6, March 2005)

These views of the respondents are consistent with Painter's (2002) assessment of the neo-liberal conception of a global lingua franca. Neo-liberals, argues Painter (2002), regard the spread of the language as beneficial to the people of the world since English 'gives people access to the products that they want and because it is itself a product people want' (Painter, 2002: 2). Within the neo-liberal interpretation, echoed by the Chinese participants in this study, the current spread of English is not a new form of colonialism but an act of 'political liberation' (Painter, 2002: 2).

The English-speaking world's control over the print and electronic media also provides it with a potent weapon able to reach into the farthest, most remote, corners of the globe. From the interviews it is apparent that young Chinese not only recognize, but also identify with Western, and especially US, media symbols. These further entrench the hegemony of English. Indeed Chinese students studying in South Africa share with some students from other parts of the world a perception that a command of the English language allows them to share in the perceived successes of the English-speaking world. These successes are personified by sports personalities and commercial brands. Names such as David Beckham and Michael Jordan<sup>11</sup> and brands such as Nike and Coca Cola have rapidly ascended in importance in the psyche of younger Chinese people. And while older students denied emulating these Western media images, they acknowledged their allure for Chinese youth.

Much of the data generated in the study, it is evident, emerged from the social interaction, discussion and keen debate and reflect what Tonkiss (2004) suggests are the 'social and cultural processes through which meaning, opinions and attitudes are shaped' (Tonkiss, 2004: 205). The 'social and cultural processes' are mirrored in the final question posed to the focus group on how people in their hometowns perceive the acquisition of English language skills. What emerged is that they valued the opinions of family and friends and this in turn shaped their attitudes to the language:

*If I came home with a beautiful English accent my friends  
and family would say I have a bright future.*

(Student 3, March 2004)

*In my opinion, they would be proud of my English.*

(Student 6, March 2004)

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<sup>11</sup> David Beckham is a European football player, feted by the Western media for his lifestyle and physical appearance rather than his prowess on the football pitch, while Michael Jordan was a highly-paid basketball personality who was touted by the US media as the greatest player in the history of the game. Both these men are hero-worshipped in Asia (and other parts of the world), largely as a result of their constant media presence.



## 4.7 CONCLUSION

As one reflects on the findings of this research what stands out is the strong desire of Chinese students to master the English language and to adopt some of its attendant cultural practices. Whether that means eating with a knife and fork or, as many Chinese students do, adopt an English name upon arrival in their host country, the critical point is that Chinese students are determined to obtain a Western, English education.

South Africa is perceived as an English host. And by a marketing South Africa as an English destination, educational institutions are propelling the language to the ‘top of the global linguistic pyramid’ (Alexander, 2004: 2).

On another level Chinese student narratives effectively removed student migration from the quantitative, statistical location favoured by academics such as Chen and Barnett (2000) while simultaneously challenging the view that English is the language of choice of only the elite in Chinese society. This study, limited as it is by its size and location, found that there has been a notable shift in the way that Chinese students from urban centres view their position in the world.

The Chinese economic boom has indeed stimulated migration from China (Omelaniuk, 2004). Education and job prospects abroad, participants in this study maintain, would be enhanced through the acquisition of English. As traditional study destinations have become more circumspect in terms of their migration policies, other destinations, that offer education of a ‘high quality’, present attractive alternatives. Student responses revealed that South Africa affords Chinese students uncomplicated access to the academic paths they wish to pursue and importantly also the opportunity to acquire and improve their English language skills. This, in turn, they believe will enhance their job prospects and, by implication, their chances in the global economy.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In writing this paper the intention was to explore some of the reasons that Chinese students choose to study in South Africa and to see whether marketing South Africa as an English destination further inflates the symbolic capital of global English.

That South Africa has emerged on the international stage as a significant provider of higher education services is indisputable and is confirmed in the many bilateral agreements concluded in recent years, not least of which is the formal Agreement concluded by the Chinese Ministry of Education and the South African Department of Education in June of 2004. In essence this document seals an arrangement in which South Africa would serve as an English host to Chinese students who are seeking international academic qualifications<sup>12</sup>. As a consequence of the diplomatic manoeuvring South Africa received over three thousand Chinese students in the period 2002 – 2004.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSION FROM THE STUDY**

The study, divided as it was into a general group of students, a focus group and group of teachers and administrators, produced significant findings with regard to South Africa's status as a host destination.

The responses of the students as well a diplomat in charge of education point very clearly to the fact that the country has emerged as a cost-effective, amiable, uncomplicated English destination, a very real alternative to the 'traditional' study destinations which in recent times – against a backdrop of the 'war on terror' appear to have forged an alliance.

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<sup>12</sup> Article 4 of the Agreement on educational co-operation reads "The Parties shall encourage their citizens to study, as self-paying students, at the other's educational institutions, and lend assistance to them with regard to gaining access to these institutions so as to enable them to receive high quality education."

Australia, the US and the UK are still desirable, yet Chinese students cite the changed stance of this alliance in the post 9/11 period, and especially after the destruction of Iraq, as an opportunity to contemplate alternative destinations. Even a high crime rate and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS would not deter them from pursuing their studies in South Africa<sup>13</sup>.

That there is a perception among the Chinese students that acquisition of and mastery of the English language is empowering can, however, also be contested. Alexander and Bloch have argued that it is important to distinguish domination from hegemony, for while the idea that English proficiency allows for effective participation in the global economy is prevalent among the students of this case study, the opposite is equally true in that it can have a ‘disempowering effect ... a kind of social pathology’ (Alexander & Bloch, 2004: 2). Indeed the notion that English equals access to the global economy and, by implication, power can be rebutted as the global currency of English has been used to justify the displacement and racialisation of other local languages (Painter, 2002). This is the critically important revelation of this small study – that English is still



intimately connected to forms of colonial power, especially the domination of the world by Western capital, cultural and political interests (Painter, 2002: 3).

As the PRC has the largest population in the world and is destined to be the next ‘superpower’, the South African state appears to have taken up position itself alongside the many other states who are queuing up to do business with the PRC.

As far as education is concerned and, given the Chinese penchant for sending their children to study overseas, an opportunity arose for South Africa to offer educational services. In the words of a Chinese Embassy official, ‘(English) is very important. It is one of the main factors that attracts Chinese students to South Africa’. This is the most

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<sup>13</sup> Much of their information prior to their arrival in SA Chinese student respondents appeared to have obtained from international news bulletins that highlight SA’s crime rate and the high incidence of HIV/Aids.

critical finding - that South Africa is perceived by Chinese students as an English destination, one in which HEIs present their programmes in English thereby creating the conditions in which learning for a Chinese student holds much the same challenges as it would for a native speaker of an African language.

### **5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

While student migration, tied as it is to the spread of global capital, and skewed as it is in favour of the developed, information-rich societies, is vigorously studied in Europe, North America and Australia this is not the case in South Africa. As the new democratic state emerges from its apartheid, pariah past to participate in the global economy and in transnational academic exchange programmes, the next few years abound with opportunity and critical challenges to South African higher education institutions.

Its relatively short relationship with the PRC witnessed some 3 245 Chinese students arriving to study here<sup>14</sup>. This has certainly thrown up new possibilities for HEIs to enter into exchange agreements, source scarce skills and enter into academic exchange programmes. Chinese migration also presents an opportunity to review the nature of trade agreements. While each of these represents its own research opportunities the arrival of Chinese students in South Africa has focused, anew, attention on the dilemma of language in South Africa. Chinese students have come here because they were presented with an opportunity to learn in English. Higher education is overwhelmingly English and business is conducted in English thus perpetuating the dominant position of the language at the expense of indigenous languages.

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<sup>14</sup> Figure kindly supplied by the Chinese Consulate in Pretoria.

## 5.4 CONCLUSION

Despite the inflated status of English, the language is still only spoken by a minority of the South African population. However, there is a powerful perception in South Africa, as there is in many parts of the globe, that command of English gives unfettered access to the global economy. The Chinese respondents in this study shared that view.

This qualitative study, with its small sample of student migrants, uncovered important considerations for future research. The unstructured interviews and questionnaires exposed fault lines and contradictions in South Africa's current policy and planning. On the one hand there are vigorous calls to resist the marginalization of indigenous languages and for an equitable linguistic dispensation, while on the other the country's participation in global business and the trade in educational services actually affirms the hegemonic position of English.

As South Africa's Department of Education and its institutions position themselves strategically for a slice of the lucrative trade in education services they need to realize that, as they promote the former colonial language, they are providing the impetus for the global currency of English, and for the continued subordination and alienation of its own indigenous languages. This study, it is hoped, will add to the ongoing discourse on international student migration and, importantly also, to the language debate which threatens to be the Achilles' heel of the new democracy.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**STUDENT RESPONDENTS**

**GENDER ..... AGE .....**

**HOME TOWN ..... PROVINCE .....**

**EDUCATION QUALIFICATION .....**

1. What motivated you to seek study opportunities outside of your home country?

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2. Which countries did you consider as possible destinations for furthering your studies?

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3. Why did you not pursue these options?

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4. What factors were in South Africa's favour that made you decide to choose this country?

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5. Did anyone, a friend or relative, influence your decision to choose SA? Please explain.

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6. Why do you think thousands of Chinese students choose to pursue their studies overseas?

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7. How are your studies financed?

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8. What are the occupations of your parents?

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9. What are their educational qualifications?

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10. Do you think it is important to do a course in English before you embark on further study?

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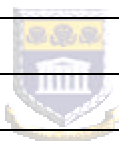
11. What exposure did you have to the English language in your home country?

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12. How important do you think it is to be able to speak English ?

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13. What are you planning to study beyond the English course?

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14. What do you hope to do upon completion?

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15. Would you consider making SA your home? Why?

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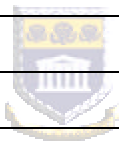
16. If you had a choice, where else would you have studied?

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17. How does South African higher education compare with Chinese higher education?

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18. Are there any other comments you would like to make about SA as a study destination?

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PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE INFORMATION GATHERED IN THIS DOCUMENT IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND YOUR ANONYMITY IS GUARANTEED.

Sincere thanks

Goolam Pandit



**APPENDIX B**

**QUESTIONS FOR ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.**

**INSTITUTION:** .....

1. How many Chinese students enrolled at this institution in the period 2002 – 2004?

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2. What is the required level of English proficiency for entry?

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3. How do students get here? Through marketing strategies? Agents? Diplomatic arrangement? Please explain.

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4. How do our tertiary institutions compare internationally considering that we are regarded as being on the periphery of host nations?

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5. What would you say are the factors that attract Chinese students?

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6. Which faculties are popular with Chinese students?



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7. How are their studies financed, generally?

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8. Is it more profitable to have Chinese/International students on our campuses?

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9. How do Chinese students fare academically? Socially?

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10. How important do you think it is that we are regarded as an 'English' destination?

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PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE INFORMATION GATHERED IN THIS DOCUMENT IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND YOUR ANONYMITY IS GUARANTEED.

Sincere thanks

Goolam Pandit

## APPENDIX C.

### QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP.

1. What motivated you to choose South Africa and this institution in particular?  
Where else would you have studied?

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2. What is it that SA offers that drew you here?

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3. How is SA perceived internationally or in your home country?

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4. How important, do you think, is it to be able to speak English? Explain.

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5. Do you have any prior exposure to English? Where did you first encounter the language and how would you rate the quality of English education that you received?

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6. How do the people you know back home regard the acquisition of English?

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