

# Chapter 7

## A Retrospective View of the Developmental Trajectory of English as a Discipline in China



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**Abstract** This chapter accomplishes three goals. It begins with an overview of the origins and early growth of English education in China. Following that, it presents a theoretical periodization of English as a discipline in Chinese higher education after the People's Republic of China was founded. Finally, it demonstrates and examines the issues that this field is experiencing, as well as possible solutions. The chapter holds that the English language arose as an officially significant language in nineteenth-century China due to the urgent needs of international affairs. It continues to evolve in response to changing needs in a variety of fields. The different developmental periods with their specific approaches demonstrate particular situations both in China and abroad. With the opening and reform policy in China, English as a discipline has witnessed rapid changes and progress while also facing great challenges. With the passing of time, the changes and challenges will continue. It is believed that understanding the discipline's history, development trajectory, and prospective future in China will help instructors and students get prepared for what and how to teach and learn.

I have been a teacher of English in China since 1978. During this lengthy career, I have played various roles, as a teacher, an administrator, an organizer of policy-making in my institution and its executor, a participant in some of the national policy-making regarding foreign language teaching and learning in the capacity of a member of the Guiding Committee for the English Language Teaching Attached to the National Guiding Committee for Foreign Language Teaching in China, and a standing member of the Committee of Foreign Literature Research, and a witness to the successive reforms in China's education in general, in the discipline of English in particular.

My chapter is a retrospective view of the developing trajectory of English as an independent discipline in the international context, for the world to see its past, present and possible future. But that is not all. The status quo and its direction of future development of English can be compared with those of other countries, either

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to gain something or to see their advantages. Further, China will continue to recruit teachers of English; an understanding of China's English programs will surely help them become better prepared for a possible teaching experience, in terms of China's policies governing the future development, student understanding or curriculum design. As such, it is necessary to trace the history of the establishment of English as a foreign language officially taught, and the zigzag path this discipline has undergone, so that we can see the changes and reforms along the way. This chapter contains (1) a very brief history of the establishment of English in China, which will tell how English teaching arose in China; (2) a periodization of the development in this language teaching, which will illustrate the uneven approach to English teaching from 1949 to the present; (3) problems and reflections. In line with the social need at various times, English as a discipline has seen many changes and reforms, which led to the advancement of the discipline, and nevertheless, unavoidable problems. This section will consider the problems that have occurred and the thoughts about the possible solutions, and (4) Efforts to find a way out and a short summary.

## **A Very Brief History of the Establishment of English as a Discipline in China**

Historically speaking, China's foreign language teaching began in 1862 when China had its first school for translation, which was called Tongwenguan, to support foreign affairs needs of the then Qing Dynasty. Several languages were taught then, including English, Russian, German, French, and Japanese (Fu, 1986). It was at first a tertiary-system school, the compulsory courses for students were foreign languages and Chinese. In 1865, the school was upgraded to a four-year university, with many courses added. In 1901, the school joined the Jingshi Daxuetang (Fu, 1986). In 1912, the Jingshi Daxuetang changed its name to Peking University (Fu, 1986).

The 1911 Revolution in China toppled over the feudal society and the Nanjing Temporary Administration began. Next year, this Administration set up an educational system, which required the teaching of foreign languages in China's universities and the teaching of a few major foreign languages at middle and elementary schools as well (Fu, 1986: 24). In 1922, Shanghai University was jointly founded by the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party (CCPC), which had a Department of English (Fu, 1986: 48). In 1941, the University of Yan'an was built up by the CCPC, and it had a Department of Russian, which was coupled with the English Department in 1942. This university engendered the present Renmin University and Beijing Foreign Studies University (Fu, 1986).

The founding of the People's Republic of China marked not only the birth of a new State but also a new system of education influencing the teaching of English. However, education is something that cannot be cut off by the boundary of old and new states. It has its lingering influence on the subsequent system, and the new

system inevitably inherits the legacy. Looking back from 1949, we see a constellation of professors educated at universities before 1949, and they became the mainstay and pillar of foreign language education in China. Among the most well-known are Qian Zhongshu of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Yang Zhouhan, Li Funing, Zhao Luorui of Peking University, Wang Zuoliang, Xu Guozhang of Beijing International Studies University, Chen Jia of Nanjing University, to name just a few. These great masters in the field of English in China received their college education from Xi'nan Lianda (the Southwest Associated University) in Kunming, Yunnan Province. To understand their rise to prominence, it is useful to look at the history of the university, which was established in 1937 amidst the war winds. It was a university of joint forces from Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nankai University. This unique university existed only for less than 10 years, but it turned out many talents who later became the backbone in China's development. The English Department was no exception, for the most prominent names of the English circle in the New China were former faculty members or students of this university. Here are some of the major courses offered to the students, which were later important references for curriculum designing.

For the first year, the English major students had Chinese, English, biology, economics, the History of the West, and logic, with 38 credits. For the second year, History of English, History of Chinese Literature, History of European Literatures, English Essays, English Poetry, a second foreign language, with 38 credits. For the third year, the English language, English Novels, Shakespearean Studies, Sociology, phonetics, second foreign language. For the last year, the English Language, Western Dramas, Masterpieces of Western Literatures (Homer, the Holly Bible) Optional Courses in Literature, Introduction to Philosophy, with 33 credits (Fu, 1986: 62). From the above, we can see that though the courses inherited the liberal arts tradition of the west in the course designing (for a majority of the professors then received their education in the west), the emphasis was on language and literature. These might account for the fact that some prestigious universities still keep the name of the department as the Department of the English Language and Literature (such is the case with Peking University and Nanjing University). It is also because many well-known scholars in the field of English are masters in literature as well as language, and not otherwise. Keeping this in mind, we can better understand why it is more difficult to produce outstanding scholars in literature in nowadays China, for the emphasis of this discipline is already changed. In this chapter, I will investigate how changes took place and how the present situation gradually took shape.

## **The Periodization of English Teaching Since 1949**

The changes in China's English education did not take place in a day. Many changes have taken place in different periods of time. Scholars in education studies vary in the periodization of English teaching in China since 1949 when the PRC was founded. There are different opinions about periodization. Here are three major ones.

- (a) Fu Ke's division is: (1) 1949–1956; (2) 1957–1966; (3) 1966–1976; (4) 1976–1984 (c)
- (b) Dai Weidong divides it into 2 30-year periods: the first 30 years from 1949 to 1978, which is subdivided into 3 phases: 1949–1956; 1957–1966; 1967–1978; the second period is from the opening and reform to the year 2008, and this is again subdivided into 3 phases: late 1970's to early 1980s, mid-1980s to the 1990s; late 1990s to 2008 (Dai, 2008).
- (c) Wen Qiufang had her division as follows: the first is from 1949 to 1977, which she terms as the turbulent years; the second is from 1978 to 1999, as the restoration period; the third is from 2000 to 2011, as the period of fast development; and the last is from 2012 to 2019, as the deepened development (Wen, 2019).

These divisions each have their reasons. But I offer my consideration in conformity with the following factors: (1) taking into account the impact of the then situation in China and the world on the teaching of foreign languages; (2) the guiding ideas for the teaching at specific times; (3) the textbooks used; (4) the students' motivation for the studies. Keeping these in mind, I divide the teaching of English in China after 1949 into three periods: (1) 1949–1966. That is, from the founding of the People's Republic of China to the start of the Cultural Revolution; (2) 1966–1976. Namely, from the first year of the Cultural Revolution to the year when China's higher education returned to the normal trajectory. (3) 1977–2012. This is the fast-progressing period, beginning from China's opening-up and reform to the time before China's education, in general, witnessed the greatest and rapid changes. (4) 2013–2020. This is the period when China's English teaching faces radical challenges and changes. More detailed expositions are as follows:

*The first period*, spanning from 1949 to 1966, marks the beginning of teaching of foreign languages in a new social system and its initial development. A turning point is generally a point where the old is fading away but not completely deserted, the new emerges, but not strong enough yet: inheritance and renewal at the same time. As a new State, The Peoples Republic of China was facing difficulties from many quarters. It urgently needed supports from outside, but it did not have many friends from the world yet, for not many countries had established diplomatic relationships with it. As one of the countries of the socialist camp, it turned naturally to the help of the Soviet Union, the “big brother” of this camp.

Consequently, the emphasis was laid on the teaching of Russian. Many teachers who formerly taught English changed to the learning and teaching of Russian. Most of the students of foreign languages were those who were learning Russian. This situation was not changed until 1956 when the Chinese government issued a call to “advance science and technology”. To learn advanced science and technology not only from Russia but also from western countries, China needed more students to learn English. Under such circumstances, English gained strength in terms of the number of faculty members, that of students, and necessary facilities. In April 1961, the Chinese government organized a meeting on the compilation of textbooks for humanities. During the meeting, Peking University, Beijing Normal University, Beijing Foreign Language Institute and Shanghai Foreign Language Institute met to

set up a proposal for the compilation of textbooks for English majors. It stipulated that the major courses for English were language and literature, like language theory, selected readings of English literature, history of English and English literature. This proposal exerted far-reaching influence on China's English education. There were no unified teaching textbooks or materials. Most schools appropriated textbooks revised from those used before 1949. Moreover, the teachers mainly adopted the grammar-translation approach. The result was that grammar was taught in great details, or even meticulously, but communicative efficiency was unfortunately neglected. Students were strong in the analysis of grammar and in translation, but poor in speaking and listening. Unlike the students today, they did not need job hunting before graduation. What they did need was to study well, for their jobs were to be offered by the unified consideration and arrangements of the government.

The publication of a set of textbooks compiled by Xu Guozhang (editor of the textbooks for freshmen and sophomores of the English major), Yu Dayin (editor of the textbook for juniors) and Xu Yanmou, Yang Xiaoshi (Editor of the textbook for seniors) was a significant event in 1963 and thereafter. These textbooks were to become the authoritative books that dominated the Chinese universities for around 40 years ever since their publication. An uncountable number of students in China were users of them. It put an end to such a situation when China had no unified textbooks for universities. The popularity of these books was due to the fact that it fit the then Chinese students' needs, and that the knowledge of English is systematically and comprehensively introduced, step by step. One of the things is, for example, that phonetics and grammar are well introduced from the freshmen level through the sophomore level to the junior level, followed by the introduction to rhetoric devices, with well-designed and sufficient exercises to make students at home with this knowledge. From the third year on, the texts are excerpts from original masterpieces of literature and culture. Interesting and informative, they are naturally very welcome to students and teachers.

Generally speaking, English teaching in this period witnessed a peaceful, stable situation. Everything went in its normal order. Students studied very hard and conscientiously, for the chance for receiving higher education was only for an elite few, quite different from the situation today. Teachers enjoyed their work and the harmonious atmosphere on campus. Universities turned out students year by year without stop. But there did exist unrest and a stop to teaching of English and all other languages as well. That happened as the Cultural Revolution broke in 1966. It was an unprecedented time when foreign language teaching, English included, suffered.

***The second period: 1966–1976*** is a time from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution to its end. During this time, some important events took place that had an impact on English education. From 1966, normal teaching at universities was actually stopped due to the Cultural Revolution. It was not until after 1970 that this was changed. After 1970, western countries like Italy, Canada, England, and Germany established foreign relationships with China. In the October of 1971, China's seat in the UN was restored. In February 1972, American President Nixon visited China, which paved the way for the establishment of foreign relationships between the two countries. All these triggered the increasing demand for workers

who were efficient in English. In such a situation, Beijing Language Institute began to enroll students of English in 1970, who were later called workers, peasants, and soldiers (WPS) students. Later on, more students were admitted to different universities. It was a tertiary system, the students were selected from those young people (around 18 years old) who were then working in the countryside, factories or the army. They were examined in Chinese, English, and Mathematics, but the papers were set not in a unified way but differently in different places. After entering the college, they were offered fundamental courses like listening, speaking, intensive reading, extensive reading, grammar, rhetoric, vocabulary, phonetics, translation, idiomatic usages, and the like. Compulsory courses also included Chinese, politics, and physical education. There was no unified use of textbooks; each university had its choice. Many had their mimeographed textbooks compiled by their faculty members.

Materials for the study had to be politically correct, of course. For example, in a literature course, such poets as Shelley, Byron, Shakespeare, Dickens, Mark Twain, Jack London, Robert Burns were taught. They were chosen because they were thought to be either positive romanticist like Byron and Shelley. Or, they sang praises for the working people such as Burns and Dickens. Or, they exposed the darkness of their society, such as Shakespeare. Fortunately, the students came to know the gems of the worlds' masterpieces. But some, whose content seemed pornographic, were forbidden. *Lady Chatterley's Lovers*, for example, was required not to be taught to students. This system of English education lasted till 1976, the last year when the university had its last batch of WPS students. After graduation, they were employed by departments of foreign affairs and schools of different levels. No doubt, these students met the urgent need for workers in foreign affairs and foreign language teaching. They served as the missing link in English education from 1966 to 1977 when China resumed national matriculation, and China's education was restored to its normal trajectory.

**The third period: 1977–2000.** 1977 was the year when China's education turned over a new leaf. Deng Xiaoping announced the holistic restoration of China's education system to the normal order. Consequently, China again enrolled college students through national matriculation, and the four-year system came back to practice, which was stopped during the second period, as we discussed above. It was a time that students' passion for study erupted like a volcano. The teachers too felt joyful with this "liberation of thoughts". Good textbooks for college students began to be used, one of which was compiled by Xu Guozhang. Other quality books appeared too to satisfy the long hunger for knowledge. Well-known textbooks used in English-speaking countries also came as a timely help. It was a spectacular scene to see students read books even when walking. The slogan for them at that time was "study hard for the rise of China", and people could see that they were sincere in saying that and thinking like that. Many agree that students from the year 1977 (including those students who entered college in 1975 and 1976 and were still studying at college) were the most conscientious in studies and most clearly motivated for their studies. This good situation was even bettered because in the next year, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed China's "opening up and reform", which led to the



rapid economic development and social progress in China. The economic booming stimulated prosperity of education. The 1980s saw the English language as a popular major, the major that numerous college candidates eagerly wanted to be admitted into, which resulted in the expansion of this major to a great degree. Nearly every school at the four-year level had an English Department to meet the great demand of students of English. What is more, a still higher level of education began to appear as a necessity. At the very beginning of the 1980s, the first MA program in English began, though at the onset, it was on an extremely small scale. In November 1981, the China State Council authorized the Ph.D. program in English in a minimal number of universities. Among them were Peking University, Beijing Language Institute (now Beijing International Studies University), Nanjing University, Sun Yat-Sen University, and China's Academy of Social Sciences. The enlargement of the scale and enhancement of the level of education indicated a flourishing of English education. This ushered in a more prosperous time to come.

**The fourth period: 2001–2020.** Joining the WTO in 2001 marked a new era for China. WTO seemed to be opening a door for China to enter the world, and made China more of a member of the global community. With it came frequent contacts with the world in areas of politics, trade, culture, military affairs etc. Another great event that changes the map of foreign language teaching is the “one belt, one road” proposal. Along with the new international circumstances came significant changes in foreign language teaching. One of them is that the dominant position of English among all foreign languages is challenged. Instead, people see the strong arrival of such languages like Arabic and Spanish, and the mushrooming of many “minor” languages which were not taught at Chinese universities. English is now ONE of the foreign languages, not the superpower among foreign languages. Another significant change occurred in syllabus designing. Before this time, language and literature were compulsory major courses. Now they have become periphery courses. Culture, geography, history, trade, foreign policy of the target languages have been added to the syllabus. The establishment or rise of new academic disciplines is another feature of the change. Commercial English, which was only part of the syllabus included in the discipline of English Language and Literature teaching, has now become an independent discipline, equally important as English in the academic catalogue.

Similarly, Country and Regional Studies has risen as another popular branch in Foreign Language Studies. The addition of new academic disciplines and the change of academic focus have led to the assertion that we should practice a “mode of compound talents raising”. The students should be taught according to the idea that they should not be students of languages and literature. Rather, they have to have a minor, or one major plus another, in a 2 + 2 pattern. With all these reforms and changes, the long-established name of the Department of English is now changed into the Department of English Studies, by which people want to demonstrate the difference between the old institution and the new one.

Here are some important events that led to the significant changes mentioned above. In March 1992, the Ministry of Education issued a document on the Graduate Education and Academic Degree Conferment, which called for strengthening

Ph.D. education. Ever since then, PhD education has progressed very fast in terms of authorization of degree conferring institutions and doctoral supervisor selection. The Issuing of the National Criteria for Ensuring the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Foreign Language Disciplines in 2018 is another crucial thing. This document provides the criteria for the checking and assessment of foreign language teaching and learning.

In March 2000, China's Ministry of Education issued the Outline Governing the English Studies at Schools of Higher Learning, which says that the aim of English teaching is to foster talents with a solid language foundation and a wide range of knowledge in culture so that they can use their knowledge efficiently in working fields like foreign affairs, education, trading, culture, science and technology, research and management, and that students should have the ability to acquire new knowledge, to think independently, to innovate. These are still practiced as guiding ideas for foreign language teaching. In 2001, 2003, 2004, China's Ministry of Education issued a succession of documents, to strengthen the undergraduate education. They served as, as it were, a catalyst that brought out the birth of Commercial English and Translation Studies as second-tier disciplines and gave rise to the idea of "liberal education" in language teaching.

In September 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the notice which announced the names of schools to be built into the world's first-rate universities and first-rate disciplines. Six universities have their foreign language discipline included in the list for "building the world's first-rate discipline." The English discipline at these universities are without exception the strongest among all foreign languages, sending a message that the English major's strength is a landmark for a first-rate university. Undoubtedly, it is a positive impetus to the construction of the English major at universities.

The Fundamental Conditions for the Application for Degree-conferring Verification issued by the degree-conferring office of the State Council of China in 2017 officially stipulated five directions within the foreign language discipline. These academic directions are foreign literature, foreign linguistics and applied linguistics, translation studies, country and regional studies. This is an epoch-making decision, which demonstrates the cross-border nature of academic studies, a decision that goes beyond the former division which was made solely according to language categories, such as English, Japanese, Germany, while neglecting the innate universalities among all language teaching. This stipulation was further solidified by the National Criteria for Measuring the Quality of Teaching and Learning of the Disciplines of Foreign Language and Literature in January 2018. The Criteria states that the academic basis includes foreign languages, literature, country and regional studies, with obvious cross-discipline features. The convenient requirements for English learners are then English language, literature, and countries and regional studies of the English-speaking countries. Not long had it been published before it became the practice at various universities. With this, the border of English as a discipline is tremendously expanded. It is no longer like the English department in the old days.



The continuous reforming of the foreign language discipline is good in many senses. It helps the advancement of English as a second-tier discipline. The former English subject is much enriched, in its academic content. At the same time, with the introduction of many other disciplines into it, the reforms present themselves as a severe challenge or even a crisis to the former state of the English Teaching. It is no longer a major that puts emphasis on language and literature. Instead, it branches away into economics, management, politics, law, education studies, journalism, etc. And its “purity” already gives way to a hybrid of disciplines.

One of the side-effects of this integration is that language and literature are reduced to an insignificant tool in the process of inter-disciplinary talent cultivation. As such, not as much attention is paid to the strength of language skills or literature by which students learn to cultivate their capability of value judgment. Language skills and literature have been the strength of the English department, but this tradition seems to have been fading away. Since the emphasis is shifted, students have to concentrate more on subjects other than English itself. Thus, the fundamentals are weakened to certain degrees. A number of scholars in English education have pointed this out (c.f. Dai, 2008: 70.). Facing the changing situation, teachers and students of the English major feel perplexed. They ask themselves what the English major should do? How should they adapt themselves to the new circumstances? Furthermore, what is the correct way to follow?

## Problems

In the past 20 years, China has made great efforts to push forward the construction of the discipline of Foreign Languages. One of the most critical and influential results of the efforts is the cultivation of cross-discipline talents. From the 1980s of the last century, some Chinese universities opened courses in the English Department such as journalism, commercial management, finance, law, Chinese for foreigners, business and trade, translation and interpretation. This is in line with the Outline decreed by the Ministry of Education for the English Discipline, which states that the English Discipline at higher learning is to educate students so that they’ll be talents with solid foundation in the English language and a wide range of cultural knowledge, and that they can work efficiently with the knowledge in fields like foreign affairs, education, business and trade, culture, science and technology.

The Outline required that 4 types of courses be taught: (1) the skill courses, covering basic English and listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating; (2) courses of English Specialty, covering English language, literature and culture; and (3) courses of related disciplines, covering such disciplines as foreign affairs, business and trade, law, management, journalism, education, science and technology, culture. These “courses of related disciplines” are just the concrete content of the so-called cross-discipline education for English majors. This “multiplicity” turn aroused debate among scholars. They held that since the essence of English is language, literature and culture, the practice of cross-discipline education would

weaken English education as a discipline of humanities. It is maintained that the cutting down of courses of humanities and the addition of other courses exhibit a kind of utilitarianism. The general response to the reform is (1) the work of foreign language talent cultivation should not only consider the market demand, but also the ultimate aim of college education, that is, to turn out good people in the general sense, such as cultivating their integrated capacity, (2) cross-discipline education should not weaken humanity education, (3) English language and literature as a discipline is obliged to strengthen its own disciplinary position.

## Efforts to Find the Way Out

The perplexities for the English discipline are twofold: on the one hand, it is a must to have reforms of the English discipline to make it more adaptive to the changed social needs; on the other hand, English as an independent discipline must stand by itself, must have its subjectivity to maintain it as an independent discipline. It cannot be an independent discipline when it is a mixture of many other disciplines “integrated”. Here is a brief survey of the developmental line of the so-called cross-disciplinary integration in the English discipline. There have been two directions of development for the cross-disciplinary practice in the English department. The first direction ended in the fact that all newly-established secondary subjects under the English major, such as English and Business, English and Law became independent in the end, completely going away from the English department. English department, in this sense, serves only as an incubator. Once those secondary subjects become mature and strong enough, they will lose no time “declaring independence” and setting up a new independent institution. The students are no longer cross-disciplinary talents, but talents of other specialty, only with stronger proficiency in English. There is never “integration” of English and other subjects in the true sense. Forced marriages would result in divorce after all. The other direction is the still enthusiastic holding together of different subjects under English. However, the dilemma is that there are not enough qualified teachers who are experts both in English as a major and in other specialties and not enough teachers who can teach students all courses as an expert using the English language. The consequence is that students are neither good in English, nor good in other subjects. As a result, they are poor competitors when they go to the society after graduation. Given this state of affairs, it is difficult to assert that attempts at cross-disciplinary integration have been successful. What could be the possible way to solve the dilemma? At the road not taken, there are not a few explorers for the way out. They commonly hold that English major should keep the essentials of English. The basic skills, that is, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, which are required, and formerly emphasized, should still be emphasized. We cannot imagine a qualified student of English to be one who cannot use English efficiently. Here we can make a distinction between English majors and non-English majors. The latter can be pardoned if they do not speak or understand English well, so long as they can read,

write and translate to some degree. Nevertheless, English majors must do well in all these things. Not only should they be at home in these, they are expected to be well acquainted with the knowledge of humanities, as they should be. To learn to be a good and useful person is the ultimate aim of education. On the other hand, students have to go abreast with the times. To adapt themselves to the changed specific situation, both at home and abroad, to be a useful person in the world, they have to learn what is needed in the global context.

The English major, after all, belongs to the humanities. Therefore, it should adhere to the basic principles of the education of humanities, and abandon the short-sighted short market-based way of training the students to suit the need of the market. That is a short-sighted, and short-termed, makeshift model of education. A better approach for English development should consider both the current and long-term needs of the society, and take into account both the student's current job-hunting and his life-long career-planning. For this purpose, students must be strong in the basics of the English language and well acquainted with knowledge of culture of the target language countries. In curriculum designing, this means that we will always include the fundamental courses (basic English, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation), and courses of English specialty (English language, literature and culture of the target country), which are the backbone courses of the English discipline. In the aspect of culture, courses like the history of England, America, Contemporary society and culture of the UK and US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, etc., History of Western Culture, Western Civilization, Introduction to Western Philosophy, Brief History of the World, World Religions, the Bible and Western Culture, Comparisons of Chinese and Western Civilization, Media Studies, Gender Studies, Contemporary World Politics, History of Chinese Culture, Classic Readings of Chinese Civilization, History of Arts, Chinese and Western Philosophy, General Linguistics. These courses will open students' vision, foster their comprehensive capacity, and help pave the way for further development of their personality. They are considered to be essential to students of humanities. During the process of their education, measures have to be taken to make sure that students also learn to be innovative, critical in thinking, responsible to themselves and the society, know how to appreciate art and beauty, how to analyze and comment on literary works. Courses so designed are different from the so-called cross-disciplinary ones. And the purpose for the courses is to make the students strong in literature, history, philosophy, arts so that their ability to think, judge, and appreciate beauty can be enhanced.

While we say that humanistic education must be the core for the English discipline, we do not mean to oppose to the strategy of cultivating students with cross-disciplinary knowledge. Such talents are in urgent need in globalized times. However, the approach towards it should be reconsidered. The representative view is as follows, and it is worth quoting:

Different from the idea that cross-disciplinary talents should be cultivated by the English department, we maintain that it is not the responsibility of the English Discipline to cultivate this kind of talents, nor is it their responsibility to shoulder the task principally and independently. Both the experience of education at prestigious universities and the logic of

the disciplinary set-up shows that a wise choice for the English program is to build up its discipline as first and foremost importance. The suggested approach to the expected type of talents is that, on the basis of the students' solid foundation required of the English majors and good knowledge in humanities, the school can provide a channel for the students to cross disciplines through optional courses, minors and double degree system. In this way, the English discipline can avoid being reduced to a training institution of the market world (Hu & Sun, 2006).

Chinese higher education not only thinks of the question of having breakthroughs in conducting education in the new international context but also has made specific experimental efforts. I would like to cite parts of curricula extracted from three universities, which are representatives of three types of universities: the comprehensive university, the normal university and the type of university that is specialized in foreign languages and cultures. When they are put together, we can have a glimpse of how each type of China's universities tries to maintain the uniqueness of the English discipline while enriching it by adding related courses to answer the new needs of the times.

This is part of the curriculum (revised in 2018) of the English Department, Peking University. This university is the earliest in China in establishing the English department. More importantly, it is the origin of China's English major. Being one of the four key English institutions officially recognized and entitled by China's Ministry of Education. It is rightfully regarded as the standard-bearer of China's foreign language teaching and learning.

The introduction to the curriculum designing says that the English department is featured by the most fundamental practical skills teaching, acquainting the students with the most meticulous exploration of this language. At the same time, it offers the teaching and research of the humanities of the Western civilization, to prepare students with multiple perspectives and insights to observe and participate in social life. Its guiding idea and actual practice in teaching is "the combination of skills and thoughts, and the integration of language and culture." Benefiting from the comprehensiveness of disciplines of the university, the English department aims to make students strong in fundamental skills and knowledge concerning the English language and culture, but talents with quality cultivation in humanities, and high adaptability to the society.

Based on the ideas above, their curriculum (part of it) exhibits the strength of the department embraced in the rich academic atmosphere. Besides core courses including basic language skills, linguistics, literature, it covers a wide range of optional courses (as many as more than 200). They are courses from such disciplines as (1) math, physics, chemistry; geology; (2) social sciences, such as economics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, archeology, law, education, Chinese language and literature, politics, ethics, logic; (3) arts, physical education. In addition, there are dozens of other foreign languages for the English majors. As is required, the students have to learn two more foreign languages in their undergraduate program.

The second type of universities, which are specialized in foreign language and culture teaching and learning, also expand their courses into other disciplines. For the purpose of education, their students are to be experts not only in language, but

also in culture of the target languages. Thus, such courses as contemporary world economics, international relationships, comparative politics, history of American economy, journalism, public opinions, studies of the Asian Pacific area are included.

The third type of universities refers to the normal universities, whose aim is to teach students to be qualified teachers at the middle school level. It is without doubt that these universities offer courses that have close relations with basic language skills and education science. Even so, their view of education is far renewed, much more advanced than it was before, as could be demonstrated by the following courses: gender and society, English film: Theory and Practice, business English, computer-aided translation, application of modern education technology, psychological counseling in schools, special issues of adolescent development psychology and strategies of English learning, multi-media courseware design. As a student graduated from a normal university, I have seen great improvements in courses offered, which broaden the students' vision, and could provide great potential for the students' careers.

As universities differ in scale, the purpose of education, specific requirements for students, and components of faculty members, courses for students naturally differ accordingly. One thing is common: while adhering to the core of English as an independent discipline, they all have considered the challenges and needs of the times, which can be summarized as follows:

All the three universities (representing three types of universities) stick to the fundamental courses as an English department should have. Though these courses may take different names and cover different ranges, they generally include such as speaking, listening, writing, translation and interpretation, phonetic courses, lexicology, grammar, basic readings of English, literary theory, literatures of all genres in the major English-speaking countries, Biblical studies, western civilization, linguistic courses, language theory, Chinese language and literature, philosophy. History of literature, and history of target countries. These courses, we believe, are fundamental to English majors. They both emphasize the importance of basic skills and the humanistic aspect of education. Basic skill teaching and learning is the foundation for students of English. This idea must be implemented by specific courses. But things cannot stop there. English teaching is after all a branch of humanistic discipline, and the ultimate aim is to educate people to be persons with good value judgment, and moral integrity. Because of this, other courses than the skill courses are also necessary, and should be indispensable in curricula.

All the three universities pay close attention to the overall development of the English majors by means of optional courses; These courses are mostly "cross-disciplinary". A good example is the long list of more than 200 optional courses covering other disciplines than English, like math, physics, chemistry, economics, archeology, law, etc. as practiced in the English Department of Peking University. The idea behind it might be that students may not pursue what they learn as students of a particular kind of discipline as their life-long career. They might find some other job options more to their hearts when they go to the society. The kind of knowledge they learned from the cross-disciplinary course might have paved the way for their wider choices of life in the future.

While all three universities have optional general courses for all students of humanities such as history, philosophy, arts, culture, different types of universities have their unique options suitable for the developmental orientation of their students. For example, students of a normal university have characteristic optional courses like teaching theories, psychology, educational practice, teaching methodology, the application of teaching facilities, testing, education policies and law to better prepare students to be qualified teachers. The curriculum for students from the International Studies University is more inclined to courses that have to do with foreign affairs, international relationships, foreign policy, society, and culture of target countries. Like the sample of the comprehensive university and normal university, it also attaches importance to fundamentals as English majors. However, in optional courses, it differs very much from the other two. It is understandable that though they belong to different types of universities, they have one thing in common, e.g., they are Departments of English. As such, they must have those characteristic courses. On the other hand, just because they are different universities with different educational aims and different students' careers (generally speaking different), they offer different cross-disciplinary courses to provide various room for development for their students. No matter what they do, they are trying to solve the problem of maintaining the unique value of the English Department while answering the call of the times by taking flexible and feasible measures.

We have to admit that higher education in China has undergone challenges in the process of development. At the onset, it was more straightforward, with language as the major task. But the world is developing very fast, especially when it entered the late twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. New scientific discoveries and invention of new technologies drive change at sometimes-dizzying speed. One step lagging behind would jeopardize the possibility of success for students. Education is both the locomotive of history and the pursuer of forever more advanced goals. It is always developing; thus, it always needs revision or reforms. This quick pace can sometimes cause anxiety, but also encourages fruitful reforms. Some scholars even hold that generally speaking, the discipline of English has lost its former attraction, and its strength for competition (Wang, 2016). The reason for the non-encouraging situation is the fact that students have to spend much time in basic skill training after they enter college. Basic skills are important, but they can never be all the matter. When students of other disciplines are learning knowledge of their own specialty and theory, the students of English are still practicing the fundamentals. That is the difference. To go abreast with students of other disciplines, the students of English must be carried to the front of research. They must go out of English language itself to see a broader view of learning. Wang maintains that the reforms so far done about the English discipline, which include the so-called multi-faceted talent cultivation approach, have more or less weakened English teaching and learning as a discipline. The way out for the English discipline then is to strengthen its connotation instead of unlimited extension (Wang, 2016). This view of the reforms might tell the fact that the results of the reforms so far are not satisfactory yet. We need more reforms for a better future of English, and the way



out is a long process of exploration. It might be like a long channel, with the light ahead, but the light is not yet attainable.

Through all the way, English as a college discipline has undergone setbacks, changes and reforms. The periodization shows different steps and different performances, witnessing its ups and downs with the time and tide. After China's opening and reform, English grew even more significant in many aspects, entering the fast-developing period. The development has double edges. On the one hand, it gave great impetus to its advancement and improvement, on the other hand, it gave rise to its metamorphosis. The old pattern of teaching and learning has met with great challenges as the world changes. English as a discipline has to adapt itself to the outside world, but at the same time, it has to maintain its own core as an independent discipline, the core that differentiates itself from other disciplines. Painstaking efforts have been made to answer the challenges, and have been very fruitful. Nevertheless, the wheel of the world is forever rolling on. Consequently, new challenges will appear, and reforms of this discipline are rightfully supposed to be always in progress.

Tracing the way, China's English teaching and learning has evolved, examining the difficulties it has faced, and considering the challenges and answering them will surely be thought-provoking. Its history will tell people how China's English has come to be as it is today, and history is always a present past, for there is no present without a past. Likewise, there is never a past without present. History is a mirror that reflects the past and tells people what is the right way to follow. For subsequent people, this chapter tells people in China and other countries as well that English teaching and learning is a very important part in China's higher education. Even when other languages are coming strong, English still takes the dominant position. The Chinese government attaches great importance to this discipline due to its importance in world affairs. Not to let it lag behind the global situation, China has made reforms in this discipline to suit the changes of the times in the scale of students' admission, textbook compiling, curriculum designing. As a result, the English discipline has greatly renewed, magnified and strengthened itself. However, its core must be maintained so that English Discipline is the English Discipline, and not otherwise. For people who are intended to be a teacher in the English department, this paper may prepare her (him) about what knowledge she (he) should have, or what dynamic way of teaching she (he) may adopt to make the learning more dynamic. By comparison and contrast with the teaching of English in her (his) native country, she (he) may also find what China's teaching lacks and must be facilitated so that new ideas, methods, textbooks, courses can be introduced. When they are considering the above things, they are kindly advised to remember that China's reforms in education are still on the way, and that the aim of reforms is to let students be educated in such a way as to make them honest, trustworthy, knowledgeable and valuable to the society.

It is hoped that the tracking of the development of English teaching in China is of referential value to the teachers or potential teachers and adolescent English learners. From the above, we find that all curricula, no matter they are designed by what type of university, attach great importance to fundamental education of

English, such as pronunciation and intonation, grammar, translation and interpretation, listening and speaking. A living language is one used by people for communication, and the meaning of the utterances is to be put across through correct pronunciation and intonation. It is known that the best time for language acquisition is before 3 years old, and the second crucial time is before puberty. Knowing the requirements of the universities about correct pronunciation and intonation, the adolescents are advised to learn English at an earlier age, so that she or he would acquire and build up correct pronunciation and intonation. This is very important for their future studies. The importance can be well exemplified by the fact that many students fail in the yearly national matriculation for the English major not because they cannot pass the written exam, but because they are still developing their spoken English, thus they are kept out of the door. Another fact they have to be aware of is that they have to pay attention to the study of grammar. It is true that the grammar-based approach to study English has been fiercely attacked. It is not without reason that it is attacked. In the past, this approach was used too much, to such a degree that the teaching of grammar was the focus, and the grammatical analysis of a text was the major thing in class. The consequence was that the students knew the rule of grammar, while their ability to listen and speak were ignored. Thus, they were made mute and deaf in communication with native speakers, and the use of language is unfortunately abused. This may support the idea that grammar is not essential. This argument can be reinforced by the fact that many native speakers may not know how to analyze sentences grammatically but speak perfect English. In saying that they forget that the native speakers are immersed in the English language environment, and they have built up a very strong sense of the language by which they can easily judge whether a sentence is right or wrong. For Chinese learners, they are not immersed in the language context, and the grammar, which are essential rules of the language, can help them master the language in the shortest possible time. We have no reason to decline the learning of grammar, though the teaching and learning of it can never be all that is taught and learned. Actually, the students have to continue their efforts in learning it after adolescent education, in order to strengthen their knowledge. Besides the basic skills, adolescents should consider paving the way for their future studies if they intend to be an English major. As is indicated in the different curricula designing, college students of English are not confined to knowledge of English only, they have to learn far more than the language itself. Courses like history, literature, philosophy, linguistics, theories of language and literature, psychology, aesthetics, and other courses of humanities are compulsory courses, even courses of sciences are offered for students interested in them. They are not required to learn these difficult things, but their interest should be developed at an earlier age. Charming picture books on these subjects could be made available to them to sow the seed. These things are not for future English learners only; many of them are for all students.

To sum up, this reflective narrative summarizing the development of English as a discipline mirror changes in times and the changes in education in China in particular. Knowing these helps people to understand the past and present of this discipline and its predictable future. Furthermore, this knowledge prepares potential

teachers to be qualified and more proficient in their teaching and hopefully serve as an orientation for adolescents and high school students if they wish to be English language students.

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