

The Impact of Educational Reform on China's Magazines for Teaching English

Jianping Lu

Institute of Media for Foreign Language Teaching

Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Tel: 86-571-8820-6044 E-mail: lillianjian@hotmail.com

Ann E. Auman (Corresponding author)

School of Communications, University of Hawai'i-Manoa

2550 Campus Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, USA

Tel: 1-808-956-3786 E-mail: auman@hawaii.edu

Received: January 24, 2011 Accepted: February 27, 2011 doi:10.5296/ije.v3i1.566

Abstract

This paper examines the effect of China's government education policy reform, adopted in 2001, on English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English to young people. This "Character Education" reform occurred when globalization and economic decentralization were transforming China. In response, teaching methods and curricula for teaching English were being revamped. In this study, four of the most popular publications for teaching English to young people were analyzed over a 10-year time period. Three of the four adapted their formats and content, and one changed its name to *Crazy English*. The publications that succeeded were targeted to readers' increasingly diversified needs and demands. The future of these publications is also discussed.

Keywords: Education in China, Educational reform, ESL, Magazines

1. Introduction

In China, the production of English-language magazines and periodicals used to teach English make up a special group of publications that have evolved into a large industry. In 2009, magazines for teaching English to secondary and middle school students accounted for more than 40 different titles with nearly 80 different editions. All of these were overseen by the government and were marked with China Unified Serial Numbers, indicating that they were government-sanctioned publications in China. The majority of these magazines were targeted to secondary and middle school teachers to use in their curricula and to students studying for the Entrance Exams for Senior Middle Schools and Universities. Some magazines even had names closely related to these entrance exams.

However, these magazines, which had a relatively loyal readership and stable number of subscribers, were subject to more government restrictions and monitoring than other Chinese magazines. They were affected by policies issued by China's Ministry of Education and were monitored by China's General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), while facing competition from peer publications such as English-language newspapers, weeklies and the Internet.

2. Educational Reform and its Impact on Publications

In the 1980s, the need for teaching materials that would help students prepare for English-language university entrance exams in China spurred the growth of English-language magazines and periodicals. These were geared toward the teaching methods and curricula at that time. Traditional teaching methods, some of which have their roots in Confucius and Han Yu, had encouraged teachers to guide and enlighten students, promote academic development and good moral behavior (Zhang and Watkins, 2007). In the past, the focus was more on knowledge transmission from teacher to student in a situated context (Chan and Rao, 2009) in preparation for national examinations. However, 20 years later, with changing theories of learning and teaching, the emphasis moved toward student-centered knowledge construction that was sociocultural, situational and contextual (Biggs in Chan and Rao, 2009). These reforms were the result of China's increasingly globalized economy and society and consequently the need to improve English-language instruction at all levels. Zhang and Watson (2007) note that attention given to foreign language competence in China was growing and had reached an "all-time high" after China entered the World Trade Organization in 2001 and put in a bid for the Olympics in 2008. More college graduates with English proficiency were in demand for the international economy. But English proficiency among college graduates was poor because there was an insufficient connection between university and high school and middle school English instruction, according to Jin and Jin (2008). The effectiveness of English-teaching and supporting materials were increasingly scrutinized at all levels, and a debate ensued on how best to promote English language competency from middle school through university.

In 2001 the Ministry of Education took a step forward and instituted the "Character Education" concept, which resulted in national educational reform, including the English-teaching curriculum. The policy encouraged students to develop their character in an

all-round way and make progress “actively and healthily” (Li Lanqing, 2004). The concept was put forward to criticize the way that education had been focused on examinations, and educators were directed to make a rational change from the national examination-oriented education model to a student-centered format that was relevant to their lives. “Character Education” generally advocates that education should be based on the personal development of students and as well as advancing lifelong learning in society. Educators were directed to use every means, including revising textbooks and encouraging supplementary materials such as magazines, to help students to reach their own potential. At the same time, the Ministry of Education issued *The Outline of the Reform of Basic Education* and *The National Curriculum Standard — the Curriculum Standard for the Subject of English*. From then on, competition was encouraged among creators and publishers of English textbooks for secondary and middle school students. For the first time, educators in China had hundreds of textbooks to select from.

Students were encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning, solve problems and read content relevant to their lives. In addition, global issues had become increasingly important in students’ lives as China grew in international importance and responsibility, and these were reflected in content and presentation of the publications. National exams were revised, and more emphasis was put on reading comprehension rather than grammar-translation and mechanical exercises (Jin and Jin, 2008; Jin, Singh and Li, 2005).

English-teaching magazines responded in different ways to the policy reforms because Chinese educational systems were, as Biggs notes, “embracing global aims and practices of education while striking an interacting balance with Chinese beliefs about teaching and learning” (Biggs 2009 in Chan and Rao, xii.) Magazines and periodicals that had previously been created to support and supplement English-language instruction were challenged and revamped. This paper theorizes that these publications, with their revised student-centered, contextually based focus, were important supplemental teaching materials that supported a government policy encouraging students to gain more practical knowledge of English. This included relating international content to their personal lives as China entered the global arena and English became important as the language of consumer culture.

This paper builds on evidence and theory by Sampredo and Hillyard (2004), who advocate expanding English-language learning to include global issues because of their relevance to students’ lives and experiences as global consumers. The point of learning English as foreign language is to be able to communicate in English, which is the “principle vehicle of global consumerism” (Sampedro and Hillyard, 2004: 3). They view “...language as a natural vehicle for fostering cross-cultural, cross-boundary understanding and for raising awareness on global and social issues” (2004: 6). They also note that learning English through critical analysis of global issues “is not trivial” like some of the narrowly focused exercise-based content of English teaching textbooks. This study connects this theory with concepts suggested by Zhang and Watson (2007) that educational reform has come about with China’s entry into the international arena. It shows that several key English-teaching magazines and periodicals in China were changed in order to promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness by internationalizing their content and presentation while adapting to an

increasingly competitive and decentralized market economy.

Even while China was becoming more “globalized,” localization of the national exam system was also a consequence of education reform that allowed decentralization — particularly in the larger international cities — and forced these publications to change. In 1998, Shanghai became the first city in China that offered its own entrance exam for universities instead of using national ones. Later, some cities and provinces — Beijing, Tianjin, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shandong — followed Shanghai’s lead. In 2010, critics of the national unified Entrance Exams for Colleges and Universities said the national exams should be cancelled in favor of the provincial and private exams. English-language magazines and periodicals published as teaching materials had been geared toward these national unified entrance exams, so any changes in these exams threatened their survival unless they adapted.

Next, this paper reviews the growth and development of English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English in China and compares them before and after the adoption of the “Character Education” concept. Four different types of magazines and periodicals for teaching English that have CN numbers were selected, and the content was analyzed to determine the impact of “Character Education” reform.

3. Environment and Language Acquisition

The role of the environment, or what has been called literacy ecology (Wagner, 1993), has been emphasized in language acquisition (Sehlaoui, 2001). In the context of learning English as a foreign language, there has been a growing recognition among scholars that broad, “extensive” reading, which could include reading about local and global culture and society, provides important opportunities for second-language (L2) development in a second-language learner (Day and Bamford, 2004). This is particularly true where English is the foreign language being taught, and in which resources for learning English are limited (Gebhard, 1996). According to Day and Bamford, “Extensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language” (2004: 1). Students can choose what they like and read it independently. Extensive reading is meant to be enjoyable with words that are familiar to the student, although a few new ones are included. Extensive reading helps students become more confident readers, and their spoken language abilities also improve.

Richek, List & Lerner (1989) note that “reading is a process of constructing meaning through dynamic interaction between the reader and the text and context of the reading situation (p. 617).” They point out that the context of EFL/ESL reading is the environmental and social milieu of the readers — home, school and social group. Therefore, EFL/ESL learners need materials to read in and after school. Usually, they will take their textbooks as their priority reading materials. But apparently textbooks are not enough for them to build up a more “soaked-in” or immersed environment (Jiang, 2004) where they can have more opportunities to “be with this foreign language” culturally and intellectually. In other words, when in a healthy learning milieu, EFL/ESL learners will not be satisfied with merely textbooks, and they would look for supplementary materials about their personal, and increasingly globalized, world. English-language magazines and periodicals created for teaching English

in China represent these supplementary learning and instructional materials (Lu, 2009).

These materials are appreciated and welcomed by English learners and their instructors in China because the material and information they provide is authentic, updated, extensive and practical (Yong, 2004). Many model tests from these magazines and periodicals have been used by middle school teachers in their classes to strengthen students' knowledge beyond their textbooks and classrooms. Passages from English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English are usually used as materials in reading and vocabulary classes in middle schools and universities. Some universities and colleges even hold competitions on the reading and comprehension of English-language newspapers and magazines. Studies on these supplemental materials are limited, and few have analyzed the changes they have undergone since the adoption of "Character Education," or of changes made as a result of changes in exams. This study adds to this literature because it surveys a sample of these magazines and periodicals and analyzes the impact on them of "Character Education" in a global, competitive context.

4. English-Language Magazines and Periodicals for Teaching

The first English-language periodical for teaching English in China was named *English Language Learning*, established in 1958 by Professor Xu Guozhang from the University of Beijing Foreign Language Studies. In the 1980s, as China began to open its doors more to the rest of the world, mastery of English was encouraged. English textbooks were highly needed but in short supply. As it took time to create textbooks, English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English found their niche. The late 1980s saw the growth of English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English. Generally, these English-teaching magazines and periodicals can be classified into four types: "intensive," "extensive," "journal" and "mixed" magazines and periodicals.

The "intensive" magazines and periodicals for teaching English are magazines that are closely linked to textbooks and act as supplementary materials that offer exercises and explanations in English grammar, English usage and comprehension. These magazines and periodicals are targeted to secondary or middle school students and teachers. Up to 2001, students in secondary and middle schools in China used the same unified English teaching material nationwide to prepare for national exams — namely, textbooks compiled by the People's Education Press and monitored by the State Education Commission (after 1998, the Ministry of Education). Before 2001, "intensive" magazines for teaching English such as *English Journal for Middle School Students*, *A School Garden of English*, *English Pictorial* and *English Coaching*, sold very well precisely because they were closely related to these textbooks.

The "extensive" magazines for teaching English have always provided more advanced and broader reading passages that go beyond the standard grammar-type exercises for new English language students. These have included magazines such as *English Language Learning*, *English World*, *English Salon*, *College English* and *The Knowledge of English*. These magazines provide their readers with selected reading passages with Chinese translation alongside and new words highlighted and explained in footnotes. The readers of

the “extensive” magazines for teaching English tend to be English-language enthusiasts or amateur learners of English who already have some knowledge of English. They read the magazines to strengthen their linguistic sense of English, enlarge their vocabulary and expand their knowledge about the world through reading English. The “extensive” magazines for teaching English have a solid circulation base and have always sold well.

The “journal” magazines for teaching English have been produced mainly for secondary and middle school teachers. They contain scholarly articles written by English teachers or learners, providing them with space to express and share ideas about teaching or learning English. Besides essays and articles, these magazines contain some selected sample test papers to help teachers design tests for their students. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* and *English Teaching & Research Notes* are two examples. These two journal magazines are published by Beijing Normal University and Huadong Normal University (Shanghai) respectively. They have a loyal group of readers.

The “mixed” magazines for teaching English are comprehension and fun magazines that are based on the textbooks and teaching materials that students use at school, but there is some space for articles designed to arouse readers’ interest in English and enlarge their knowledge and broaden their worldview. *English Square* and *New Oriental English* fall into this category.

4.1. Government Oversight and Structure of the Magazines

Official, or “legal,” English magazines and periodicals for teaching English in China, are overseen and administered by government authorities. These are usually presses or publishing houses supervised by a municipal or provincial publication board that is, in turn, supervised by China’s General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP). Administratively, each English-language magazine or periodical for teaching English, like other magazines and periodicals, has to follow the rules and regulations set by the GAPP or each municipal and provincial publication board to maintain their legal status, or, to be more specific, to keep their China Unified Serial Number.

5. Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions in order to gain understanding of how four types of magazines changed with educational policy reform.

- 1) Did the number of different editions of all magazines in four categories change over time and why?
- 2) Did the number of pages devoted to different content areas change between 1997 or 1999 and 2009?

The study also briefly examined evidence of more international content, and noted any significant changes in design.

6. Method

For this study, sample magazines and periodicals for teaching English were examined before and after the adoption of the “Character Education” reform, and changes were noted. First, the study documented the number of editions of 40 magazine titles representing four categories or types of magazines that existed before and after “Character Education” (See Table 1: Changes in editions of four categories of magazines). These four categories represent: “intensive,” “extensive,” “journal” and “mixed” publications.

Table 1. Change in editions

Categories of magazines (40 different titles)	No. of editions in 1999 N = 51 editions	No. of editions in 2009 N = 79 editions
“Intensive” English	30	30
“Extensive” English	10	30
“Journal” English	5	8
“Mixed” Teaching	6	11

The change in the number of editions of four different types of English-language magazines for teaching English before and after the 2001 reforms.

Second, four of the most popular of the 40 different magazines that supplement English teaching were selected in 2009 and compared with their editions from at least 10 years earlier (1997 or 1999). Of these four, three were chosen because they had appeared to have changed significantly in content and format: *English Pictorial*, *English Coaching* — later called *Crazy English* — and *Foreign Language Teaching in School*. The fourth one chosen — *A School Garden of English* — had made minor changes in content; however, it did significantly increase the number of editions. These four also were chosen as representatives of the four categories. They are, respectively: *A School Garden of English* (intensive), *English Coaching* (*Crazy English* — extensive), *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* (journal) and *English Pictorial* (mixed).

Then the four sample publications were analyzed along seven content areas common to most of them, such as grammar exercises, tests or reading comprehension, and the number of pages of each area that appeared in each publication was documented (see Table 2: Number of pages devoted to seven subjects in four sample English magazines). These were the seven content areas in the four categories or types of publications:

Intensive category of publication

- (1) Tests
- (2) Pragmatic analysis and explanation
- (3) Grammar exercises
- (4) Reading exercises

Extensive category

- (5) Reading for fun
- (6) Compositions or essays

Journal

(6) Compositions or essays

Mixed (intensive plus extensive)

(7) Other types of content

Table 2. Number of pages

	Tests		Pragmatic analysis & explan.		Grammar exercises		Reading exercises		Reading for fun		Composition or essay		Others	
	97/99	09	97/99	09	97/99	09	97/99	09	97/99	09	97/99	09	97/99	09
Magazine title														
<i>English Pictorial Senior One</i>	6	0	7.5	4	4	0	2	2	14	25	1.5	1	3	2
<i>English Coaching (Crazy English) (Middle School)</i>	4	0	17	0	15	0	2	0	8	54	1	5	3	7
<i>A School Garden of English</i>	12	29	26	16	0	13	8	4	2	1	0	0	1.5	3
<i>Foreign language Teaching in Schools</i>	10.5	5	10.5	0	0	14	0	3	1	0	11	26	1	2

A catalog comparing the number of pages devoted to seven content areas in four sample English magazines for teaching English in 1997/1999 and 2009.

7. Results and Analysis

After education reform, many “intensive” English-language magazines for teaching English changed their design, content and number of editions and pages to have more variety, similar to the “extensive” ones. Before reform in 2001, there were 40 magazine titles with 51 editions, and 30 out of the 51 editions were “intensive” magazines that taught the mechanics of English, such as grammar (see Table 1). Ten of the 51 were “extensive” magazines that had more variety in content; five were journals for teachers and six were “mixed” magazines that supplemented English-language instruction with mechanical exercises as well as photos and more variety in reading passages (see Table 1).

After reform, more editions of each original were added. Most of the magazines divided their readers into different grades, creating between three and five editions of the same title of each magazine and periodical. For example, *English Pictorial* and *A School Garden of English* had editions for Junior Grade One, Junior Grade Two, Junior Grade Three, and Senior Grade One, Senior Grade Two, Senior Grade Three. *English Coaching (Crazy English)* had a Middle School edition, Reading edition and Teacher edition, and *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* had editions for elementary school and middle school students and for teachers.

The number of editions of all magazines increased to 79 by 2009 (see Table 1). The number of editions in the “extensive” category increased from 10 to 30; the number of “journal” English editions increased from five to eight, and the number that were “mixed” rose from six to 11 editions. However, the number of editions in the “intensive” category remained the same at 30, but these accounted for a smaller percentage of the total number of English magazines in 2009. This means there was a decrease in the relative percentage of magazines that focused on the pragmatic and mechanical instruction of English grammar and vocabulary with tests and exercises.

The majority of the magazines also increased the number of pages. For example, *English Coaching* and *A School Garden of English* increased from 50 pages to 66, including the front and back covers. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* increased its number of pages from 34 pages to 50, including the cover pages. But *English Pictorial* dropped to 34 pages from 38, including the cover pages. Among the four magazines, three increased the number of editions offered: *English Pictorial*, *English Coaching (Crazy English)* and *A School Garden of English*.

The content in three of the four magazines became more entertaining, with more extensive reading activities. *Crazy English* even changed its name to be more student-centered and to send the message that learning English can be fun.

The results show that in the late 1990s, the English teaching magazines were designed around the unified textbooks with the topics focused on pragmatic explanation and grammar analysis, and with contents stressing tests and exercises (“intensive reading”). (See Table 2: Number of pages devoted to subject areas in four sample magazines). Many reading passages in these magazines also had exercises with them. Few pages with topics for fun or enjoyment (“extensive” reading), such as popular culture, sports or films, were offered — only 25 or 11.1 percent of the total content of all the magazines in the study. In the past, *English Pictorial (Senior One)* published more entertaining pages (14), making up 36.8 percent of the total editorial content of this magazine, a far larger percentage of entertaining content compared with the content of the other three magazines.

By 2009, all four sample magazines had made a big adjustment in their content, mainly increasing the percentage of pages devoted to reading for entertainment to an average 32.93 percent of all the magazines. Among the four sample magazines, *English Pictorial (Senior One)* devoted 25 pages (73.5 percent of its pages) to reading for entertainment, and *Crazy English* (originally *English Coaching*) had 54 pages, up from 8 (81.8 percent). One publication, *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools*, no longer published any reading-for-fun

passages, and ran mainly academic articles of interest to EFL teachers. In 2009, the editors more than doubled the number of pages of the magazine allocated to academic articles compared with the amount in 1997. In 2009, academic articles took up 52 percent (26 pages), compared with 32.4 percent (11 pages) in 1997. These changes gave prominence to the magazine's purpose as a platform for secondary and middle school teachers to exchange their teaching ideas and experience.

In 2006, *English Coaching* stopped including tests, explanations and exercises, which altered its quality and type from "intensive" to an "extensive" magazine for teaching English. Its name was also changed to *Crazy English* to distance itself from being an "intensive" magazine. Many of the magazines began increasing the number of pages for entertainment and interest and included Chinese translations, but *A School Garden of English* did the opposite and added pages for 1) tests (up 19 percent), and 2) pragmatic plus reading exercises (up 9.75 percent).

Crazy English, which had the most dramatic changes, continued in 2010 to offer entertaining reading on both global and local culture and news. Here are some examples of its sections and stories in 2010, with color and black and white photos and graphics. Sections cover lifestyle, business, popular culture, literature, adventure and discovery. "English fun factory" explains English words. CDs were with podcasts and activities in English were also included:

Entertainment: "Hot movie: Alice in Wonderland," "ACG Club: The Most Anticipated Games of 2010," "Cary Mulligan: The New Audrey Hepburn"

Feature: "Runner-Up for Person of the Year 2009: The Chinese worker," "What it means to be Green," "Peru's Mountain People Face Fight for Survival in a Bitter Winter."

People: "The Man behind the Google Doodle."

Planet Travel: "Bled, Slovenia — Simply Breathtaking!"; "Poland: Time to move on"

Global News Link: "AP Voted Top Ten News of Year 2009," "60-second science."

Section title: *Hot words*. Story title: "Internet social life"

Teen life: "Six Steps to Smarter Studying."

Sports World: "Tiger Woods Economic Impact" (with CD track)

Business Talk "After Work Drinks" (with CD track).

English Pictorial, a "mixed" magazine, offered entertaining and educational stories with practical exercises and an insert to help students study for the national exam. Some examples from 2010 include:

"Michael Perham, the Youngest Person to Sail around the World Solo," "Youn-ha, a Star with Secret Magic," "Cherie Blair: Speak for Myself," and "Ottawa Awaits Your Discovery."

Fill-in-the-blank multiple choice grammar exercises were also included.

A School Garden of English, an "intensive" magazine, was dominated by similar types of practical exercises and more traditional reading comprehension passages geared toward the national exams. It is a smaller magazine that is type-heavy with no graphics or photos. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* offers mainly academic articles in Chinese and English on teaching-related topics.

The design, content and layout for all magazines were revamped to be more reader-friendly compared with those in 1997 and 1999. Magazines in the 1990s were mostly quite serious, carrying passages for readers to be educated morally and inspired intelligently, while magazines in 2009 were more eye-catching in design and contained entertaining content. These changes reflected an adaptation to a globalized, more market-driven economy, so the magazines had to be more appealing to attract readers (Zhang and Watson, 2007; Sampedro and Hillyard, 2004). Apart from passages for education and inspiration, they published more international content related to popular culture: films, music, sports, stars, fashion and video games. Some magazines opened up space for readers to interact with editors to express their ideas or talk about some popular topics. In the redesigns in the 1990s, only *English Pictorial* inserted some color images in its magazines. After 2001, *English Pictorial* and some other “intensive” magazines for teaching English upgraded their format and style with more color and variety to be more appealing to readers. In 2009, half of *English Pictorial* contained color pages. In addition, *Crazy English* printed the whole book in color with two glossy pages inserted in the middle to carry colorful advertisements concerning English learning and items of student interest.

8. Conclusion

Many complex factors have affected sales of English-teaching magazines as each editor interprets how to “to cultivate students’ practical ability and develop their comprehensive language ability” (The Ministry of Education of China, 2001). As noted by Biggs (2009), Chinese educators were “embracing global aims and practices of education,” while balancing that with traditional teaching and learning pedagogy and practices, such as examinations.

In addition, they have been hit by faster-responding competition from English-language newspapers, weeklies and the Internet that readers use to learn English. However, the success of *Crazy English* and *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* shows that there is a market for them. Reflecting its new name, *Crazy English* is entertaining, and is culturally and contextually relevant to English learners in China’s changing society and economy (Day and Bamford, 2004). On the other hand, *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools* serves a particular niche market among teachers. Both claimed their sales had increased. There is also the possibility that these publications could be distributed online.

A School Garden of English increased its pages dedicated to tests and exercises, while *English Pictorial* tried to balance both by adding pages of reading while dropping a few pages of pragmatic explanations and grammatical analysis. Even though *English Pictorial* tried to update its content and look, the magazine failed to meet readers’ different demands to supplement different textbooks, and its sales plummeted. It faced competition from more visually appealing magazines such as *Crazy English*. *A School Garden of English* continued its original publishing principle while failing to increase the examination-oriented tests and exercises matching the specific local textbooks, and it ended up with a decline in its sales, according to government officials.

9. The future of the English-language magazines and periodicals

Any reforms in the magazines' parent publishing companies will continue to have an impact on them. For example, the publishing industry in China in 2009-2010 undertook its greatest market reform ever: establishing the government-owned joint stock cooperative system of publishing enterprises. English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English were unavoidably affected by this reform, although over 90 percent of them had already become independently managed enterprises with government oversight. Most of them were affiliated with different provincial, municipal and university publishing companies.

English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English, particularly in secondary and middle schools, face many new challenges and struggles, such as structural and administrative issues and macroscopic policies that affect their ability to change and reform. Their independence is compromised by their affiliation with the publishing companies. Even so, their survival depends on their economic performance. If the magazines sell well, the press or publishing house they are affiliated with will keep them as an important and indispensable product. And whether they can sell well depends on the design, content and marketing of their magazines — how well they appeal to increasingly sophisticated readers in a globalized culture and competitive economy who also have individual, localized needs.

The 2001 reform resulted in major curriculum reform, an overhaul of teaching materials, pedagogy and teacher education. But if the unified national Entrance Examination for College is canceled, that will cause another major reshuffle and revamping of how English is taught. Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Shandong already have their own examination papers for entrance to colleges and universities. If other large cities and provinces continue this trend and offer their own exams, English-language magazines and periodicals for teaching English will become even more fragmented in their content and design to appeal to different needs and segmented, local markets. The need for additional editions will increase costs across the board — in content, production and distribution.

To compete with the English-language newspaper and weeklies for teaching English, the “intensive” English magazines for teaching have to be revamped. They could follow *Crazy English* and become one of the “extensive” magazines. But “extensive” magazines such as *English World*, *English Salon*, and *English Digest* already have their mature market and loyal readers. To compete with them is a tough job. There is still a unified entrance examination for senior middle school students, so magazines and periodicals might aim at this market. Actually, *English Pictorial* and *A School Garden of English* have already occupied a good share of this market. And now a lot of elementary schools have English as a compulsory subject and even some kindergartens teach children English. Magazines for young children could be a new target market.

This study represents a first attempt to document and examine the impact of the “Character Education” policy reform on magazines targeted to young people in China, and to understand these changes in the cultural context of the competitive internationalized environment that China has entered (Zhang and Watson, 2007; Day and Bamford, 2004). This study also considers the impact of local changes in the examination system in certain larger cities on

magazine content. This study is limited because it only examines four magazines that underwent changes. An additional, larger study could be conducted on all magazines and periodicals in China for teaching English across different levels. This study could include a more detailed analysis of the impact of the Internet on magazines, periodicals and newspapers that students use to learn English.

References

- Biggs, J. B. (2009). Forward. In *Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (pp. x – xii). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center, The University of Hong Kong.
- Chan, C. K. K., & Rao, N. (Eds.). (2009). *Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center, The University of Hong Kong.
- Day, R. R., & J. Bamford, (Eds.), (2004). *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gebhard, J. G. (1996). *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Jiang, H. D. (2004). The Practice and Conception of Immersion Bilingual Education Mode. *Exploring Education Development*, 24(6).
- Jin, L. J., Singh, M. & Li, L. Q. (2005, December). *Communicative Language Teaching in China: Misconceptions, Applications and Perceptions*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education, Parramatta, NSW, Australia.
- Jin, Y. H. & Jin, G. C. (2008). Foreign Language Teaching Reform and Improvement of College English Teaching Quality. *Asian Social Science*, 4 (4), 127-128.
- Li, L. Q. (2004). *Education For 1.3 Billion: Former Chinese Vice-Premier Li Lanqing on 10 Years of Education Reform and Development*. Beijing: China. Pearson Education Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Lu, J. P. (2009, July). Preface. In *The Interpretation of the Language/Editing Quality of English Magazines for Teaching English in China and an Analysis of Evaluation Criteria* (p. 1). Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press.
- Petrić, B. (2005, June). Global Issues. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(2), 348.
- Richeck, M. A., List, L. K., & Lerner. J. W. (1989). *Reading Problems: Assessment and Teaching Strategies*. NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Sampedro, R., & Hillyard, S. (2004). *Global Issues*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, x.–148.
- Sehlaoui, A. S. (2001). Facing the Challenge of Teaching and Learning EFL. Reading: Beyond the Language of Critique. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 13(2), 615-629.

The Ministry of Education (2001). *The National Curriculum Standard — the Curriculum Standard for English Subject*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, p.3

Wagner, D. A. (1993). *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Yong, W. Q. (2004). English-language Magazines and Periodicals for Teaching & English-reading Teaching, Retrieved on June 9, 2010, [Online] Available: <http://english.cersp.com/ketang/ghsyq/200402/417.html>.

Zhang, Q. Y., & Watkins, D. (2007, December). Conceptions of a Good Tertiary EFL Teacher in China. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 781 - 790.

Copyright Disclaimer

Copyright reserved by the author(s).

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).