

# Focus on Curriculum Change in China and Hong Kong

## The English Curriculum in the People's Republic of China

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The inclusion of English in school curricula around the world has been associated with a variety of motivations. In some cases, it has been depicted as a unifying lingua franca for administration, broadcasting, and education; in others as a means for facilitating international communication, trade and scientific progress, national reconstruction, and empowerment or repression.<sup>1</sup> The growing international importance of the English over the past 150 years is not without pitfalls, however, for national cultures and political, economic, and social systems, which are threatened by values that may be imported with the English language. Moreover, the status of indigenous languages may diminish if English is accorded superior social and economic prestige, and such languages may even face extinction.<sup>2</sup>

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), these tensions have polarized attitudes toward English as a school subject.<sup>3</sup> For Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders supporting Western-style "modernization" policies (albeit with Chinese characteristics), the study of English is regarded as necessary for acquiring technological expertise and for fostering international trade. For leaders more concerned with the integrity of Chinese culture and systems, however, the English language bears uncomfortable connotations of capitalism, imperialism, or even barbarianism. It also is perceived to embody values undesirable and antithetical to Chinese culture and the ideology of the CCP.<sup>4</sup> This tension has resulted in English

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<sup>1</sup> See Alastair Pennycook, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> See Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> 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 antiforeignism and encouraged resistance to Western influences. See Kuang-Sheng Liao, *Antiforeignism and Modernization in China*, 3d ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Y. F. Dzau, "Historical Background," in *English in China*, ed. Y. F. Dzau (Hong Kong: API Press, 1990), pp. 11-40.

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instruction being described as “the barometer of modernization,”<sup>5</sup> in that its position in the curriculum has been enthusiastically endorsed by the country’s leaders when economic considerations such as “modernization” or technological transfer from Western nations have prevailed over those reflecting a more isolationist and anticapitalist agenda, and vice versa. The contested status of English as a school subject throws the processes of curriculum policymaking and implementation into sharp relief.

The sensitivity surrounding English poses particular problems for those Chinese agencies and personnel charged with designing and producing the various components of the official national curriculum, especially syllabuses and textbooks. Not only do these agencies have to navigate through often conflicting and shifting ideological currents, which influence the selection of both curriculum content and pedagogical approaches, but they also must produce syllabuses and materials for teaching English that take into account the diversity of Chinese schools.<sup>6</sup> By exploring how these tensions have been resolved, we gain insight into the strategies of curriculum development used and the nature of the policymaking process within the PRC.

The focus here is on the junior secondary (*chuzhong*) school curriculum, which has been more sensitive to political shifts than other levels because it is the stage of mass schooling at which most students study English. Five historical periods are identified in terms of the process of curriculum policymaking and its objectives, content, and pedagogical approaches. Evidence is derived from analysis of the various syllabuses and textbooks, literature by Chinese scholars, and interviews with two key individuals—Tang Jun and Liu Daoyi—who participated in the curriculum reform.<sup>7</sup>

A tripartite depiction of agencies involved in curriculum development since 1949 is used to facilitate discussion among the various agencies in the five periods. The agencies are designated as the superordinate, the

<sup>5</sup> Heidi Ross, “Foreign Language Education as a Barometer of Modernization,” in *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe (Oxford: Pergamon, 1992), pp. 239–50.

<sup>6</sup> There are a variety of national systems, such as key-point schools and specialized schools, as well as regional variations.

<sup>7</sup> 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 Guan, “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), ed. Curriculum, Materials and Methodology Association (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1986), pp. 181–215; Qun Yi and Li Qingting, eds., *Waiyu jiaoyu fazhen zhanlue yanjiu* (Research into foreign language education development strategies) (Sichuan: Sichuan Education Press, 1991); and Tang Lixing, *TEFL in China: Methods and Techniques* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Languages Press, 1983).

intermediate, and the subordinate.<sup>8</sup> The first category is composed of 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 instruction, who are based primarily in tertiary institutes. Members of this group at the provincial, county, and municipal levels also are responsible for public assessment. The subordinate group consists primarily of classroom teachers who directly implement the syllabus.

To date, much of the literature on curriculum innovation in China has concentrated on demonstrating the connection between changes in macro-level policies and subsequent educational reforms. Central to these studies are the strong linkages between the oscillations of national politics and the state's hegemonic role in defining school curricula through its bureaucratic, centralized, and coercive mechanisms.<sup>9</sup> Similar portrayals of the former Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes<sup>10</sup> suggest the operation of a general discourse whose focus on the state derives from the ideological tensions of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the state-monopoly view of policy formulation and implementation in the PRC has come into question. Studies of the processes linking national political priorities and their impact on curricula suggest a substantial degree of reconstruction and reinterpretation of national policies by various agencies and considerable slippage between curriculum policy and its implementation.<sup>12</sup> Lynn Paine goes further, contending that the actual formulation of contempo-

<sup>8</sup> 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. diss., University of Hong Kong, 1995), extending the framework developed in Colin J. Marsh, *Curriculum: An Analytical Introduction* (Sydney: Ian Novak, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Theodore Chen Hsi-en, *Chinese Education since 1949: Academic and Revolutionary Models* (New York: Pergamon, 1981); and Shen Jianping, "Educational Policy in the People's Republic of China: A Political Influence Perspective," *Journal of Education Policy* 9 (January–March 1994): 1–13.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Brian Holmes and Martin McLean, *The Curriculum: A Comparative Perspective* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 102–21; Mervyn Matthews, *Education in the Soviet Union* (London: Allen & 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.

<sup>11</sup> See Ronald F. Price, "China: A Problem of Information?" *Comparative Education Review* 25 (February 1981): 85–92.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., 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. diss., 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.

rary 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.<sup>13</sup> We elaborate on this argument by showing that curriculum policymaking has evolved since 1949 from a centralized and state-controlled process into a more complex and pluralistic procedure that displays an increased degree of pluralism. Table 1 summarizes that evolution in regard to the English language curriculum during the five periods.<sup>14</sup>

#### Period 1: The End of Soviet Influence (1956–60)

This period saw the demise of Soviet influence in the PRC and a series of attempts in education 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 it sought to respond to shifts in that balance.

In the years immediately following the Communist revolution in China, 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 broadening education. One was to eradicate the influence of prerevolutionary ideas and to inculcate socialist ideology, and the second was to provide an educated work force for national construction.<sup>15</sup> The Common Program thus attempted to balance economic and political elements. Little official attention was paid to the teaching of English, though, as the close political alliance between the CCP and the Soviet Union combined with the failure of the United States to recognize the PRC led to the recommendation that Russian be studied in schools (although schools teaching English would be allowed to continue).<sup>16</sup>

Initially, three lessons per week were allocated to Russian or English. Between 1954 and 1957, however, all foreign language instruction ceased in junior secondary schools because authorities wanted to reduce the curricular demands on students,<sup>17</sup> and priority was to be given to Chinese

<sup>13</sup> Lynn Paine, “The Educational Policy Process: A Case Study of Bureaucratic Action in China,” in *Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision-making in Post-Mao China*, ed. K. Lieberthal and D. Lampton (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 181–215.

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

<sup>15</sup> The Common Program, chap. 5, article 49.

<sup>16</sup> Qun and Li, eds. 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.”

<sup>17</sup> The ministry was under recurring pressure from teachers to reduce the learning load on students. See Lewin et al., p. 151.

TABLE 1  
 FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN FIVE PERIODS SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE PRC

	The End of Soviet Influence, 1956-60	Toward Quality in Education, 1960-66	The Cultural Revolution, 1966-76	Modernization under Deng Xiaoping, 1977-93	Toward Nine Years' Compulsory Education, 1993-
Macro national priorities	National socialist construction	Quality in education to support development	Social revolution	Economic modernization	Economic modernization
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	Highly politicized texts	Anecdotes, stories, scientific texts; some politicized	Anecdotes, stories; scientific and cultural information
Pedagogy of texts	Grammar-translation	Audio-lingualism and grammar-translation	Grammar-translation	Audio-lingualism and grammar-translation	Eclectic

and other subjects, especially mathematics and science.<sup>18</sup> It was the industrial expansion of the mid-1950s, carried out with Soviet aid, that rekindled official interest in English as a valuable language of science and technology. As a result, the Ministry of Education announced in 1956 that, from the following year, junior secondary schools again would teach either Russian or English with the expectation that the number of schools offering English would be equal to the number offering Russian.<sup>19</sup>

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 I), as the PEP lacked the experience to perform these tasks.<sup>20</sup> When most other tertiary institutions were concentrating on teaching 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 of their considerable experience in preparing materials for introductory English courses at the Institute in the early fifties.<sup>21</sup> 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 Institute, and secondary school textbooks from the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> While the latter choice was a result in part of the limited number of foreign textbooks available in the PRC, it also was an appropriate model for imitation given that both countries displayed political antipathy toward Western nations and both used textbooks to promote political ideology.

The syllabus aimed at “motivating students to continue to learn English in the future and providing them with the relevant knowledge, skills, and techniques.”<sup>23</sup> The two textbooks the PEP published in 1957 center around reading passages and grammar exercises, although Book 1 also emphasizes pronunciation. The orientation of the syllabus and the textbooks reflects 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 to produce interpreters who would need clear diction and correct usage in their profession. The intended pedagogical approach is specified in Lesson 15 of Book 2:

<sup>18</sup> Tang Guan (n. 7 above).

<sup>19</sup> Qun and Li, eds. (n. 7 above).

<sup>20</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, Beijing, July 29, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Tang Jun, reporting a recent discussion with Ying Manrong, Beijing, July 29, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> People’s Education Press, *Yingyu jiaoxue dagang* (English syllabus) (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1957).

## 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 teacher-centered grammar-translation method of second language pedagogy, which is characterized by an emphasis on reading and writing skills, constant references to the learners' mother tongue, a focus on grammatical forms, and memorization of grammatical paradigms.<sup>24</sup> Passages range from stories and everyday anecdotes to overtly politicized material, much of which is oriented toward promoting a strong sense of national identity.<sup>25</sup> 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 child. 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 1950s, the "politics to the fore" movement—as manifested in the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward—prevailed in national policies 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) that the ideological messages in education were insufficient and that the Soviet influence on the curriculum was undesirable.<sup>26</sup> Despite the overt political content in Series 1, it was condemned as being divorced from politics, production, and reality.<sup>27</sup> In response to these criticisms, the Ministry of Education mandated a new set of three textbooks (Series 2) for junior secondary schools. In April, staff from the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute were commissioned to write Junior English Book 1, to be used the follow-

<sup>24</sup> This characterization is taken from Tang Lixing (n. 7 above); and also from 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 (n. 4 above); and Donald J. Ford, *The Twain Shall Meet: The Current Study of English in China* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> "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!"

<sup>26</sup> Jan-Ingvar Löfstedt, *Chinese Educational Policy* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1980).

<sup>27</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, Beijing, July 29, 1995.

ing September. The Ministry then rushed production of the complete series and engaged staff of the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute to write Books 2 and 3.<sup>28</sup>

The new set of textbooks bore a strong resemblance to Series 1, as many of the original texts were retained and others in a similar political vein were added.<sup>29</sup> These political texts are translated from Chinese language textbooks also published by the PEP.<sup>30</sup> The pedagogical approach is likewise similar to Series 1. However, in letters and at conferences and training workshops organized by the PEP, teachers criticized the lack of coordination between Book 1 and the other two books.<sup>31</sup>

While Series 2 was under preparation, another set of books (Series 3) was commissioned and published by the PEP and tested in selected schools. This set included, for the first time, material for teaching English in primary as well as secondary schools. Series 3, which was written by staff of the Foreign Languages Department of the Beijing Teachers University, is a unified set of 18 books, designed to encompass 3 years of primary and 6 years of secondary education. To a greater extent than Series 1 and Series 2, the contents of the Series 3 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, paraphrasing, and composition activities), there is no overt language instruction.

After a trial of 2 years involving several thousand students, Series 3 was abandoned, partly because of a moderation in the national political climate but principally because 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

<sup>28</sup> "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, personal communication, July 29, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> For example, "A Tibetan Girl," in Book 3, Lesson 15, extols the virtues of life in Tibet under the role of the CCP.

<sup>30</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, July 29, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> 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.



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."

In short, three series of English textbooks were produced for the junior secondary level from 1956 to 1960. Two of them attempted to maintain a balance among 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 for texts. Meanwhile, the third set of textbooks, intended for primary and secondary schools, was heavily skewed toward ideological goals to the detriment of other aims. Series 3 reflected the contemporary climate of "politics to the fore" by using political tracts written by or about national leaders almost exclusively. Significantly, these texts were abandoned not only because of political developments but also because teachers found them to be unteachable.

While the superordinate group (the PEP) dictated the development of the curriculum during this period, the actual writing of the syllabuses and textbooks was placed in the hands of a variety of intermediate agencies. Concomitantly, criticisms from the subordinate group (teachers) led to revisions in some textbooks and contributed to the rejection of others.

### **Period 2: A Search for Quality in Education (1960–66)**

The early 1960s were a period of profound changes in political direction, especially a rejection of Soviet models and an attempt to move education toward a more professional orientation. The period has been variously described as one of "curriculum reform and experiments"<sup>32</sup> and as the "First Renaissance."<sup>33</sup> The Sino-Soviet alliance weakened as China's rulers became increasingly disaffected with Nikita 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 was a review of English language teaching, an initiative strongly influenced by grassroots calls for changes in pedagogy. 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 widespread desire to discard or at least improve them. With the focus on

<sup>32</sup> Lewin et al. (n. 12 above).

<sup>33</sup> Tang Lixing, referring to the English curriculum.

reforming the curriculum, compiling teaching materials, experimenting with new teaching methods and improving teaching facilities, education boomed."<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, a National Cultural and Educational Conference was held in October 1960 to discuss ways of improving English instruction.<sup>35</sup> Participants recommended revision of the syllabus and national textbooks, and the long-term introduction of English in primary schools nationwide as part of a 10-year schooling program.<sup>36</sup> A committee of PEP members and consultants was formed to prepare new syllabuses and resources that would include two sets of textbooks: Series 4 for schools adopting the 10-year primary and secondary program and Series 5 for students starting English at the secondary level under the existing system. The consultants enlisted by the PEP came from the Foreign Languages Department of Beijing Teachers University, whose members played a significant role in the National Cultural and Educational Conference. The committee first drew up a draft syllabus that stressed the use of colloquial English and the ability to read professional publications in English. These objectives were to be accomplished through a thematic approach that closely integrated the difficulty level of texts with a linear progression of discrete linguistic components.<sup>37</sup>

Series 4—which included eight books for primary schools (two to be used per year from grades 2 to 5) and three junior secondary textbooks—was produced in 1961 and 1962. In these three junior secondary volumes, 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 passages in the first half of the course are intended to be read aloud, as intonation patterns are marked in the text, and insights into the pedagogical approach 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?

<sup>34</sup> Tang Lixing, p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> Löfstedt.

<sup>36</sup> Ironically, the government's plan to institute 10 years of schooling instead of 12 years moved China toward 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).

<sup>37</sup> Tang Jun.

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 emphasizes oral skills before written ones, encourages students to use English as much as possible, incorporates sentence-pattern drills, and promotes learning through habit formation.<sup>38</sup> The texts focus around aspects of everyday life or tell stories, and while some passages convey a strong patriotic or socialist message, texts that negatively portray other countries are sparse compared to texts of the previous period.<sup>39</sup>

The 10-year program for which Series 4 was intended was not adopted throughout the country. In the main, its use was restricted to certain schools in larger cities whose students were deemed capable of covering the 12-year syllabus in 10 years.<sup>40</sup> Most schools retained the 12-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 60 years of English language teaching in China and to examine ideas from Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom.<sup>41</sup> This group was then 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

<sup>38</sup> Tang Lixing (n. 7 above); and Larsen-Freeman (n. 24 above).

<sup>39</sup> 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 the hospital by white doctors.

<sup>40</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, July 29, 1995.

<sup>41</sup> 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 Guan [n. 7 above]).

strengthen our relationship with people in different countries; and to empower people in different countries to combat imperialism.<sup>42</sup>

To accompany the new syllabus, the six-book Series 5 was published by the PEP after a draft version was piloted in three secondary schools in Beijing and Tianjin in 1962–63. The PEP increased its English editorial staff to 10 members in 1962 by recruiting educators from leading institutes. In addition, a team of consultants (including several expatriates) from tertiary institutes was formed to comment on and polish the materials.<sup>43</sup> The publishing process also was reorganized. Surveys were conducted among senior teachers on the content, organization, and methodology of the textbooks, while feedback also was collected at seminars and through a survey of teachers at the three schools where Series 5 had been tested.<sup>44</sup>

The final orientation of the new series was similar to that of the Series 4 textbooks. Indeed, many of the lessons are identical. Emphasis in Series 5 is placed initially on oral skills through audio-lingual drills (tapes also were available), but the grammar-translation method returns from Book 3 onward. The content of texts also is similar to that of 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.<sup>45</sup> These themes reflect the political climate of the times. The People's Communes were a product of the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s, but the results in the early 1960s were unacceptable to many Chinese leaders.<sup>46</sup> Another reason for the thematic shift was the rise of Sino-American tensions by 1963 because of the developing war in Vietnam. Further differences between the two series arose from criticisms of Series 4 by teachers that the textbooks were overly demanding. As a result, adjustments were made in the number of vocabulary items, and the early stages of the course contained a simpler progression from the alphabet to short passages.<sup>47</sup>

In short, curriculum innovation in English from 1960 to 1966 responded to demands for improved educational quality and a less direct political indoctrination by shifting toward an amalgam of audio-lingual

<sup>42</sup> People's Education Press, *Yingyu jiaoxue dagang* (English syllabus) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1963).

<sup>43</sup> Responsibility was also strengthened: from 1962, all authors, editors, and consultants were named in textbooks (Tang Guan).

<sup>44</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, July 29, 1995. One request made by teachers and accepted by the PEP was to change the handwriting model from Gothic to Italic style.

<sup>45</sup> 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.

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

<sup>47</sup> Tang Guan.

and grammar-translation methods—extending the focus from reading to also embrace listening, speaking, and writing. The superordinate agency (PEP) relied heavily at first 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 also were involved by promoting change (through experiments with new pedagogy or by criticizing current resources and practices) and by testing new textbooks. Decisions concerning curriculum development in English in this period primarily were influenced by a growing understanding of overseas models and practices. Although a political agenda was not entirely absent—as reflected in the themes chosen for textbook reading passages—the intermediate and superordinate agencies had a degree of freedom in introducing pedagogical innovations (often in consultation with the subordinate agencies) intended to enhance language learning in junior secondary schools.

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 under way, both series were discarded as useless by the Ministry of Education.<sup>48</sup>

### **Period 3: The Cultural Revolution (1966–76)**

The political and social turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, which sought to overturn many aspects of traditional Chinese society, disrupted instruction in all schools, and the mobilization of many students as Red Guards meant that education became one of its focal points. In a letter to Defense Minister Lin Biao dated May 7, 1966, Mao wrote, “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.”<sup>49</sup>

Such ideas contributed to the violence that accompanied the Cultural Revolution, and many foreign-language teachers suffered at the hands of Red Guards after being accused of spying for other countries or worshipping everything foreign.<sup>50</sup> Anarchy erupted throughout the educational system, and most schools stopped teaching English. Ironically, how-

<sup>48</sup> Tang Jun, personal communication, July 29, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted by Löfstedt (n. 26 above), p. 124.

<sup>50</sup> Tang Lixing (n. 7 above).

ever, Mao affirmed the value of studying English in a conversation with Red Guard leaders at Beijing University in 1968, the same year the PEP was disbanded: "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."<sup>51</sup>

In 1970, English started to reappear on the curriculum in some schools, although the time devoted to it was limited. The textbooks, which were produced at the provincial and municipal levels, focused on political propaganda (slogans and political tracts) in a way similar to the textbooks produced during the Great Leap Forward (Series 3). Communication or pedagogical matters received little attention and no syllabuses were issued. The textbooks focused on developing reading and writing skills. A typical lesson started with the teacher reading the vocabulary lists for the students to imitate before going through the text and translating it into Chinese. After students listened to the translation of the text, written exercises concentrating on grammar or translation would end the lesson.<sup>52</sup>

In this period, modest curriculum development in English 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 that an aim of the Cultural Revolution was to undermine the traditional role of teachers, the prevailing pedagogy involved a return to a teacher-centered grammar-translation methodology. There are several possible reasons for this choice. First, audio-lingualism was associated with American methods of language learning, which had an unhealthy connotation for Chinese educators at that time. Second, those responsible for curriculum development were relatively inexperienced and their lack of exposure to other pedagogical approaches may have limited their choice to the methodology that they had encountered in learning English and their mother tongue. Finally, such a pedagogy lends itself to use when alternative resources are limited, where teachers lack expertise in more interactive or communication-oriented pedagogy, and where the main purpose of teaching is to preach political dogma.

#### **Period 4: Modernization under Deng Xiaoping (1977–93)**

The death of Mao in 1976 and the arrest of the "Gang of Four"—the most powerful faction in the national leadership during the latter stages

<sup>51</sup> 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 United States, which resulted in President Nixon's visit to China in 1971.

<sup>52</sup> Tang Lixing.

of the Cultural Revolution—marked the end of a period of political turmoil and economic isolation for China. Nevertheless, the impact of the Cultural Revolution lingered, as evidenced by the rhetoric used in both the politics-oriented and economics-oriented camps within curriculum development agencies. The PEP was reestablished in 1977 and quickly produced a new syllabus and accompanying textbooks, as schooling returned to a semblance of normality.<sup>53</sup>

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 that had characterized the early 1960s initially was 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.<sup>54</sup>

To produce the new English syllabus and accompanying textbooks (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 to every school via provincial education bureaus, and conferences were held for teachers and specialists in Wuhan, Shanghai, and other major cities. Feedback from these measures led to changes in the textbooks such as the rejection of a proposal to introduce phonetic symbols before the alphabet, a response to criticism by a group of Beijing teachers invited to arbitrate a dispute among the textbook writers.<sup>55</sup> The six books in the series also were revised after brief trials in selected second-

<sup>53</sup> The first textbooks for the new syllabus were published in March 1978.

<sup>54</sup> People's Education Press, *Zhong xiao zue xingyu jiaoxue dagang* (English syllabus for primary and secondary schools) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1978).

<sup>55</sup> Liu Daoyi, personal communication, Hong Kong, December 19, 1995.

ary schools. Major revisions were necessary because teachers complained that the books were too difficult to teach, primarily because of the emphasis on political content to the detriment of language instruction.<sup>56</sup>

The revised version of Series 6, which was published for national use in 1978, included teachers' books and cassettes demonstrating the reading passages and pattern drills. The pedagogical approach was similar to that of Series 5 (1963–66) in that the audio-lingual pattern drills early in the series were gradually combined with and then 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.<sup>57</sup> Other passages include topics of general educational interest,<sup>58</sup> stories with strong moral messages, such as "The Hare and the Tortoise" (Book 2, Lesson 22); and selections with positive portrayals of foreigners.<sup>59</sup> A recurrent theme dating back to Series 1 of 1957–58—the unjust treatment of blacks in the United States—reappears in Book 4, Lesson 23, "A Black Girl Speaks Her Mind," although "Negroes in America" in Book 6, Lesson 14, ends with the somewhat back-handed compliment that "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, as in the passage for reading aloud in Book 2, Lesson 32: "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 20 years, China will become a modern and strong socialist country." Overall, however, this series contains far less overtly political material than textbooks from Series 3 and Cultural Revolution textbooks.

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 also to the twin-track policy instigated

<sup>56</sup> Liu, personal communication. 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."

<sup>57</sup> 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.

<sup>58</sup> For example, "The Universe and Man-Made Satellites," in Book 4, Lesson 20, and "Whales—Giants of the Sea," in Book 5, Lesson 10.

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



by Deng Xiaoping, which set up keypoint secondary schools to provide education for the academic elite.<sup>60</sup> In designing the new syllabus and textbooks, the PEP collected feedback from teachers, some of which was gathered at a national conference held at the Summer Palace in Beijing in September 1981.<sup>61</sup> The time allocated for English in primary schools, where problems in the provision and quality of instruction had surfaced, was reduced from 4 to 3 hours a week. For the 5 years of junior and senior secondary schooling, however, 768 hours was allocated for English—an increase of 112 hours over the 1978 figure.<sup>62</sup> This new arrangement also reduced the level of difficulty in the junior secondary textbooks, as one of the main criticisms from teachers concerned the large number of vocabulary and grammatical items in the syllabus and the way they were organized in Series 6.<sup>63</sup> Teachers also complained that secondary students were overburdened, particularly as the time allocated (656 hours) in 1978 was roughly half the time (1,238 hours) allowed for teaching the similarly oriented Series 5 in 1963.<sup>64</sup> The extra hours allocated to English in 1982 over those in 1978 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 the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute. In addition to revising the organization and presentation of discrete linguistic items in line with the new time arrangements and feedback on the 1978 series, the PEP made changes to the stated aims of English instruction. The introduction to the new syllabus is less political than its immediate predecessor, concentrating more on the economic benefits of studying 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."<sup>65</sup> 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

<sup>60</sup> Tang Guan (n. 7 above).

<sup>61</sup> Liu, personal communication.

<sup>62</sup> Tang Guan.

<sup>63</sup> Liu, personal communication.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> 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.

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.<sup>66</sup>

This softening of political rhetoric paralleled the Open Door Policy, which supported the Four Modernizations Program and encouraged foreign investment and technical transfer. English skills were thus perceived as a conduit for acquiring technological expertise and for dealing with foreigners. Moreover, reading passages in the new textbooks published by the PEP (Series 7) concentrated 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, selections about the treatment of blacks in America are not. New passages included one about good manners in public and in the classroom (Book 6, Lesson 8), and several had a scientific theme.

The pedagogical approach in the revised textbooks was similar to that in Series 6. Early on short dialogues and sentence patterns for oral drilling were emphasized, gradually giving way to more reading passages. Thus, the pedagogy was once more a blend of audio-lingualism and the grammar-translation method. The series was used throughout most of China until 1993, when a new syllabus and textbooks were published. Series 7 was not free from criticism, however, as teachers complained that the textbooks continued to make too many demands of the students. PEP accepted this criticism, acknowledging that it had designed the materials for the elite keypoint schools without adequately considering the needs of other schools.<sup>67</sup>

Overall, then, while there were a number of reforms between 1977 and 1993, the resulting orientation—especially in terms of pedagogy and the focus on economic goals—resembled the English curriculum that had prevailed between 1960 and 1966. Members of 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 as their feedback considerably influenced the syllabus and textbooks that appeared in 1978 and the 1982 revisions. The intended pedagogical approach of this later period also resembled that of the early 1960s, rejecting the traditional, teacher-centered methodology of the textbooks that appeared during the Cultural Revolution. This change can be attributed to the efforts of educational specialists at top institutions in China who possessed knowledge of alternative approaches to English language teaching; to the less stringent political re-

<sup>66</sup> People's Education Press, *Yingyu jiaoxue dagang* (English syllabus) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1986).

<sup>67</sup> Liu, personal communication.

straints of the Dengist era, which made it acceptable to import pedagogical ideas from Western countries and which also increased the value of learning to communicate with foreigners; and to feedback from teachers grappling with the everyday problems of motivating and meeting the needs of their students.

#### **Period 5: Toward Nine Years' Compulsory Education**

Since 1949, the provision of compulsory education has been a major goal of the CCP. Initial attempts in the 1950s and early 1960s were restricted to providing compulsory primary schooling within the framework of the 10- and 12-year educational programs. In 1986, however, officials promulgated the ambitious Nine-Year Compulsory Education Law, which envisaged the provision of primary and junior secondary schooling nationwide. The target date was 1990 for providing 9 years of schooling in major cities and well-developed areas, 1995 in the hinterland provinces, and as circumstances allowed in remote areas. A revision of the English syllabus consequently was required in order to provide materials flexible enough to be used by the different systems of mass education in the world's most populous nation. While the resulting syllabus was drawn up by the PEP in consultation with specialists, according to established practice, recognition of the particular needs of different regions and the climate of devolving economic power to the provinces led the State Education Commission to permit the production of alternative textbooks by different agencies. These included the South East Normal University (for use in the Guangdong region), Beijing Normal University, Sichuan Educational Science Institute, and the South West Normal University as well as the PEP. Although each province could select the textbooks to be used in its schools, the PEP enjoyed an enormous advantage in resources over other publishers.

The 1993 English syllabus focuses principally on economic goals, as the preface makes clear: "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."<sup>68</sup>

The guidelines issued by the PEP for the compilation of teaching materials under the new syllabus require 400 class hours devoted to English in 3-year junior secondary schools and 530 hours in those that offer

<sup>68</sup> People's Education Press, *Yingyu jiaoxue dagang* (English syllabus) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1993).

4-year courses. The aims of the program are not overtly political, merely stipulating that materials should have "sound contents" and "good effects on students' moral character."<sup>69</sup> The study of English also is expanded to include aspects 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; and 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."<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the guidelines acknowledge the value of experience in developing 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."<sup>71</sup>

The guidelines also call for the study of foreign 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."<sup>72</sup> This statement echoes the maxim of *zhongxue weiti xixue weiyong* (the synthesis of Chinese essence and Western practice) that has recurrently 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 previously had been a relatively marginal goal. To achieve this end, the guidelines advise teachers to 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. . . .

<sup>69</sup> 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).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

When the students realize that they can communicate in English, they will go on learning with more interest and motivation."<sup>73</sup>

The revised English curriculum of 1993, therefore, makes the pedagogical parameters more holistic and communication-oriented. Teachers are free to choose their methodology to suit individual needs, but language performance is stressed over knowledge of details. Most notably, meaningful oral communication is viewed as the principal goal.

Of the various textbooks produced for the new curriculum, the PEP textbooks (Series 8), "Junior English for China" (JEFC), have been adopted by most secondary schools nationwide.<sup>74</sup> JEFC was the product of a project involving foreign agencies, Longman International Publishing Company, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which funded the venture. Longman supplied a consultant and two writers 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.<sup>75</sup> The project began with 6 months of research, a period in which Longman's chief writer met with teachers to collect their views on content and pedagogy to be incorporated into the series. Once completed, the textbooks were piloted over 3 years in contexts including major cities (e.g., Beijing), county towns, and small towns. Feedback then was collected from teachers and adjustments were made to the textbooks.<sup>76</sup>

The pedagogical approach implicit in the new course materials and explicit in the Teacher's Books may be classified as "eclectic."<sup>77</sup> Along with a general focus on communication, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing all receive attention; use of the mother tongue is permitted; and there also are elements of audio-lingualism in the drills used. Unlike former textbooks, which switched from an emphasis on audio-lingualism to the grammar-translation method within a series, the approach of JEFC remains consistent.<sup>78</sup> Each book is divided into units

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Approximately 80 percent, according to Liu, who was the chief editor of JEFC.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> Liu, personal communication. 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. Feedback and experimentation remain a feature of the curriculum process: since the publication of JEFC, a number of books and magazine articles by teachers of English have discussed problems with the curriculum and suggested alternative teaching strategies.

<sup>77</sup> Tang Lixing (n. 7 above); and Larsen-Freeman (n. 24 above).

<sup>78</sup> 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 sociocultural factors. Appropriate use of language is not synonymous with grammati-

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 United States, Britain, and Australia is presented through descriptions of food, festivals, places of interest, sports, and language.<sup>79</sup> Scientific and other academically oriented material also is included,<sup>80</sup> as is some on ethical behavior.<sup>81</sup> Other passages are stories, a number of which also appeared in Series 7.<sup>82</sup>

Besides changes in the orientation and content of textbooks and other materials, noteworthy innovations during this period include the variety of textbook series available to schools and the nature of participants in the production of Series 8. The active participation of external bodies—Longman and UNDP—is unprecedented in the PRC's junior secondary school English curriculum and is itself a reflection both of the demise of hard-line propaganda against noncommunist countries and of the predominant policy of selective borrowing from them. Moreover, while the role of intermediate agencies remained the same as in previous curriculum innovations (1978 and 1982), the role of subordinate agencies (i.e., classroom teachers) was greatly enlarged with their involvement in the research stage and the extensive piloting exercise. Foreign funding and the nation's increasing economic prosperity enabled the PEP to produce a more lavish set of textbooks, and although the new textbooks retained many features of their predecessors in content and pedagogy, the use of communicative English in specific sociocultural contexts received greater emphasis.

JEFC (Series 8) has generated considerable debate within the teaching profession. While the better qualified teachers in more prosperous regions generally have 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

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,

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cal accuracy: instead it stems from matching the formality, register, and style of the language to the dynamics of a given situation.

<sup>79</sup> 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.

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

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

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

something akin to a "desirable evil." Undeniably, there is a link among the nation's shifting priorities in terms of the open-door versus anticapitalist 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 1950s, the goal was to train people as "red" and "expert," which resulted in a balance of political and academic orientations in the English syllabus and teaching materials. The early 1960s saw an emphasis on economic modernization, and this is reflected in the reduction of overtly political elements in the English curriculum. The Dengist era, which started in the late 1970s, picked up where the early 1960s left off by reintroducing and expanding the economic modernization drive and soliciting the support of overseas agents to assist 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 cultures of other countries. In marked contrast, the decade of the Cultural Revolution was a period of intense and violent political activity that disrupted formal schooling and turned the English curriculum first and foremost into a political propaganda tool.

This article has demonstrated the correspondence between macro politics and the English curriculum in terms of both curriculum development and pedagogies promoted. The prevailing process of curriculum development in each of the periods was crafted by a superordinate agency, the PEP, which administered macro policy decisions made by the national government but was also significantly influenced by feedback from intermediate and subordinate agencies. Intermediate agencies have supplied expertise through their knowledge of second-language-acquisition theories and pedagogical models and, in the 1950s, through textbook writing. They also, from the early 1960s, 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 grassroots teachers, evolved from initially providing feedback on existing curricula, resulting in significant changes. In particular, Series 3 was abandoned largely because of teachers' negative feedback. Later the subordinate agencies became involved as consultants and critics in the design and development stages of new curricula (as in Series 6), or even as pioneers through their pedagogical experiments (as in Series 8).

Curriculum development reflects, to some extent, a compromise among the various agencies, but a clear procedure, rather than just a "muddling through," has evolved. The PEP continues to preside over

curriculum design, ensuring that the end product is in line with 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 teachers responsible for the actual implementation of the curriculum. This 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, the PEP closed down, and many of the intermediate agencies rusticated, leaving curriculum design to be carried out on a regional, grassroots basis.

A similar pattern developed in pedagogical approaches, with each innovation building upon the pedagogy and contents of the previous one. The exception, once again, occurred during the Cultural Revolution, when there was a return to the traditional grammar-translation approach. Likewise, in terms of textbook content there was a retreat from politically charged passages—especially salient during the Cultural Revolution—toward academic and ethical themes and toward more open-minded material with regard to foreign countries and culture.

Clearly, major discontinuities characterize the relationship between curricular policy and its implementation.<sup>83</sup> However, the growing role of teachers in the development process suggests sympathy within the profession for the eclectic orientation combining discourse-centered, audio-lingual, and grammar-translation methods of current materials. There is evidence of a more eclectic pedagogy in schools and a decline in the reliance on traditional grammar-translation pedagogy.<sup>84</sup>

Despite various political and social upheavals in China since 1949, curriculum development has not been a wholly centralized and monolithic exercise undertaken by the state and characterized merely by a series of pendulum swings corresponding to shifts in focus between the political and economic spheres. A focus on the link between politics and education, and on the centralized and bureaucratic nature of curriculum development processes, yields only a partial portrayal. This article has attempted to look behind those features, viewing the emerging pattern of curriculum development as involving a wider range of stakeholders, a greater sensitivity to the concerns of teachers, an increasingly eclectic orientation to pedagogy, and a greater concern with pupils' all-around communicative competencies.

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed discussion of this relationship, see Colin Marsh and Paul Morris, eds., *Curriculum Development in East Asia* (Lewes: Falmer, 1991).

<sup>84</sup> 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 in Tang Lixing.