

The English Curriculum in the People's Republic of China

Paper submitted to *Comparative Education Review*

Bob Adamson

Dr. Paul Morris

*Department of Curriculum Studies,
The University of Hong Kong,
Pokfulam Road,
Hong Kong*

Tel: 2548 8247

Fax: 2858 5649

e-mail: badamson@hkusua.hku.hk

pmorris@hkucc.hku.hk

The English Curriculum in the People's Republic of China

Bob Adamson & Paul Morris
(The University of Hong Kong)

Abstract

The status and role of English as a school subject in China has fluctuated wildly because of its desirable but sensitive connotations. English is the language of world trade and communications, which makes its study an important strategy in implementing internationally-oriented policies for "modernization", while its historical overtones of imperialism, capitalism and even barbarianism are unwelcome for those who prefer more self-reliant and isolationist approaches.

This paper traces the career of the English curriculum in China since 1949, with particular reference to the junior secondary school curriculum, through an analysis of the national syllabus and textbooks. It identifies five distinct periods and analyses the major forces of curriculum change, the dynamics of curriculum design, and the principal features of models for change in each of the periods. It is argued that the overall process of policy-making, and curriculum development specifically, has been characterized by a complexity and pattern of development which is not adequately recognized in existing portrayals that have focused on the relationship between macro political shifts and educational policies, and have emphasized the role of the state.

The English Curriculum in the People's Republic of China

Introduction

The inclusion of English in school curricula around the world has been associated with a variety of motivations. In the case of some countries, it has been depicted as a unifying *lingua franca* for performing the functions of administration, broadcasting and education; elsewhere, for the purposes of international communication, trade and scientific progress, as an essential aid to national reconstruction, or as a means of empowerment or repression.¹ The growing importance of English as an international language over the past hundred and fifty years or so is not without pitfalls for national cultures and political, economic and social systems, which are threatened with erosion by the values that may be imported with the English language, and for indigenous languages, which may face diminution of status or even extinction if English is accorded superior social and economic prestige.²

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), these tensions have polarized attitudes towards English as a school subject.³ For those leaders in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) supporting the policy of strengthening the nation through Western-style

"modernization" (albeit with Chinese characteristics), the study of English is regarded as necessary for acquiring technological expertise and for fostering international trade. On the other hand, for leaders more concerned with the integrity of Chinese culture and systems, the English language bears uncomfortable connotations of capitalism, imperialism or even barbarianism, and is also perceived to embody values that are undesirable and antithetical to the nature of Chinese culture and the ideology of the CCP.⁴ This tension has resulted in the status of English being described as "the barometer of modernization",⁵ in that its position in the curriculum has been enthusiastically endorsed by the country's leaders at times when economic considerations such as "modernization" or technological transfer from Western nations have prevailed over those reflecting a more isolationist and anti-capitalist agenda, and vice versa. The contested status of English as a school subject serves to throw into sharp relief the processes of curriculum policy-making and implementation.

The sensitivity surrounding English poses particular problems for those agencies and personnel charged with designing and producing the various components of the official national curriculum, especially the syllabuses and textbooks. Not only do these agencies have to navigate a course through the often conflicting and shifting ideological currents, which influence the selection of both curriculum content and pedagogical approaches, but they also have the responsibility of producing a syllabus and teaching materials that are suitable for studying English in the context of the plurality of Chinese schools and schooling systems.⁶ The purpose of this study is to explore how these sets of tensions were resolved. This has the potential to provide an insight into the strategies of curriculum development used and the nature of the policy-making process within the PRC.

The focus of this paper is on the junior secondary (*chuzhong*) school curriculum, which has been more sensitive than other levels, as it is the stage of mass schooling at which most students study English. The paper identifies five historical periods and analyzes the changing nature of the official English language curriculum during each period in terms

of the process of curriculum policy-making and its impact on the subject, its objectives, content and pedagogical approaches. The principal evidence is derived from documentary analysis of the various syllabuses and textbooks, as well as interviews with two key informants, Tang Jun and Liu Daoyi, who were involved in the process of curriculum reform, and from literature produced by Chinese scholars.⁷ A tripartite depiction of agencies involved in the process of curriculum development since 1949 is used in this paper to facilitate discussion of the interaction between the various agencies in the five historical periods. The agencies are designated as the Superordinate, the Intermediate and the Subordinate.⁸ The first group comprises the agencies in the State Education Commission (previously the Ministry of Education) charged with national curriculum policy decisions, most notably the People's Education Press (PEP) which produces national syllabuses, textbooks and other resources. The Intermediate group includes linguistics experts and specialists in language teaching, who are primarily based in tertiary institutes. Members of this group at the provincial, county and municipal levels are also responsible for public assessment. The Subordinate group is made up primarily of the teachers who have the responsibility for implementing the syllabus in classrooms.

To date, much of the literature on curriculum innovation in China has concentrated on demonstrating the link between changes in macro-level policies and subsequent educational reforms. Central to these portrayals are the strong linkages between the oscillations of national politics and the hegemonic role of the state in defining the nature of school curricula through its bureaucratic, centralized and power coercive mechanisms.⁹ Similar portrayals are evident in the literature on the former USSR and other totalitarian regimes,¹⁰ which would suggest the operation of a discourse whose focus on the role of the state may have had its origins in ideological tensions of the cold war, when such regimes generally and their school systems specifically were objectified and portrayed by supporters and opponents in terms which highlighted the positive or negative aspects.¹² Be that as it may, the state-monopoly view of policy formulation and implementation in the PRC has

begun to be questioned. Studies of the dynamics of the processes linking national political priorities and their impact on curricula discern a substantial degree of reconstruction and interpretation of national policies by various agencies, and a substantial degree of slippage between curriculum policy and its implementation in schools.¹¹ Paine goes further, by contending that the actual formulation of contemporary national educational policies has a strongly pluralistic quality through a process of *mosuo* (muddling through), whereby “an evolutionary compromise” is achieved between central bureaucratic objectives and the practical lessons of local experience.¹³ This paper argues that, since 1949, the process of curriculum policy-making has demonstrated an evolution from a centralized and state-controlled process to becoming a more complex procedure which displays an increased degree of pluralism.

The paper analyzes the English curriculum within a chronological framework. It identifies five socio-political periods, namely, from 1956-1960, 1960-1966, 1966-1976, 1977-1993 and 1993 onwards.¹⁴ The table below summarizes the changing features of the English language curriculum within those periods with regard to macro national priorities, the role of English, the sets of official textbooks published, the content of the discourse in the textbooks, and the pedagogy promoted by curriculum documents.

[insert Table 1 about here]

Period 1: The End of Soviet Influence (1956-1960)

This period saw the demise of Soviet influence in the PRC and, within the educational sphere, witnessed a series of attempts to interpret the appropriate balance between “redness” and “expertise”. For English, this resulted in the publication of three sets of textbooks for junior secondary schools by the PEP as they sought to respond to shifts in that balance.

In the years immediately following the Communist revolution, the Ministry of Education turned to the Soviet Union for advice and models to emulate. The Common Program, adopted as government policy in 1949, identified two main goals for this broadening of the provision of education: one was to eradicate the influence of pre-revolutionary ideas and to inculcate socialist ideology; the other goal was to provide an educated workforce for the purposes of national construction.¹⁵ The Common Program thus attempted to promote a balance between economic and political elements. However, little official attention was paid to English language teaching, as the close political alliance at that time between the CCP and the Soviet Union, as well as the failure of the United States of America (in particular) to recognize the PRC, led to the recommendation that Russian be the foreign language studied in schools, although schools teaching English would be allowed to continue.¹⁶ Initially, three lessons per week were allocated to Russian or English but between 1954 and 1957, all foreign language teaching ceased in junior secondary schools because the authorities wanted to reduce the demands of the curriculum on students,¹⁷ and priority was to be given to learning Chinese and other subjects, especially Mathematics and Science.¹⁸ The industrial expansion of the mid-fifties, carried out with Soviet aid, served to rekindle official interest in English as a valuable language of science and technology. In 1956, the Ministry of Education announced that, from the following year, junior secondary schools would teach either Russian or English, and that the target ratio of schools offering Russian to those offering English would be 1:1.¹⁹

The Ministry of Education subsequently asked staff at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute to produce a draft syllabus for English and to write the national textbooks (Series 1), as the PEP lacked the experience to perform these tasks.²⁰ When most other tertiary institutions were concentrating on the teaching of Russian, the Foreign Languages Institute had specialized in training interpreters and cadres in English for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The staff of the English Department, in particular Ying Manrong and Fan Ying, were chosen to write the syllabus and textbooks because they had accumulated considerable experience in preparing materials for introductory courses in English at the Institute in the early fifties.²¹ In writing the syllabus and textbooks, Ying and Fan used two sources for reference: the courses for adult beginners that they had written at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, and secondary school textbooks from the Soviet Union.²² The latter choice was restricted by the limited number of foreign textbooks available in the PRC, but was an appropriate model for imitation as the teaching of English in the Soviet Union created similar dilemmas for educationalists, in that the two countries displayed political antipathy towards Western nations, and both the Soviet Union and the PRC used school textbooks as a means for promoting the prevailing political ideology.

The syllabus specified the aims of “motivating students to continue to learn English in the future and providing them with the relevant knowledge, skills and techniques”.²³ The two textbooks, which were published by the PEP in 1957, center around reading passages and grammar exercises, although Book 1 concentrates on practicing pronunciation. The orientation of the syllabus and the textbooks reflect their genesis: many of the texts are borrowed directly from Soviet textbooks, while the emphasis on accurate pronunciation and grammar arises from the aims of the adult beginners’ course for future interpreters, who would need clear diction and correct usage in their profession. The intended pedagogical approach is spelt out in a reading text in Lesson 15 Book 2:

Our English Lessons

We have a new text every week. Our teacher reads the text and we read after her. Then she explains the text. We listen carefully because there are many new words in it. If we do not understand, we put up our hands, and she explains again. Our teacher asks us questions. When we answer her questions, we must try to speak clearly. We do a lot of exercises in class. We make sentences. We have spelling and dictation. Sometimes we write on the blackboard. Sometimes we write in our notebooks. We learn to write clearly and neatly.

I like our English lessons. I think we are making good progress.

This approach bears the hallmarks of the grammar-translation method of second language pedagogy, which is characterized as: emphasizing reading and writing skills; making constant references to the learners' mother tongue; focusing on grammatical forms; requiring memorization of grammatical paradigms; and being highly teacher-centered.²⁴ The choice of passages ranges from stories and everyday anecdotes to overtly politicized passages, many of which are oriented towards promoting a strong sense of national identity.²⁵ Other passages carry a grim portrait of life in the United States, concentrating on the hardships of the black community: "Two American Boys" (Book 1 Lesson 39), for instance, contrasts the privileged life of a white boy with that of a black boy. Another text, "A Negro Boy in the Soviet Union" (Book 1 Lesson 40), presents a much happier situation, and attests that these passages are borrowed directly from Soviet textbooks.

In the late fifties, the "politics to the fore" movement, as manifested in the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward, prevailed in national policies, and at the same time, the relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union was becoming strained. There was criticism from a hard-line faction within the CCP (backed by Mao Zedong) that the ideological messages in education were insufficient and that the Soviet influence on the

curriculum was undesirable.²⁶ Despite the overt political content in Series 1, it “was condemned as being divorced from politics, from production and from reality”.²⁷ In response to these criticisms, the Ministry of Education decided that a new set of three textbooks (Series 2) was required for junior secondary schools. In April, staff from Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute were commissioned to write Junior English Book 1, which was to be used the following September. The Ministry then decided to rush through the production of the complete series, at very short notice and, to achieve this, engaged staff of the Beijing Foreign Language Institute to write Books 2 and 3.²⁸

The new set of textbooks bears a strong resemblance to Series 1. Many of the original texts are retained, with others in a similar political vein being added.²⁹ These political texts are translated from Chinese language textbooks also published by the PEP.³⁰ The pedagogical approach is likewise similar to Series 1. However, there was criticism from teachers (expressed in letters to the PEP, at conferences or at training workshops organized by the PEP) about the lack of co-ordination between Book 1 and the other two books.³¹

While Series 2 was under preparation, another set of books (Series 3) was commissioned and published by the PEP and trialed in selected schools. This set included, for the first time, material for teaching English in primary as well as secondary schools. Series 3 is a unified set of eighteen books in all, designed to cover a nine year program encompassing three years’ primary and six years’ secondary education, and was written by staff of the Foreign Languages Department of the Beijing Teachers University. To a greater extent than Series 1 and Series 2, the contents of the texts strongly reflect the climate of “politics to the fore”, at the expense of pedagogical considerations. The majority of texts are selected political documents, and moralizing stories and poems translated into English. Although the books for junior secondary schools include vocabulary lists and some exercises (mainly reading comprehension questions, translation, paraphrase and

composition activities), there is no overt language instruction. After two years' trialing involving several thousand students, Series 3 was abandoned, partly because of a moderation in the national political climate, but principally because the teachers and students in the pilot schools complained that the books were unusable; as Tang Jun commented:

The English in the textbooks was not the English of any English-speaking country. Textbooks were not compiled according to any linguistic theory or within any teaching methodological limitations, but rather according to instructions from the then authorities. Textbooks began with "Long live" or other slogans. There was not a single text dealing with a foreign theme or foreign culture. The texts were full of big words or words of more than two syllables. They were hard to read.

To sum up: three series of English textbooks were produced for junior secondary level during the period 1956-60. Two of them attempted to maintain a balance between ideological, social, linguistic and pedagogical concerns in keeping with the "red and expert" philosophy. The textbooks writers took the politically and pedagogically safe option of referring to, and even borrowing from, Soviet models that interlaced reading-based teacher-centered pedagogy with passages that carried strong political messages. Later, when the Soviet model was no longer politically appropriate, Chinese language textbooks provided a source of texts. Meanwhile, the other set of textbooks, intended for primary and secondary schools, was heavily skewed towards ideological goals, to the detriment of the others. The series reflected the contemporary climate of "politics to the fore" by making almost exclusive use of political tracts written by or about national leaders, but, significantly, was abandoned not just because of political developments, but also because teachers found the textbooks to be unteachable.

While the development of the curriculum during this period involved the Superordinate group (the PEP) publishing the syllabus and the textbooks, the actual task of writing them was placed in the hands of a variety of Intermediate agencies. The Subordinate group, the teachers, played a role as critics, causing revisions to be made to some textbooks and contributing to the rejection of others.

Period 2: A Search for Quality in Education (1960-1966)

The early sixties was a period of profound changes in political direction and, within the educational sphere, was characterized by a rejection of the Soviet models and an attempt to move education towards a more professional orientation. The period has been variously described as one of "curriculum reform and experiments",³² and as the "First Renaissance".³³ The Sino-Soviet alliance weakened as China's rulers became increasingly disaffected with Krushchev's "Revisionism", and as long-standing territorial disputes resurfaced. The split was acrimonious, and in 1960, Soviet experts were withdrawn from China at short notice, leaving many projects incomplete. One result of the schism was a review of English language teaching in schools, an initiative which was strongly influenced by calls for change in pedagogy from the grassroots. As a teacher recalled:

In the field of English teaching dissatisfaction over the Russian-style textbooks and the prevailing spoonfeeding method of teaching rose, and there was a wide-spread desire to discard or at least improve them. With the focus on reforming the curriculum, compiling teaching materials, experimenting with new teaching methods and improving teaching facilities, education boomed.³⁴

Consequently, a National Cultural and Educational Conference was held in October 1960 to discuss ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning.³⁵ One

recommendation made by participants was a revision of the syllabus and national textbooks. Another suggestion was the nationwide introduction, in the long term, of English as a subject in primary schools, as part of a ten-year schooling program.³⁶ A committee was formed, including members of the PEP and consultants, to prepare new syllabuses and resources. These resources would include two sets of textbooks: Series 4 for schools adopting the ten-year primary and secondary program, and Series 5, which would be for students starting English at secondary school level according to the existing system. The consultants enlisted by the PEP came from the Foreign Languages Department of the Beijing Teachers' University, who had played a significant role in the National Cultural and Educational Conference. The committee first drew up a draft syllabus and decided upon the objectives for the teaching of English; they stressed the use of colloquial English and the ability to read professional publications in English as two major goals, through the adoption of a thematic approach which closely integrated the difficulty level of texts with a linear progression of discrete linguistic components.³⁷

Series 4, which comprises eight books for primary schools (two to be used per year from Primary 2 to Primary 5) and three junior secondary school textbooks, was produced in 1961 and 1962. In these three books, Book 1 and the first part of Book 2 contain more dialogues and sentence pattern drills for oral practice, but strong elements of the grammar-translation method remain thereafter. Most of the passages in the first half of the course are intended for reading aloud, as intonation patterns are marked in the text. Insights into the intended pedagogy are offered in Book 3 Lesson 1:

Learn to Speak English

Student: Good morning, teacher.

Teacher: Good morning. How did you enjoy the holidays? Are you glad to be back at school?

Student: Yes, I am very glad to be back and to begin my lessons again. I want to improve my English this term. I should like to be able to speak correctly. What should I do?

Teacher: You must try to talk in English as much as possible. Don't simply say "yes" or "no" and then stop. You can't learn to talk by keeping your mouth shut, can you?

Student: No. But suppose I make mistakes....

Teacher: Don't worry about mistakes. First of all, learn the expressions by heart. Learn whole sentences, not single words. Another thing, don't be afraid to talk. Just try to say what you want to say, and don't be afraid that people will laugh at you. Keep on trying and you'll make fewer and fewer mistakes. And, there's another thing to remember: always say complete sentences. That's the way to learn to speak a language.

Student: Thank you. I'll do as you say.

These features are similar to those of the audio-lingual method of second language pedagogy, which are characterized as: emphasizing oral skills before written skills; encouraging the students to use English as much as possible; incorporating sentence pattern drills; and promoting learning through habit formation.³⁸ The texts are materials which focus around everyday life or tell stories. Some passages have a strong patriotic or socialist message, but texts portraying other countries in a poor light are sparse compared to the previous period.³⁹

The ten-year program of primary and secondary schooling (for which Series 4 was intended) was not adopted throughout the country: in the main, its use was restricted to certain schools in the larger cities whose students were deemed capable of covering the twelve-year syllabus in ten years.⁴⁰ The majority of schools retained the twelve-year system. To provide revised materials for these schools, the Ministry of Education first engaged a

group of scholars to summarize the experience of the previous sixty years of English language teaching in China and to look at ideas from Japan, the USA and the United Kingdom.⁴¹ The group was responsible for producing a new syllabus, which appeared in May 1963. The preamble to the syllabus sets out its rationale:

Aims and Requirements

Foreign language learning is an important tool for developing cultural and scientific knowledge, engaging in international interaction, fostering cultural exchanges, and increasing understanding between peoples of different countries. English is commonly used throughout the world. A good grasp of English enables us to absorb the aspects of science and technology which will help socialist construction; to share our experiences with friendly countries and people; to strengthen our relationship with people in different countries; and to empower people in different countries to combat imperialism.⁴²

To cater for the new syllabus, Series 5, consisting of six books, was written and published by the PEP, after a draft version was piloted in three secondary schools in Beijing and Tianjin in 1962-1963. The PEP had strengthened its English editorial staff to ten members in 1962 by recruiting educationalists from leading institutes. A team of consultants from tertiary institutes was formed, including several expatriates, to comment on and polish the materials.⁴³ The publishing process was also reorganized. Surveys were conducted among senior teachers to gather their opinions on the content, organization and methodology of the textbooks; feedback was also collected at seminars and by means of a post-trialing survey of teachers at the three schools.⁴⁴

The finalized version of the new series has a similar orientation to the textbooks for the ten-year schooling system (Series 4): indeed many of the lessons are identical. Emphasis is placed initially on oral skills through audio-lingual drills (tapes were also available), but the grammar-translation method returns from Book 3 onwards. The texts are

also similar to Series 4. One notable difference, however, is that the focus on People's Communes in Series 4 is replaced by a focus on ideological tracts in Series 5.⁴⁵ These themes reflect the political climate of the times: the People's Communes were a product of the Great Leap Forward at the end of the fifties, but the results in the early sixties were unacceptable to many Chinese leaders.⁴⁶ Also, by 1963, the development of the war in Vietnam was exacerbating tensions between China and the USA, hence the shift in thematic focus in the textbooks. Further differences between the two series arose from criticisms of Series 4 which had been voiced by teachers, that the textbooks placed a very heavy learning burden upon students. In designing Series 5, adjustments were made to the number of vocabulary items to be covered, and the early stages of the course contained a more simple progression from the alphabet to short passages.⁴⁷

Series 4 and Series 5 were used until 1966, when the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began. Materials for senior secondary school were prepared for introduction in 1966 but they were never used. As the Cultural Revolution got underway, both series were discarded as useless by the Ministry of Education.⁴⁸

In the period between 1960 and 1966, curriculum innovation in English responded to demands for improvement in the quality of education and a lessening of direct political indoctrination by a pedagogical shift towards an amalgam of audio-lingualism and the grammar-translation method, thereby extending the main skills focus from reading to also embrace listening, speaking and writing. The Superordinate agency relied heavily, initially, upon the expertise of Intermediate agencies in researching, designing and producing both the syllabus and teaching materials, until it recruited personnel from those agencies and undertook much of the work itself. Subordinate agencies were also involved in the process, by promoting change (through experiments with new pedagogy or expressing dissatisfaction with current resources and practices) or, on a small scale, by trialing new textbooks. The decisions concerning curriculum development in English in this period were

primarily influenced by the development of an understanding of overseas models and practices. Although a political agenda was not entirely absent, as can be seen from the themes chosen for reading passages in the textbooks, the Intermediate and Superordinate agencies had a degree of freedom in introducing pedagogical innovation (often in consultation with the Subordinate agencies) with a view to enhancing the quality of language learning in junior secondary schools.

Period 3: The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)

The political and social turmoil of the Cultural Revolution disrupted instruction in all schools, and the mobilization of many of the students as Red Guards meant that education became one of the focal points of the revolution, which sought to overturn many aspects of traditional Chinese society. In a letter to Defense Minister, Lin Biao, dated May 7th 1966, Mao Zedong said:

While the students' main task is to study, they should also learn other things: that is to say, they should not only learn book knowledge, they should also learn industrial production, agricultural production, and military affairs. They should also criticize and repudiate the bourgeoisie. The length of schooling should be shortened, education should be revolutionized, and the domination of our schools and colleges by bourgeois intellectuals should not be tolerated any longer.⁴⁹

The Cultural Revolution also involved violence and many foreign language teachers suffered at the hands of Red Guards, being accused of spying for other countries or worshipping everything foreign.⁵⁰ Most schools stopped teaching English, and anarchy erupted throughout the school system. The PEP was disbanded in 1968, but, ironically, in

the same year, Mao Zedong affirmed the value of studying English in a conversation with Red Guard leaders at Beijing University:

It's good to know English. I studied foreign languages late in life. I suffered. One has to learn foreign languages when one is young It's good to learn English. Foreign language study should be started in primary school.⁵¹

In 1970, English started to reappear on the curriculum in some schools, although only a limited amount of time was devoted to it. The textbooks, which were produced on a provincial or municipal basis, focus on political propaganda, in the form of slogans and political tracts, as occurred with the textbooks that were produced during the Great Leap Forward (Series 3). Little attention is paid to communication or pedagogical matters, and no syllabuses were issued. In terms of language, the textbooks are principally concerned with developing reading and writing skills. A typical lesson started with the teacher reading aloud the vocabulary lists for the students to imitate before going through the text translating into Chinese. Students would listen and note the translation. Written exercises, concentrating on grammar points or translation, would end the lesson.⁵²

In this period, curriculum development in English (if such a description is appropriate) was carried out principally by Subordinate agencies, as the Superordinate agencies were inoperative and many of the specialists in the Intermediate agencies had been dismissed from their posts and assigned menial jobs or sent to the countryside. Paradoxically, given the fact that one of the aims of the Cultural Revolution was to undermine the traditional role of the teacher, the pedagogy promoted involved a return to a teacher-centered grammar-translation methodology. There are several possible reasons for this choice. Firstly, audio-lingualism was associated with American methods of language learning, which had an unhealthy connotation for Chinese educators at that time. Secondly, the relative inexperience of the curriculum developers and their lack of exposure to other

schools of pedagogy may have limited their choice to the methodology that they had encountered previously in learning English and their mother tongue. Finally, such a pedagogy lends itself for use in situations where there is a shortage of alternative resources, where a teacher lacks expertise in more interactive or communication-oriented pedagogy, or where the main purpose of teaching is to preach political dogma.

Period 4: Modernization under Deng Xiaoping (1977-1993)

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976, and the arrest of the "Gang of Four", the most powerful faction in the national leadership during the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution, marked the end of a period of political turmoil and economic isolation for China. Despite this, the impact of the Cultural Revolution lingered. This was evident within the English language curriculum, as curriculum development agencies utilized the rhetoric of both the politics-oriented and economics-oriented camps. The PEP was re-established in 1977, and immediately set about producing, within a very short timescale, a new syllabus and accompanying textbooks, as schooling returned to a semblance of normality.⁵³

After the fall of Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, and the other members of the "Gang of Four", there was a brief interregnum with Hua Guofeng acting as the nominal successor to Mao, before Deng Xiaoping established effective control as the paramount leader of China. A number of pre-Cultural Revolution policies were reactivated, most notably the program of economic modernization. Although the excesses of the Cultural Revolution had ceased, this return to the internationalist economic orientation which had characterized the early sixties was initially tentative, as the strong political tone of the introduction to the 1978 English syllabus reveals:

English is a very widely used language throughout the world. In certain aspects, English is a very important tool: for international class struggle; for economic and trade relationships; for cultural, scientific and technological exchange; and for the development of international friendship.

We have to raise Chairman Mao Zedong's glorious flag, and carry out the policies initiated by the Party under Hua Guofeng's leadership, so that by the end of this century, we can achieve the Four Modernizations of industry, science and technology, agriculture and defense and make China a strong socialist country. To uphold the principle of classless internationalism and to carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary diplomacy effectively, we need to nurture a large number of "red and expert" people proficient in a foreign language and in different disciplines. That is why we have to strengthen both primary and secondary teaching.⁵⁴

To produce the new syllabus and accompanying textbooks for English (Series 6), the PEP mobilized a group of professors, experienced teachers and textbook writers from Beijing and Shanghai in 1977. A draft of the syllabus was sent, via provincial education bureaus, to every school, and conferences were held for teachers and specialists in Wuhan, Shanghai and other major cities. Changes to the textbooks were made in the light of feedback: for instance, the proposal to introduce phonetic symbols before the alphabet was rejected by a group of Beijing teachers who were invited to arbitrate upon a dispute between the textbook writers.⁵⁵ The six books in the series were also revised after brief trialing in selected secondary schools. Major revisions were necessary, because teachers complained that the books were too difficult to teach, primarily because of the strong emphasis on political content, to the detriment of language instruction.⁵⁶

The revised version of Series 6, which was published for national use in 1978, included teacher's books and cassette tapes demonstrating the reading passages and pattern drills. The pedagogy promoted is very similar to that prevailing in Series 5, which

was used from 1963 to 1966, in that the audio-lingual pattern drills of the early books in the series are gradually combined with and eventually superseded by a grammar-translation methodology. The texts cover the everyday life of junior secondary school students, including descriptions of exemplary behavior such as visiting a commune, and listening attentively to exhortatory lectures.⁵⁷ Some passages are on topics of general educational interest;⁵⁸ there are stories with a strong moral message, such as "The Hare and the Tortoise" (Book 2 Lesson 22) and others with positive portrayals of foreigners.⁵⁹ A recurrent theme dating back to Series One of 1957-58, the unjust treatment of blacks in America, reappears in Book 4 Lesson 23, "A Black Girl Speaks Her Mind", although another passage, "Negroes in America" in Book 6 Lesson 14, ends with the somewhat back-handed compliment that nowadays, "at least in the eye of the law, blacks and whites are equal in America". Besides the regular references to socialism and Marxism, political leaders are occasionally mentioned, such as in the passage for reading aloud in Book 2 Lesson 32, which states:

The Chinese people are a brave and hard-working people. We have friends all over the world. We hold high the great banner of Chairman Mao, and Chairman Hua is leading us on a new Long March. We're working hard to make our country rich and strong. In about twenty years, China will become a modern and strong socialist country.

Overall, however, compared with Series 3 and Cultural Revolution textbooks, this series contains far less material with an overtly political orientation.

The syllabus and textbooks were considerably revised in 1982 in response to changes in the allocation of hours for English in the primary and secondary curriculum, and to the twin-track policy instigated by Deng Xiaoping, which set up keypoint secondary schools to provide education for the academic élite.⁶⁰ In designing the new syllabus and

textbooks, the PEP collected feedback from teachers, some of which was gathered at a national conference for teachers held at the Summer Palace in Beijing in September 1981.⁶¹ The time for English in primary schools, where problems in the provision and quality of teaching of English had surfaced, was reduced from four to three hours a week. The secondary education was strengthened: for the five years of junior and senior secondary schooling, a total of 768 hours was allocated for English, an increase of 112 hours over the 1978 allocation.⁶² This new arrangement meant that the level of difficulty in the junior secondary textbooks should be reduced. The main criticisms from teachers concerned the excessive quantity of the vocabulary and grammatical items in the syllabus and the ways in which these items were organized in Series 6.⁶³ Teachers complained that secondary school students were overburdened, particularly as the time allocated in 1978 (656 hours) was just over half the time (1238 hours) allowed for teaching Series 5, a similar course, in 1963.⁶⁴ The extra hours allocated to English would still prove insufficient, unless the amount of material to be covered in the textbooks were reduced.

The revision of the syllabus and textbooks was carried out by editors from the PEP in consultation with specialists from Beijing Foreign Languages Institute. As well as revising the organization and presentation of discrete linguistic items in line with the new time arrangements and the feedback on the 1978 series, the PEP made changes to the aims of the course. The introduction to the new syllabus is less political than its immediate predecessor, concentrating more on the economic benefits accruing from the study of English:

Foreign language is an important tool for learning cultural and scientific knowledge; for acquiring information in different fields from around the world; and for developing international communication. "Education has to be oriented towards modernization, the outside world and the future."⁶⁵ Our country has adopted the Open Door Policy; the reforms of our country's economics, politics, technology and

education are being wholeheartedly implemented; throughout the world, new technological reforms are booming. In order to construct our country as a modern socialist nation, with a high level of civilization and democracy, we have to raise the cultural and scientific quality of all people in the country. We need to nurture a large number of experts who are goal-oriented and ethical, possessing culture, discipline and, to different extents, competence in various aspects of foreign languages. Under these circumstances, the value of foreign languages as important tools becomes greater. Therefore, foreign languages are listed as a basic subject in our country's secondary schooling.⁶⁶

The softening of the extent of political rhetoric paralleled the Open Door Policy, which supported the Four Modernizations Program and encouraged investment and technical transfer from overseas. English language skills were thus perceived as a conduit for acquiring technological expertise and for dealing with foreigners. Also, in the new textbooks published by the PEP (Series 7), the reading passages concentrate less on giving a bad impression of foreign countries. For instance, while the passage about a dustman's strike in Britain (Book 6 Lesson 3) is retained from the 1978 series, the passages about the treatment of blacks in America are not. New passages include one about good manners in public and in the classroom (Book 6 Lesson 8) and several with a scientific theme.

The pedagogical approach to language learning embodied in the revised textbooks is very similar to Series 6. In the early stages of the course, the focus is placed on short dialogues and sentence patterns for oral drilling. As the course develops, the reading passage assumes greater prominence. Thus, the intended pedagogy is once more a blend of audio-lingualism and the grammar-translation method. Series 7 was used throughout most of China until 1993, when a new syllabus and textbooks were published. The series was not free from criticism: teachers complained that the textbooks continued to make too many demands of the students; PEP accepted this criticism, acknowledging that they had

designed the materials for the élite keypoint schools, without adequately taking into account the needs of other schools.⁶⁷

Overall, therefore, the period between 1977 and 1993 saw a number of reforms which affected English, but the resulting orientation, especially in terms of pedagogy and the focus on economic goals, resembled the English curriculum that prevailed between 1960 and 1966. Intermediate agencies contributed to the production of the syllabus and accompanying textbooks by acting as consultants and materials writers, and teachers also played an increasingly significant role in the process. Feedback from this sector had considerable influence on the design of the syllabus and textbooks which appeared in 1978, and on the revisions that occurred in 1982. The intended pedagogical approach of this period also resembled that of the early sixties, rejecting the traditional, teacher-centered methodology of the textbooks that appeared during the Cultural Revolution. This change can be attributed to three factors: the role of the Intermediate agencies, who were specialists in top institutions in China with knowledge of alternative approaches to English language teaching; to the less stringent political restraints of the Dengist era, which made it acceptable to import pedagogical ideas from Western countries and which increased the value of learning to communicate with foreigners; and to the feedback from teachers grappling with the everyday problems of motivating and meeting the needs of their students.

Period 5: Towards Nine Years' Compulsory Education

Since 1949, the provision of compulsory education has been a major goal of the CCP. Initial attempts in the fifties and early sixties were restricted to providing compulsory primary schooling within the framework of the ten- and twelve-year educational programs. In 1986, the ambitious Nine-Year Compulsory Education Law, which envisaged the provision

of primary and junior secondary schooling nationwide, was promulgated: the target for major cities and well-developed areas was to provide nine years' schooling by 1990, the hinterland provinces by 1995, and the remote areas as circumstances allowed. As a consequence, a revision of the English syllabus was required in order to provide materials that could be used flexibly to cater for the different systems of mass education in the world's most populous nation. The resulting syllabus was drawn up by the PEP in consultation with specialists, according to established practice. However, in recognition of the particular needs of different regions, and in the climate of devolving economic power to the provinces, the State Education Commission permitted the production of a variety of alternative textbooks by different agencies, including the South East Normal University (for use in the Guangdong region); Beijing Normal University; Sichuan Educational Science Institute and the South West Normal University; and the PEP. While each province could select the textbooks to be used in its schools, the PEP enjoyed an enormous advantage over other publishers in terms of its resources.

The 1993 syllabus focuses principally on pursuing economic goals, as the preface explains:

A foreign language is an important tool for interacting with other countries and plays an important role in promoting the development of the national and world economy, science and culture. In order to meet the needs of our Open Door Policy and to accelerate socialist modernization, efforts should be made to enable as many people as possible to acquire command of one or more foreign languages.⁶⁸

The guidelines issued by the PEP for the compilation of teaching materials for the new syllabus stipulate that 400 class hours are to be devoted to English in three-year junior secondary schools and 530 hours in those which offer four-year courses. The aims of

the program are not politically overt, merely laying down that materials should be chosen which have "sound contents" and "good effects on students' moral character".⁶⁹ The ambit of English study is also expanded to include some study of foreign culture. Besides basic training in the four linguistic skills, the program is designed to:

... develop [students'] thinking ability; help them acquire more knowledge of foreign culture; strengthen international understanding; arouse their interest and study and form correct methods and good habits of study so that an initial foundation can be laid for their further study of English as well as future work.⁷⁰

The guidelines acknowledge the value of learning from past experience to develop an effective new curriculum:

We must pay attention to our efficient traditional teaching experiences, such as knowing the history of English teaching and secondary school compilation in our country, studying and summarizing the experiences and lessons of using the current teaching syllabus and teaching materials, as well as the experiences of teaching experiments in all parts of the country. Those experiences suit the features of teaching English in our country and play an important role in our English teaching work.⁷¹

They also call for study of overseas theories of language and language teaching and for a synthesis of Western and Chinese ideas. They elucidate the policy that was developed for selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches: "We should make further researches into all the pedagogic schools, rejecting the dross and assimilating the essence, and make them serve us according to our national conditions."⁷² This statement echoes the maxim of *zhongxue weiti xixue weiyong* (the synthesis of Chinese essence and Western

practice) that has informed decisions on the importation and adaptation of foreign ideas since the mid-1800s.

The guidelines state that the principal aim of the new curriculum is to foster communication, which had previously been a relatively marginal goal of previous curricula. To achieve this end, the guidelines advise that teachers should use a variety of teaching strategies to create situations for promoting communicative competence.

Language form has to be combined with its meaning and with what the students think and want to say. Special attention should be paid to turning the language skills acquired through practice into the capacity of using the language for the purpose of communication When the students realize that they can communicate in English they will go on learning with more interest and motivation.⁷³

The revised English curriculum of 1993, therefore, increases the parameters of the intended pedagogy to include more holistic, communication-oriented constituents. Teachers are free to choose their own methodology to suit individual needs but stress should be placed upon the cultivation of language competence and performance in English rather than upon knowledge of the language. Most notably, meaningful oral communication is viewed as the prime goal.

Of the various textbooks produced for the new curriculum, the textbooks (Series 8) published by the PEP, "Junior English for China" (JEFC), has been adopted by the majority of secondary schools nationwide.⁷⁴ JEFC was the product of a project involving foreign agencies, namely Longman International Publishing Company and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) who funded the venture. Longman supplied a consultant and two writers,⁷⁵ as well as editorial and design support, while the PEP provided the chief

editor, a team of writers (for supplementary materials) and the production staff. The project commenced with a six-month research period, in which the chief writer from Longman met with teachers to collect their views on possible contents and intended pedagogy to be incorporated in the series. Once completed, the textbooks were piloted over a three-year period in different contexts: in major cities, such as Beijing, county towns and small towns. Feedback was collected from teachers and adjustments were made to the textbooks.⁷⁶

The pedagogical approach implicit in the content of the new course materials and explicit in the Teacher's Books corresponds to what may be classified as an "eclectic approach",⁷⁷ in that: there is a general focus on communication; the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing all receive attention; and the use of the mother tongue is permitted. There are also elements of audio-lingualism, in the form of drilling. Unlike the former textbooks, which switch from an emphasis on audio-lingualism to the grammar-translation method within a series, the approach of JEFEC remains consistent throughout the complete set of textbooks.⁷⁸ Each book is divided into units of four lessons based on a single topic. Some topics focus on the daily life of Chinese and Western children living in Beijing as they interact in school or engage in more culturally-specific activities at home. Cultural information about the USA, Britain and Australia is presented in the form of descriptions of food, festivals, places of interest, sport and language.⁷⁹ Scientific and other academically-oriented passages are also included,⁸⁰ as are some on ethical behavior.⁸¹ Other passages are stories, a number of which had also appeared in Series 7.⁸²

The innovations of this period are noteworthy for the variety of textbook series available to schools, and, as far as Series 8 is concerned, the nature of the participants in the production process, and the orientation and contents of the textbooks and other materials. The active participation of external bodies (namely Longman and UNDP) is unprecedented in the history of the junior secondary school English curriculum in the PRC and is itself a reflection both of the demise of hard-line propaganda against non-communist

countries, and of the predominant policy of selective borrowing from them. The role of the Intermediate agencies remained the same as for the previous curriculum innovations of 1978 and 1982, but the role of the Subordinate agencies (the classroom teachers) in the pre-writing period was greatly enlarged with their involvement in the research stage and the extensive piloting exercise. The support of foreign funding and the increasing economic prosperity of the nation enabled the PEP to produce a more lavish set of textbooks than previously. Although the new textbooks absorbed many of the features of earlier textbooks in terms of content and pedagogy, greater stress was laid upon the use of communicative English in specific socio-cultural contexts.

JEFC (Series 8) has generated considerable debate within the teaching profession. While the better qualified teachers in the more prosperous regions have generally reacted favorably to the pedagogical innovations, there have been complaints from less developed areas about the expense of the textbooks and the difficulties encountered by poorly qualified teachers in handling the materials. This feedback is likely to have a significant impact upon future changes to the English syllabus and textbooks.

Conclusion

Emerging from this historical overview, it is evident that, since the resolution of the civil war in 1949, English as a school subject in the PRC has had an essentially oxymoronic status, in that it has been perceived as something akin to a “desirable evil”. In terms of curriculum change, there is evidence of an evolution of a process which is dynamic and which is inadequately explained by merely identifying the influence of macro political shifts and of Superordinate agencies in schooling.

Undeniably, there is a link between the nation's shifting priorities in terms of the open-door versus anti-capitalist debate, the general strategy of curriculum development in junior secondary school English and the specific nature of curriculum content. The genesis and orientation of curriculum reform initiatives lay, for the most part, in policy decisions made by the central government. In the fifties, the goal was to train people as "red" and "expert", which resulted in the balance of political and academic orientations in the English syllabus and teaching materials. The early sixties saw an emphasis on economic modernization, and this is reflected in the reduction of the inclusion of overtly political elements in the English curriculum. The Dengist era, which started in the late seventies, picked up from where the early sixties left off by re-introducing and expanding the economic modernization drive, and soliciting the support of overseas agents to assist the nation's efforts in English language education. As a result, the later curriculum innovations have emphasized economic and academic goals more strongly, and fostered international understanding through the inclusion of material that focuses on the culture of other countries. In marked contrast, the decade of the Cultural Revolution was a period of intense and violent political activity which disrupted formal schooling and turned the English curriculum into a political propaganda tool first and foremost.

However, this paper has demonstrated that this correspondence between macro politics and the English curriculum has been paralleled by changes in both the process of curriculum development and in the pedagogies promoted. The prevailing process of curriculum development in each of the periods centered around a Superordinate agency, the PEP, which reflected macro policy decisions made by the national government, but was also significantly influenced by feedback from Intermediate and Subordinate agencies in developing the curriculum. Intermediate agencies have supplied expertise through their knowledge of second language acquisition theories and pedagogical models, as well as through textbook writing in the fifties. They also, from the early sixties, provided an important source of staff recruitment for the PEP. The most recent curriculum change, in

1993, saw the broadening of Intermediate agencies with foreign publishers acting as partners with the PEP. The role of the Subordinate agencies, mainly the grassroots teachers, evolved significantly. Initially, their contribution was of a *post hoc* nature as feedback from teachers on an existing curriculum helped the PEP in designing a new curriculum, and this often resulted in significant changes being made. For instance, Series 3 was abandoned largely because of negative feedback from teachers. Later the Subordinate agencies became more involved as consultants and critics in the design and development stages of a new curriculum (as in Series 6), or even as pioneers through their pedagogical experiments (as in Series 8). The process of curriculum development policy-making reflects, to some extent, the notion of a compromise between the various agencies, but a clear procedure, rather than just a “muddling through”, has evolved. The PEP continues to preside over the process of curriculum design, ensuring that the end product is in line with the prevailing political requirements, but has evolved a mechanism that is more sensitive and responsive to the views of experts in linguistics and language pedagogy, and to those of teachers responsible for the actual implementation of the curriculum. This process of evolution was, however, interrupted for a decade by the radical changes of the Cultural Revolution, during which the centralized system of curriculum development was scrapped, with the PEP being closed down and many of the Intermediate agencies being rusticated, leaving curriculum design to be carried out on a regional, grassroots basis.

A similar pattern may be seen in the pedagogical approaches promoted during each of the periods identified. The approaches promoted by the PEP have evolved continuously towards a communicative orientation, with each innovation building upon the pedagogy and contents of the previous one. The exception, once again, occurred during the Cultural Revolution, when materials returned to the traditional grammar-translation approach. Likewise, in terms of the content of the textbooks, a movement can be detected away from politically-charged texts towards passages that encompass academic and ethical themes, and which are more open-minded with regard to foreign countries and culture.

During the Cultural Revolution, however, the materials were infused with overt political propaganda.

The question of the pedagogy actually used by junior secondary school teachers cannot be answered simply by examining the intended pedagogy of the curriculum materials. Clearly, major discontinuities will characterize the relationship between curricular policy and its implementation.⁸³ However, the growing role of teachers in the development process suggests that there is increasing sympathy within the profession for the eclectic orientation of methodology displayed by the materials currently available (combining discourse-centered, audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods). There is also evidence of the emergence of a more eclectic pedagogy in schools and a decline in the reliance on traditional grammar-translation pedagogy.⁸⁴

The survival of the evolutionary process since 1949, despite various political and social upheavals in China during this period, indicates that the process of curriculum development in the People's Republic of China has neither been static nor a wholly centralized and monolithic exercise undertaken by the state and characterized solely by a series of pendulum swings which correspond to shifts from a focus on the political to the economic. The emerging pattern of curriculum development has been characterized by the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders, a greater sensitivity to the concerns of teachers, an increasingly eclectic orientation to pedagogy and a greater concern for the promotion of pupils' all-round communicative competencies. A focus on the link between politics and education, and on the centralized and bureaucratic nature of curriculum development processes provides a very limited and partial portrayal. This paper has attempted to provide an analysis which looks behind those features.

Footnotes

The authors are grateful to Tang Jun, Liu Daoyi, Jane Williamson-Fien, Michael Agelasto, Esther Morris, Annie Tong Siu Yin and two anonymous reviewers for their advice and assistance.

- ¹ See Alastair Pennycook, The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language. (London: Longman, 1994).
- ² See Robert Phillipson, Linguistic Imperialism. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- ³ Historical roots of this tension are seen in China's dichotomized responses to the gunboat diplomacy of Western powers in the mid-nineteenth century. One school of thought, associated in the early periods with the Self-Strengthening Movement led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, called for the study of Western technology (and, by extension, languages) in order to achieve economic and military parity with those powers. Another, exemplified by the writings of Zhou Han, advocated anti-foreignism and encouraged resistance to Western influences. See Kuang-Sheng Liao Antiforeignism and Modernization in China, 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990).
- ⁴ Y.F. Dzau, "Historical Background," in English in China, ed. Y.F. Dzau (Hong Kong: API Press, 1990).
- ⁵ Heidi Ross, "Foreign Language Education as a Barometer of Modernization" in Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience, ed. Ruth Hayhoe (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992) p 240.
- ⁶ There are a variety of national systems, such as key-point schools and specialized schools, as well as regional variations.
- ⁷ Tang Jun, now retired, was a syllabus designer and textbook writer for the PEP from the early sixties until the eighties. Liu Daoyi has been similarly involved since 1977. Both women also occupied senior administrative positions within the PEP. Principal published sources are Tang Jun, "Sanshier nian laide zhongxue yingyu jiaocai" (Thirty-two years of

Secondary School English Teaching Materials), in Zhongxue Waiyu Jiaocai He Jiaofa (Foreign Language Materials and Methodology for Secondary Schools), eds. Curriculum, Materials and Methodology Association, (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1986), in Chinese; Qun Yi and Li Qingting (eds.) Waiyu Jiaoyu Fazhen Zhanlüe Yanjiu (Research into Foreign Language Education Development Strategies), (Sichuan: Sichuan Education Press, 1991), in Chinese; and Tang Lixing, TEFL in China: Methods and Techniques. (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Languages Press, 1983).

⁸ This classification was used in Winnie Y.W. Au Yeung Lai, "The Chinese Language Curriculum in the People's Republic of China from 1978-1986: Curriculum Change, Diversity and Complexity," (Ph.D. thesis: The University of Hong Kong, 1995), extending the framework developed in Colin J. Marsh, Curriculum - An Analytical Introduction. (Sydney: Ian Novak, 1986).

⁹ See, for example, Theodore Chen Hsi-en, Chinese Education since 1949: Academic and Revolutionary Models. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981) and Shen Jianping "Educational Policy in the People's Republic of China: A Political Influence Perspective" in Journal of Education Policy, 9 (January-March 1994): 1-13.

¹⁰ See, for example, Brian Holmes and Martin McLean, The Curriculum: a Comparative Perspective. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp 102-121, Mervyn Matthews, Education in the Soviet Union. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), and Charles D. Cary, "Patterns of Emphasis upon Marxist-Leninist Ideology: a Computer Content Analysis of Soviet School History, Geography and Social Science Textbooks," Comparative Education Review, 20 (February 1976): 11-29.

¹¹ See Ronald F. Price, "China: A Problem of Information?" Comparative Education Review, 25 (February 1981): 85-92.

¹² See, for example, Julian Y.M. Leung, "A Study of Curriculum Innovation in Post-1976 China, with Special Reference to the Design and Implementation of the Senior Middle School Geography Curriculum," (Ph.D. thesis: University of Sussex, 1989); Keith M. Lewin *et al*, Educational Innovation in China. (Harlow: Longman, 1994), and Au Yeung

Lai. Their findings are echoed in Susan Shirk, How China Opened Its Door. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994). Shirk highlights the extent to which central policies are amended or effectively vetoed in view of the reaction of various peripheral and regional agencies.

¹³ Lynn Paine, “The Educational Policy Process: A Case Study of Bureaucratic Action in China,” in Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision-making in Post-Mao China, eds. K. Lieberthal and D. Lampton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁴ These periods correspond approximately to those identified by Tang Jun, and Tang Lixing. The periods are not unique to the English curriculum (see, for example, Lewin *et al*), but the sensitivity surrounding the role of English created specific tensions for the agencies involved in curriculum reform.

¹⁵ Chapter V, Article 49.

¹⁶ Qun and Li. According to Tang Lixing, p 14, “a shadow of doubt fell over English instruction. It became somehow unpatriotic to study the language of our enemies”.

¹⁷ The Ministry was under recurring pressure from teachers to reduce the learning load on students. See Lewin *et al* p 151.

¹⁸ Tang Jun.

¹⁹ Qun and Li.

²⁰ Tang Jun (personal communication).

²¹ Tang Jun, reporting a recent discussion with Ying Manrong.

²² Tang Jun, reporting a recent discussion with Ying Manrong.

²³ People’s Education Press, Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang (English Syllabus), (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1957). In Chinese.

²⁴ This characterization is taken from Tang Lixing, and Diane Larsen-Freeman, Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Grammar-translation pedagogy resembles traditional, indigenous methods for learning Chinese. See Dzau, “Historical Background,” and Donald J. Ford, The Twain Shall Meet: The

Current Study of English in China. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1988).

²⁵ "On National Day" in Book 2 Lesson 8, for instance, describes students waving to Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square; Book 2 Lesson 31, entitled "China" concludes:

"The Chinese people work hard and love peace. They are building Socialism. Now there are more schools, more factories and more hospitals in China than before. How happy the Chinese people are!"

²⁶ Jan-Ingvar Löfstedt, Chinese Educational Policy. (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1980).

²⁷ Tang Jun.

²⁸ "In the summer of 1960 the Ministry of Education suddenly assigned the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute the task to write Junior English Book 2 and Book 3 which were to be used in September when schools began. Perhaps they thought that the Institute had a great number of experienced English teachers and could take on the work. To write two books within two months was really a hard work. All the teachers of the English Department of the Institute were mobilized. With the effort of the teachers the two books were written and published in the autumn" (Tang Jun).

²⁹ For example, "A Tibetan Girl" in Book 3 Lesson 15 extols the virtues of life in Tibet under the rule of the CCP.

³⁰ Tang Jun

³¹ For instance, the text "A Negro Boy" in Book 1 Lesson 36 reappears almost verbatim as "Black Jimmy" (itself a borrowing from Series 1) in Book 2 Lesson 15. Teachers also complained that the vocabulary and grammar were not presented in a coherent manner.

³² Lewin *et al.*

³³ Tang Lixing, referring to the English curriculum.

³⁴ Tang Lixing, p 42.

³⁵ Löfstedt.

³⁶ Ironically, the government's plan to institute ten years of schooling instead of twelve years moved China towards the system operating in the Soviet Union, and originated from suggestions by Soviet educationalists made in the early fifties. See Manzoor Ahmed, Cheng Kai Ming, A.K. Jalaluddin and K. Ramachandran, Basic Education and National Development: Lessons from China and India, (New York: UNICEF, 1991).

³⁷ Tang Jun.

³⁸ Tang Lixing, and Larsen-Freeman.

³⁹ For example, "National Day" in Book 2 Lesson 4 and "Tibet Reborn" in Book 3 Lesson 9 have patriotic themes. Several lessons refer to People's Communes, the collectives which had been introduced during the Great Leap Forward. An exceptional example of a negative portrayal of another country is "Eddie Lewis" in Book 2 Lesson 20, which tells the tale of a black child in the United States who died after being refused admission to hospital by white doctors.

⁴⁰ Tang Jun.

⁴¹ The group recommended that attention be paid to oracy as well as literacy, and that the syllabus and materials should be carefully planned and graded according to linguistic complexity (Tang Jun).

⁴² People's Education Press, Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang (English Syllabus), (Beijing: People's Education Press), 1963. In Chinese.

⁴³ Responsibility was also strengthened: from 1962, all authors, editors and consultants were named in textbooks (Tang Jun).

⁴⁴ Tang Jun. One request made by teachers and accepted by the PEP was to change the handwriting model from Gothic to Italic style.

⁴⁵ For example, "Imperialism Will Not Last Long" in Book 5 Lesson 2; "New Awakening of the American Negroes" in Book 5 Lesson 16; "Imperialism and All Reactionaries Are Paper Tigers" in Book 6 Lesson 1; "The Revolutionary tradition of the Good Eighth Company" in Book 6 Lessons 7 and 8; "A Letter from South Viet Nam" in Book 6 Lesson 12.

⁴⁶ Immanuel C.Y. Hsü, The Rise of Modern China, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴⁷ Tang Jun.

⁴⁸ Tang Jun

⁴⁹ Quoted by Löfstedt, p 124.

⁵⁰ Tang Lixing.

⁵¹ Quoted in Jonathan Unger, Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools 1960-1980, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p 282. A subsequent boost to the status of English was heralded by the thawing of relations with the USA, which resulted in President Nixon's visit to China in 1971.

⁵² Tang Lixing.

⁵³ The first textbooks for the new syllabus were published in March 1978.

⁵⁴ People's Education Press Zhong Xiao Xue Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang (English Syllabus for Primary and Secondary Schools), (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1978). In Chinese.

⁵⁵ Liu Daoyi (personal communication).

⁵⁶ Liu. For example, Book 1 Lesson 14 presents the following drill, which is typical of many of the language exercises:

“I have Chairman Mao's works.

You have Chairman Mao's works.

He has Chairman Mao's works, too.

We study Chairman Mao's works hard.”

⁵⁷ For example, the old scientist in Book 3 Lesson 4 tells the students to study hard, be good at foreign languages, take plenty of exercise and above all, study Marxism.

⁵⁸ For example, "The Universe and Man-made Satellites" in Book 4 Lesson 20, and "Whales -- Giants of the Sea" in Book 5 Lesson 10.

⁵⁹ Including Sir Rowland Hill, in Book 6 Lesson 24, for devising the concept of cheap postage stamps to enable poor people to send letters.

⁶⁰ Tang Jun.

⁶¹ Liu.

⁶² Tang Jun.

⁶³ Liu.

⁶⁴ Liu.

⁶⁵ This quotation, taken from an inscription written by Deng Xiaoping in 1983, is included in later editions of the syllabus. It appears to lend legitimacy to the economic, open-door orientation of the 1982 syllabus.

⁶⁶ People's Education Press, Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang (English Syllabus), (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1986). In Chinese.

⁶⁷ Liu.

⁶⁸ People's Education Press, Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang (English Syllabus), (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1993). In Chinese.

⁶⁹ People's Education Press, "Programme for the Compilation of the English Teaching Materials for Nine-Year Compulsory Education in the Full-Time Secondary Schools," project document for PEP/Longman materials developers, 1989.

⁷⁰ People's Education Press, 1989.

⁷¹ People's Education Press, 1989.

⁷² People's Education Press, 1989.

⁷³ People's Education Press, 1989.

⁷⁴ Approximately 80%, according to Liu, who was the Chief Editor of JEFC.

⁷⁵ L.G. Alexander served as the consultant. Neville Grant was the principal writer, while Bob Adamson was engaged to write the Teacher's Books with Liu Daoyi.

⁷⁶ Liu. For instance, in the final version of the series, two units were deleted from Books 3 and 4 after teachers complained of content overload in the piloted textbooks. Changes were made to the Teacher's Books, with additional notes in Chinese being supplied. The PEP also responded to teachers' requests by producing extra supplementary materials, such as wall charts and a handbook of stick figures for blackboard drawings. The feedback and experimentation process remains a feature of the curriculum process: a

number of books and magazine articles by teachers of English have appeared since the publication of JEFC, discussing problems and suggesting alternative teaching strategies.

⁷⁷ Tang Lixing, and Larsen-Freeman.

⁷⁸ An underlying belief of the course is one which prevails in such second language pedagogies as the Functional / Notional Approach, which views communicative competence as requiring an awareness of relevant socio-cultural factors. Appropriate use of language is not synonymous with grammatical accuracy: instead it stems from matching the formality, register and style of the language to the dynamics of a given situation.

⁷⁹ For example, "Take-away food" in Book 2 Lesson 78; "Christmas Day" in Book 3 Lesson 54; a description of Ayers Rock in Book 3 Lesson 94; a discussion about American football in Book 2 Lesson 27; and "American English and British English" in Book 4 Lesson 77.

⁸⁰ For example, "Thomas Edison" in Book 3 Lesson 42 and "The Great Green Wall" in Book 3 Lesson 74 (about afforestation in central China).

⁸¹ For example, passages on not jumping the queue in Book 2 Lesson 90 and "Good Manners" in Book 4 Lessons 86 and 87.

⁸² For example, "The Seagulls of Salt Lake City" in Book 4 Lessons 14 and 15.

⁸³ For a detailed discussion of this relationship, see Colin Marsh and Paul Morris (eds.), Curriculum Development in East Asia. (UK: Falmer Press, 1991).

⁸⁴ See case studies in Tang Lixing, and R.D. Adamson, "An Analysis of Junior English EFL Teacher Training in the People's Republic of China," (M.Phil. thesis, University of Wales, 1992), as well as the survey by Zhang Zhengdong and Zhang Penghao, quoted by Tang Lixing.

Table 1: Features of the English Curriculum in Five Periods since the Founding of the PRC

	1956-1960 The End of Soviet Influence	1960-1966 Towards Quality in Education	1966-1976 The Cultural Revolution	1977-1993 Modernization under Deng Xiaoping	1993- Towards Nine Years' Compulsory Education
Macro National Priorities	National socialist construction	Quality in education to support development	Social revolution	Economic modernization	Economic modernization and compulsory schooling
Role of English	Access to scientific and technical information	Developing cultural and scientific knowledge	Vehicle for propaganda	Developing trade; cultural and scientific knowledge	Developing trade; cultural and scientific knowledge
Sets of Official Textbooks	Series 1-3	Series 4-5	No national series, but some produced regionally	Series 6-7	Series 8 and competing series produced by regional publishers
Content of Texts	Anecdotes, stories, scientific and politicized texts	Anecdotes, stories, scientific texts; some politicized texts	Highly politicized texts	Anecdotes, stories, scientific texts; some politicized texts	Anecdotes, stories; scientific and cultural information
Pedagogy of Texts	Grammar-translation	Audio-lingualism and grammar-translation	Grammar-translation	Audio-lingualism and grammar-translation	Eclectic