

## **The Use of English in the Professional World in China**

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In the context of English being a global lingua franca and China being the nation with the largest English learning and using population in the world, the status and use of English in China have become a topic of intense interest for researchers. However, most of the research has been conducted within the field of education, especially in the university setting, with few data from the actual users of English in the professional world. The current study is such an attempt. With a 93-item questionnaire, this study has drawn data from 2,247 participants at workplaces across China. The participants are from three types of organization, namely, government, public service unit (e.g. school, hospital), and company.

The questionnaire elicits data on three aspects: general pattern of language choice and use (English vs. Chinese), frequency of the use of English, and importance of English in both written and spoken communications at workplaces in China. The participants' responses are then analyzed using SPSS for frequencies and means of the questionnaire items. Possible group differences are also examined in the above-mentioned aspects in terms of the three types of participants.

Although overall the use of English is not frequent in China's professional world, the results indicate that English is playing an important role in about a quarter of the participants' working lives and that the majority of the participants recognize the high importance of English and believe the language will become increasingly important in future. The results also demonstrate that the 'company' participants use English significantly more than the other two groups.