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English Language Education in China, Japan, and Singapore

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACT	Active Communicative Teaching
"A" Levels or GCE "A" Levels	Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education, Advanced
ACCD	Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development (part of MOE)
ALM	Audiolingual Method
CBEI	Content-based English instruction
CCTV	China Central Television
CERN	China Educational Research Network
CL	Chinese language (especially, Chinese language classes or Chinese language teaching)
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CME	Civics and Moral Education
CPDD	Curriculum Planning and Development Division
EFL	English as a foreign language
EL	English Language (especially, English language classes or English language teaching)
ELT	English language teaching
ESP	English for specific purposes
FLT	Foreign language teaching
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology (as in "IT Masterplan")
JSSL	Junior secondary school leaving
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MITA	Ministry of Information and the Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOELC	Ministry of Education Language Centre
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOM	Ministry of Manpower, formerly Ministry of Labour.
MT	Mother Tongue
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
NCEE	National College Entrance Examination
NE	National Education
NIE	National Institute of Education, formerly Institute of Education (IE)
"N" Levels or GCE "N" Levels	Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education,

	Normal
NTU	Nanyang Technological University
NTUC	a confederation of local labor unions
NUS	National University of Singapore
"O" Levels or GCE "O" Levels	Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education, Ordinary
PEP	People's Education Press
PAP	People's Action Party
PM	Prime Minister
PRC	The People's Republic of China
PRIME	Programme for Rebuilding and Improving Existing Schools
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
REAP	Reading and English Acquisition Programme
SAP	Special Assistance Plan schools
SGEM	Speak Good English Movement
Singstat	Singapore Department of Statistics
SLLL	School of Life-Long Learning
SM	Senior Minister (Lee Kuan Yew, since 1990)
SMC	Speak Mandarin Campaign
SMU	Singapore Management University
SPED	Special Education Schools
TL	Tamil language (especially, Tamil language classes or Tamil language teaching)
TLM	Tamil Language Movement
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSLN	Thinking Skills, Learning Nation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WTO	World Trade Organization

Foreword

The Six Nation Education Research Project (SNERP) was initiated by the International Programs Office of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. SNERP was a collaborative effort at international comparative research. The project was unique in several ways. One unique feature was the inclusion of policy makers and university-based researchers from the outset. Although the role of policy makers varied in each country, this inclusion meant that all of the investigations had some connection to policy issues. Another unique feature was that each country established their own area of research interest and acted as the 'lead country' in that area (e.g., China led the research on Educational Evaluation; Singapore on Language Education and Literacy; the U.S. on Mathematics and Science Education). Each country also facilitated data gathering for the other projects. Beyond that, the amount and type of collaboration was left open.

Singapore's interest in language education and literacy led to collaboration with four other SNERP countries: China, Japan, Switzerland, and the U.S. The trend toward globalization has led to an increasing emphasis on the use of English language as an international lingua franca for business, tourism, and general dissemination of information across national borders. This emphasis provided a rationale for these five countries to do comparative educational research on English language education, emphasizing English as a foreign or second language. Both policy and pedagogy were explored in the Pedagogical Practices in English Language Education (PPELE) project which evolved, led by the National Institute of Education in Singapore.

The PPELE project had two components:

> The pedagogical component explored the teaching of English in the fourth year of language learning in the five participating countries Through the collection of teacher logs and in-depth interviews with each teacher the study aimed to define the contexts and conditions for language education and, at the same time, to describe teaching practices in each of the five countries as illustrations of possible options for English language education. The study also aimed to identify the support systems for language education in the schools and to examine the relationship between pedagogical practices and stated English language education policies, including views on the economic importance of English as an international language.
>
> The policy component comprised a review of the socio-cultural and socio-political backgrounds as well as the national language and literacy education issues in each of the participating countries. These so-called "country reports" were designed to provide important information about the educational, linguistic, and economic systems in each participating country.

In addition to providing background information for the pedagogical component, the country reports stand as independent research reports on English language and education policy in each country. Globalization and English education are pressing policy issues particularly in the three participating Asian countries. This volume, therefore, presents the three Asian 'country reports' from the PPELE project. The reports provide information on each country, individually, as well as offering opportunities for comparison through their joint publication in this NIE research monograph.

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Editor's Introduction

This research monograph presents three reports from the Pedagogical Processes in English Language Education (PPELE) study which was conducted as part of the Six Nation Education Research Project (SNERP). Singapore acted as the lead country on a international research project on language and education; that project included "country reports" from China, Japan, Singapore, Switzerland, and the U.S. The country reports informed the comparative, pedagogical study, PPELE, by providing contextual information about the educational settings. They also stand in their own right as policy reports on the individual countries. This volume includes the country reports from the three Asian countries involved in SNERP and PPELE. [1]

The country reports were designed to provide important information about the educational, linguistic, and economic systems in each participating country. They were written with an eye toward helping others (i.e., those from other countries) become acquainted with and understand the country specific systems that influences language education. All of the country reports provide background information on the following:

- demographic data, including information on immigration, foreign populations and ethnic groups;
- linguistic information including dominant languages, language use patterns, and any relevant aspects of bi/multilingualism
- discussion of language planning and policy efforts and their impacts
- historical information that is crucial to understanding current educational, linguistic, and/or economic systems
- a description of the educational system
- a description of English language education and it's role in the educational system.

Based on the interests of SNERP, connections between English language education and economic development are also considered in each report. However, in keeping with the individual issues in each country, economic and language connections are discussed more or less explicitly. In addition to addressing basic issues which are at the heart of SNERP and PPELE, as outlined above, each country report deals with the factors that are most relevant to current local issues. A brief summary of the issues addressed in each report will highlight some of the diversity, and similarities, of these issues.

In the first country report, Hu gives both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective on English language teaching (ELT) in the People's Republic of

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[1] The U.S. report has been published as Hornberger, N., Harsch, L. & Evans, B. (1999). The Six Nation Education Research Project: The United States. A Country Report. Also published as Language Education of Language Minority Students in the United States. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* (*WPEL*), *15*(1). Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, Language and Education Division.

China. A schematic description of the current formal educational system and the structure of administration provides the context in which ELT operates. A profile of ELT at the various levels of the formal educational system is then presented to indicate the scale of ELT in the country. This is followed by an outline of the development of ELT since 1949 and a discussion of unified national syllabuses issued at different times. The discussion clearly shows that due to political, economic and social changes, the role of English has also undergone changes. Currently the language is highly valued by the government because of its facilitative role in the modernization program. Hu also delineates major ELT methodologies that have been adopted and some recent trends of development. The discussion suggests that while there is a top-down effort to promote methodologies that are more oriented toward developing skills in communication, considerable resistance to educational innovation is manifest. Hu traces the causes of this resistance by looking at some cultural, social, economic and infrastructural factors that impinge on classroom practices. He also examines pre- and in-service teacher training, a key factor in the improvement of ELT in the country, and draws attention to a number of problems in this regard. Hu's report concludes with a discussion of some recent important developments in curriculum reform, materials production, examinations, and research that are changing the edifice of ELT in the country.

In the second report, Iino describes efforts at reform in ELT in Japan. Again, the presentation is both diachronic and synchronic: detailing the historical development of ELT and linking this to current issues. The report clearly shows how the role of English in Japanese society, and the perception of that role by government agencies, has influenced educational decisions. Educational decisions in turn have attempted to influence public perceptions of the utility of English. While some features of the educational system (such as standardized, high stakes examinations and standardized textbooks) tend to encourage maintenance of traditional teaching, recent governmental attempts at reform are intended to encourage more communicative language teaching. Current controversies include the age at which English education should begin, the amount of time that should be spent on English, the types of changes that can/should be made to the examination system, as well as discussion of teaching methodologies.

The third, and final, report discusses English language use and English language learning in Singapore. Silver explains the history of English language education from the founding of modern Singapore, and shows how ELT is explicitly linked to government policies of social cohesion and economy. English education has been supported by utilitarian arguments revolving around employment and international trade since its inception. Bilingual education has been supported by arguments surrounding ethnic and national identity. As Singaporeans have become increasing bilingual and biliterate, government initiatives to maintain a standard of English that is 'internationally intelligible' have overtaken basic arguments about which language to use for education; utilitatarian arguments are now emerging for the learning of all official languages at high levels of competence. Thus, unlike China and Japan, the

issues in Singapore are less about how and why to learn English and more about standards and high proficiency bilingualism. However, active debates about how to teach/learn English continue (especially regarding students who seem to be overburdened by the universal bilingual education policy) and new government initiatives are continually being implemented.

Taken together, these three country reports show the diversity of educational systems, language issues, and economic connections in the Asian SNERP/PPELE countries. They provide contrasting views of how ELT has developed and is being implemented in each country. They also present complimentary information on how social, political, and economic forces influence educational decisions—including decisions on when, how and why to teach English.

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The People's Republic of China Country Report

English Language Teaching in the People's Republic of China

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Introduction

In the last two decades or so, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has seen rapid economic development and an explosion in commercial, technological and cultural exchanges with other parts of the world. This has given rise to a pressing demand for English proficiency (Y. A. Wu, 2001). On the national level, English is perceived by the government as a necessary means for helping the nation further open up, a valuable resource for realizing its modernization program, and an important cornerstone of international competition (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Maley, 1995; Ross, 1992; J. Z. Zhang, 1993). On a personal level, proficiency in English is seen as a key to a host of opportunities: to enter and graduate from university, to go abroad for further education, to secure desirable jobs in public and private sectors, foreign-invested companies or joint ventures, and to be eligible for promotion to higher professional ranks (Ng & Tang, 1997).[1] Consequently, English proficiency has accrued superior national, social, and economic prestige. In response to this ever-increasing demand for English is an impressive commitment to the teaching and learning of the language from the government, teachers, students, parents and society at large (Boyle, 2000; S. Chen, 1989; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a).

Thus, there has been a massive drive to expand and improve English language teaching (ELT) in the formal education system. Besides, evening universities, English tuition centers, distance learning, radio/television English courses, on-line English programs, course books for private study, English newspapers/magazines, and English Corners (i.e., places, usually in parks, where people meet to practice English informally) have sprung up across the country to cater for the needs of those outside the formal education system to acquire or upgrade proficiency in English. Clearly, ELT has become a national enterprise in the PRC. Given its immense scale, ELT in the PRC is rightly described as "the most ambitious language-learning campaign in history" (Hertling, 1996). As a result, ELT in China is faced with challenges of unprecedented strenuousness and opportunities for further development.

This report is aimed at presenting an overview of ELT in the PRC, with a focus on the secondary level of education. ELT at the secondary level is the focus for three reasons. First, it has undergone the most shifts and changes since 1949, when the PRC was founded, and thus has been at the forefront of educational reforms. Second, ELT at the secondary level is charged to help students build a foundation for further formal or independent study of English, and consequently is of paramount importance to the general national level of English proficiency. Last, but not least, secondary ELT directly affects a larger number of English learners in the formal education system than ELT at any other level.

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[1] One requirement for promotion to a senior professional position is a specified level of proficiency in a foreign language, usually English (Dong, 1995).

This report begins with a schematic description of the formal education system and the structure of administration that supports it. This brief description provides the context in which ELT operates. A profile of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the various levels of the formal education system is given to indicate the scale of ELT in the PRC. This is followed by an outline of the development of ELT since the founding of the PRC to provide a historical perspective. The development of ELT is further discussed with specific reference to the unified English syllabuses produced at different times for secondary schools. Following that, ELT methodologies that have been adopted are delineated and some recent trends of development are discussed. The report then looks at some cultural, social, economic and infrastructural factors that exert an influence on classroom practices. It also examines teacher training, a factor that is crucial to the improvement of ELT. Finally, it discusses some important current developments in curriculum reform, textbook production, examinations, and research that have been producing profound effects.

At the outset, it is useful to repeat the caveat made by Cortazzi and Jin (1996a: 61) in their recent review of ELT in China:

> The Chinese context is almost impossible to describe; the scale of ELT is extensive and the circumstances are changing. This is a huge, rapidly developing country with an enormous population…. There are significant differences in language teaching developments between the major cities and small cities, between rural towns and countryside, between coastal and inland areas, between north and south, between key and non-key schools/universities. There is wide variation in teaching quality, though there have been marked improvements. We should not expect all classrooms to be the same; every generalization will have important exceptions.

The Education System and Its Administration

The PRC has a population of 1.3 billion comprised of 56 ethnic groups. The Han people form the largest ethnic group (around 91% of the population) and the remaining 55 ethnic groups add up to about 9% (Xia, 2001). The linguistic situation in the PRC is more complex than is generally supposed. Putonghua (common spoken Chinese), which is the language spoken by more than 70% of the population, is the national language and officially prescribed medium of instruction. An overwhelming majority of the 55 ethnic minorities have their own languages (some 80 different languages), and bilingual education for minority children has been encouraged since 1949 and actively promoted more recently (He, 1998; Kormondy, 1995; Ministry of Education [MOE], 1998a; Xia, 2001). As for the Han people, there is an enormous range of Chinese dialects, often different enough from each other to be mutually unintelligible.[2]

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[2] The varieties of Chinese spoken across the country are generally divided into seven dialect groups: *Beifang* (on whose syntax and lexicon *Putonghua* is based), *Wu* (a variety of which is

However, the Chinese speakers share a unified written Chinese whose word order, lexicon and orthography do not vary for speakers of different dialects in Mainland China.[3] Although the promotion of Putonghua has been written into the Constitution, the use of Putonghua is not widespread in many remote rural and mountainous areas (National Language Work Committee, 1996). The sheer size of the population and the complexity of the linguistic situation pose challenges for the education system of the PRC (Cheng, 2000; Postiglione, 1992, 2000).

The formal education system of the PRC is an extensive and complex one involving multi-tiered administration. Based on the sheer size of the student population, it is the largest one in the world (see the following section). The various stages of education are schematically presented in Figure 1.1. For the sake of space, it is beyond the report to go into detail about the system. Interested readers are referred to the China Education and Research Network (CERN) (2000a), Lewin, Xu, Little, and Zheng (1994), and the MOE (1998a) for more information. What follows is a brief sketch of the education system and its administration.

Most Chinese children in urban and economically developed areas start organized schooling in kindergartens at the age of three and receive three to four years' pre-school instruction.[4] They attend classes for reading, writing, music, dance, painting, games and physical exercises. The majority of children in rural areas, however, stay at home and receive virtually no organized instruction until they reach six or seven.[5] From six or seven onwards, children receive a nine-year compulsory education comprising primary and junior secondary schooling. In large cities and economically more developed areas, five years of primary schooling is followed by four years of junior secondary study, whereas six and three years are allocated, respectively, for primary and secondary education in rural and less developed areas. Subjects in the primary curriculum include Chinese, mathematics, science, moral education, social studies, arts, music, health, and physical education. Some of these subjects, especially the core ones (i.e., Chinese and mathematics), are taught throughout primary school, and others (e.g., social studies) are introduced or taught at different grades. At the junior secondary level, students are placed in general junior secondary schools or vocational junior secondary schools, depending on,

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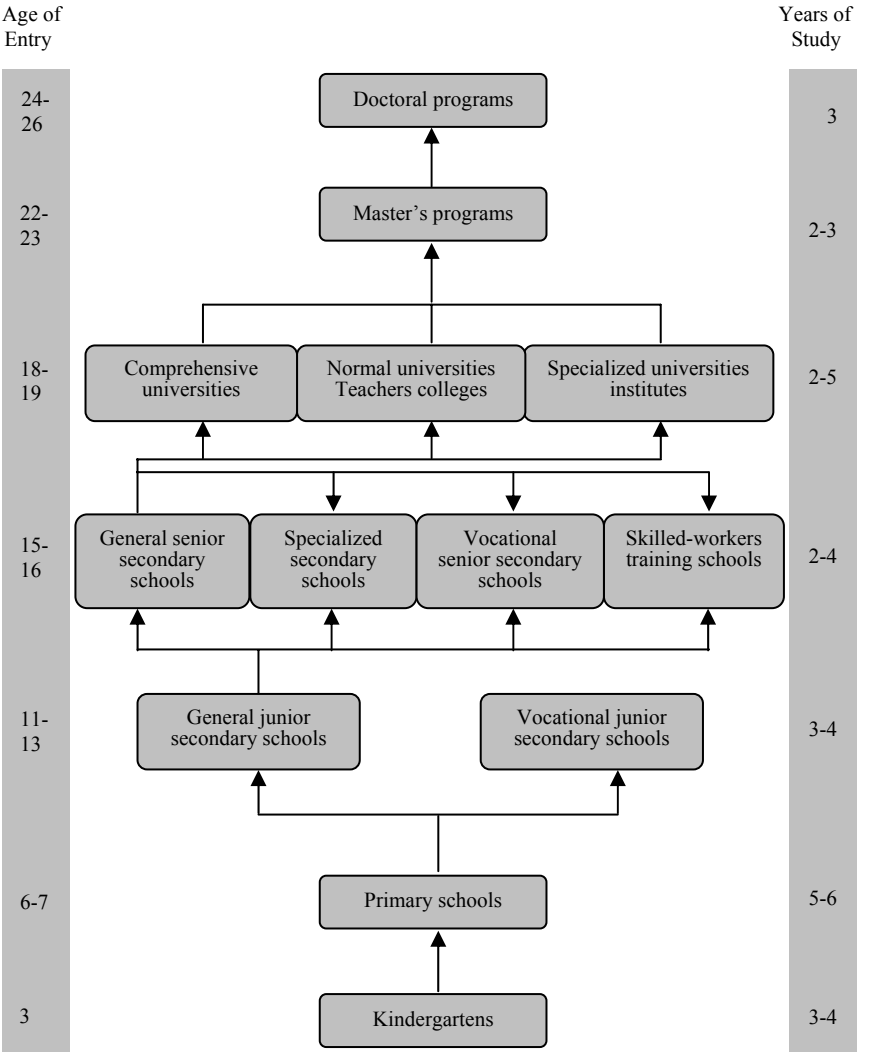
Shanghainese), *Xiang*, *Kejia* (Hakka), *Gan*, *Min* (Hokkien), and *Yue* (Cantonese). Each of these dialect groups comprises a number of sub-varieties.

[3] Unlike Hong Kong or Taiwan, Mainland China uses a simplified orthography.

[4] The starting age for primary schooling varies. Whereas children in some areas, especially economically advanced ones, go to school at six, children in other areas are enrolled at seven.

[5] According to CERN (n.d.), about 28.4 % of children aged between three and six in rural areas were enrolled in kindergartens in 1997.

Figure 1.1 The regular education system of the PRC



among other things, their academic achievements.[6] In addition to those subjects offered at primary school, junior secondary students take more subjects, including foreign language (usually English), history, geography, physics, chemistry, and biology.

Upon finishing the nine-year compulsory schooling, students choose, on the basis of their academic performance at junior secondary school, to sit different examinations designed to select students for four different types of senior secondary school.[7] Students who fail the examinations, together with those who do not intend to continue their formal education, join the workforce. Those who pass the examinations proceed to general senior secondary schools, specialized secondary schools, vocational senior secondary schools, or skilled-workers training schools.[8] A general senior secondary school offers a three-year academic course whose main aim is to prepare the students for a tertiary education. The curriculum includes, among other things, Chinese, mathematics, foreign language (usually English), politics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and biology. Chinese, mathematics, foreign language, and politics are core subjects which are taught throughout senior secondary school. The remaining subjects are taken by all students for the first two years. In their last year, students who intend to major in humanities at university are not required to take physics, chemistry, or biology, and those who wish to major in natural sciences and technology do not take history or geography. Upon completion of their senior secondary education, a majority of graduates from general senior secondary schools take the highly competitive National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), which includes a foreign language test as a core component. Those who pass the NCEE move on to a university of one of the three types shown in Figure 1.1, largely depending on their examination results. A minority of senior secondary graduates choose to sit entrance examinations for the three types of vocational-technical schools. These schools train middle-level specialists, technicians, and skilled workers.[9]

Students who excel in the NCEE may be admitted to comprehensive universities offering a full range of subjects, specialized universities/institutes

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[6] In 1999, there were 1,319 vocational junior secondary schools throughout the country (CERN, 2000e). The number of students enrolled in these schools added up to only 1.5 % of the total student population studying at the junior secondary level. Vocational junior secondary schools are mainly located in rural areas and provide a vocational and technical education that lasts from three to four years (CERN, 2000c). The curriculums are aimed at meeting the needs for labor forces with basic knowledge and skills.

[7] Graduates from vocational junior secondary schools may go on to specialized secondary schools, vocational senior secondary schools or skilled-workers training schools, provided they pass the entrance examinations. As the number of vocational junior secondary schools and their students is insignificant, these routes to senior secondary schooling are not represented in Figure 1.1.

[8] In 1999, new entrants to specialized secondary schools, vocational senior secondary schools and skilled-workers training schools amounted to 3.75 million (about 48.64 % of all the entrants to senior secondary schools), and the total number of students studying at these schools was 11.15 million (about 51.52 % of the student population studying at senior secondary schools).

[9] In principle, graduates from the vocational and technical track can move on to a university, but, in practice, only a relatively low proportion of them can pass the stringent, academically oriented NCEE. See Henze (1992) and the State Council (1991) for more information on vocational-technical education in the PRC.

concentrating on particular disciplines (e.g., mining, engineering), or normal universities/colleges and teachers' colleges providing pre-service teacher-training.[10] The number of years of study required by different undergraduate courses varies from two (e.g., teachers' colleges) to five years (e.g., medicine). After obtaining a bachelor's degree, a minority of graduates move on to Master's programs, which are normally of two or three years' duration, and from there, an even smaller minority make their way to doctoral programs, which require a further three years' study.

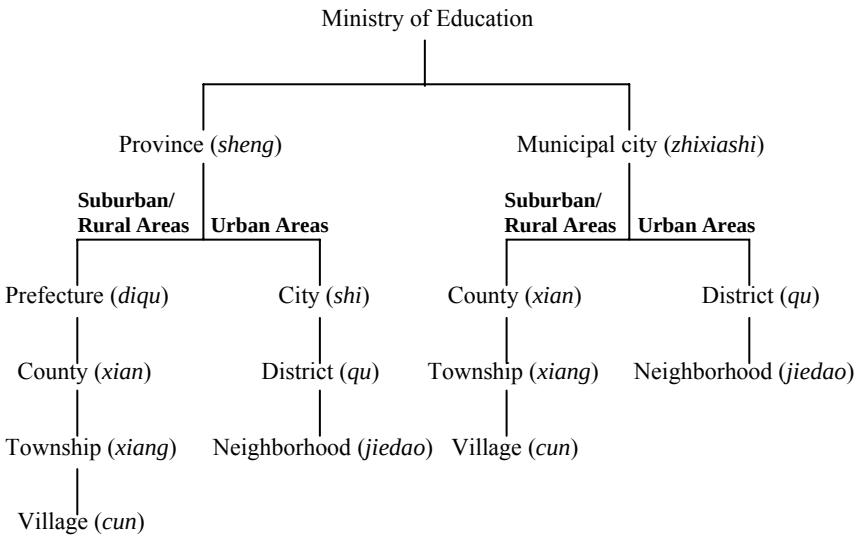
It should be pointed out that a number of important differences or distinctions are not represented in Figure 1.1. First, there is the widely recognized difference between key schools/universities and ordinary ones (Henze, 1992; Ross, 1993; Yin, 1993). The former have better facilities, more qualified staff and more capable students than the latter. They are intended as pivot sites of educational excellence (Hu & Seifman, 1987: 102-103; Lewin et al., 1994). Second, there are disparities between schools in urban areas and those in rural areas. Urban schools tend to be better funded, equipped, and staffed than rural ones (Cheng, 2000; Paine & DeLany, 2000). Third, differences exist between state-sponsored and non-state-run (*minban*) schools/universities in terms of funding, curriculum orientation, and administration (see CERN, 2000f; Chan & Mok, 2001; Mok, 2000). Finally, there is also a distinction between regular schools/universities and those for adults (Bureau of Vocational and Adult Education, n.d.; Huang, 1992; Maley, 1995).

The administrative structure supporting the Chinese education system is presented in Figure 1.2. The MOE (known as the State Education Commission from 1985 to 1997) is the supreme educational administrative agency responsible for macro-level planning and management. Its primary responsibilities include researching and drafting education-related guidelines, policies, laws, and regulations; carrying out relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies approved by the central government; researching and proposing strategies and policies for educational reforms; planning the focus, structure, and pace of nationwide educational development; integrating and coordinating educational initiatives and programs throughout the country; overseeing the raising, allocation and use of education funds; researching and supervising primary and secondary curriculum standards; and supervising the evaluation and approval of textbooks written for primary and secondary schools (MOE, 1998b; Z. X. Su, 1991). Since 1985, the central government has pursued a policy of decentralizing educational administration (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, 1985; Yin, 1993). This policy is most clearly reflected in two respects. While in the past the MOE undertook, through its subordinate institution—the People's

[10] Chinese higher institutions are undergoing extensive restructuring. Currently there are 1,166 regular institutions of higher learning and another 718 adult institutions of higher learning. The figures for 1999 were 1,071 and 871 respectively. See D. P. Yang (2001b) for a review of the development of higher education in the PRC.

Education Press (PEP)[11], the writing and publishing of primary and secondary syllabuses and textbooks, local governments and their institutions of education are now given considerable autonomy to produce their own curriculums, syllabuses and textbooks (Curriculum & Teaching Materials Research Institute, 2000; Ding, 1999; Shi, 1999). More significantly, basic education has become increasingly the endeavor of the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy (Cheng, 2000; State Council, 2001; Yin, 1993).

Figure 1.2 Structure of Educational Administration



As a result of the decentralization of educational administration, provincial or municipal governments and their bureaus of education have assumed greater power and responsibility for the administration of local primary, secondary and tertiary education. Specifically, they are authorized to make and implement policies, plans and procedures concerning the establishment of two- and three-year institutions of higher learning, tertiary enrolments, curriculums, management of bachelor's and master's programs, and financing of tertiary education. They are also responsible for the implementation and administration of basic education within their jurisdiction, including making plans of development, working out primary and secondary curriculums, evaluating the progress of local basic education, budgeting and financing basic education, and setting up

[11] Founded on December 1, 1950, the PEP is a specialized publishing house directly under the Ministry of Education and engages in researching, writing, compiling, publishing and distributing syllabuses and teaching materials mainly for primary and secondary schools in China. Since its founding, the PEP has published 20,000 titles in all with a total impression of 30 billion copies.

special educational funds to assist subordinate governments in poor areas or minorities-concentrated areas.

Governments and their bureaus of education at prefecture, city, county and district levels are responsible for implementing basic education (State Council, 2001). Their responsibilities include raising, managing and using educational funds to improve the conditions of the schools, training grass-roots educational officials, appointing and supervising principals, recruiting and assessing teachers, and guiding teaching and research (MOE, 2000a). Township governments harness township revenues for education, assist in the planning of basic education, and supervise the administration of the schools. The main responsibilities of villages and neighborhoods include improving the physical conditions of schools, mobilizing school-age children to go to school, and overseeing the management of the schools.

Although the decentralization of educational administration is not without its problems (Cheng, 2000; Yin, 1993), it is generally considered a measure of paramount importance, taken to speed up educational development nationwide and to improve the efficiency of educational administration (State Education Commission, 1996a; Z. X. Su, 1991).

A Profile of English Learners at Various Levels of Education

In presenting a profile of EFL learners at regular schools and universities, the report relies mainly on published educational statistics, curriculums, syllabus requirements, and various formal and informal assessments of proficiency. As no complete educational statistics are currently available for the year of 2000, the *Statistical Communiqué of Educational Development for Year 1999* (MOE, 2000f) and data collated by the PEP (2000) are used as major sources of information. Table 1.1 summarizes the number of regular schools, formal institutions of higher education, graduates, new entrants, and schooling students by level and type of school.

ELT at the pre-school level is not officially required. However, kindergartens in large cities and advantaged areas do offer English lessons (British Council, 1995). It is not clear how many pre-school children take such lessons. Those children who take English in kindergartens generally learn simple English songs or nursery rhymes, a small number of vocabulary items, some brief dialogues, pronunciation, and basic intonation patterns (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b). Their proficiency in English can rightly be described as minimum.

As in the case of kindergartens, English instruction is not part of the nationally prescribed curriculum for primary pupils, though the MOE is currently planning to expand ELT to all primary schools.[12] According to the guidelines issued by the MOE (2000b), primary schools run at city and county levels should start to offer English classes in the academic year of 2001/2002,

[12] Not all ELT educators support adding English (or, for that matter, any foreign language) to the primary curriculum. Some, for example, argue that English instruction should start at junior secondary school rather than at primary school (D. F. Shu, 2001).

and those in townships from the autumn of 2002. The recommended starting grade is Primary Three. As a matter of fact, primary schools in large cities and developed areas started to teach English years back (Y. A. Wu, 2001). Since 1994, there has been an annual increase of more than one million primary English learners. Currently there are eight million primary school pupils studying English as a school subject for two to three hours a week (*Zhongguo Jiaoyubao*, 2001). Although there are no official data available on the English proficiency levels of these primary pupils, it would be quite safe to say that they have some minimum proficiency in the language. The basic requirements for primary English (MOE, 2000e) state that by the end of their primary English course, pupils should be able to understand simple questions and stories with picture cues; conduct brief dialogues with clear pronunciation and intonation; use formulaic expressions to greet, take leave and apologize; read simple directions and illustrated stories; write simple greetings and sentences; and sing 30 to 40 English songs/nursery rhymes.

Table 1.1 Statistics of the regular educational system, 1999

Level	School	Graduate	Entrant	Enrolment
Postgraduate	**775**	**54,700**	**92,200**	**233,600**
Tertiary institutions	446	50,800	86,800	218,700
Research institutes	329	3,900	5,400	14,900
Undergraduate	**1,071**	**847,600**	**1,596,800**	**4,134,200**
Bachelor's degree	597	623,000	1,118,400	3,149,300
Sub-degree	474	210,100	402,100	878,300
Other programs	-	14,500	76,300	106,600
Senior secondary	**30,504**	**6,133,000**	**7,716,200**	**21,651,000**
General senior secondary	14,127	2,629,100	3,963,200	10,497,100
Specialized secondary	3,962	1,401,500	1,633,700	5,155,000
Vocational secondary	8,317	1,436,900	1,603,800	4,438,400
Skilled-workers	4,098	662,500	515,500	1,560,500
Junior secondary	**64,405**	**16,139,400**	**21,834,400**	**58,116,500**
General junior secondary	63,086	15,898,000	21,496,800	57,215,700
Vocational junior secondary	1,319	241,400	337,600	900,800
Primary	**582,291**	**23,137,400**	**20,295,300**	**135,479,600**
Kindergarten	**181,136**	**-**	**16,175,400**	**23,262,600**

Sources: the MOE (2000f) and the PEP (2000). Note that statistics presented above do not include those on special education and adult education. For information about adult education, see CERN (2000d).

A foreign language subject is compulsory for students enrolled in all regular secondary and post-secondary institutions. On the basis of the statistics presented in Table 1.1, and assuming more or less the same number of new entrants and graduates in 2000, it can be estimated that there are nearly 80 million full-time secondary students learning a foreign language nationwide. Of

these students, about 350,000 study Russian and another 160,000 learn Japanese (Adamson, 2001).[13] In other words, about 99% of the 80 million students study English as a school subject.[14]

Junior secondary students are required to study English (or another foreign language) between three and four contact hours a week for three or four years, depending on whether they are in the 6-plus-3 track or the 5-plus-4 one. This means that by the time they graduate from junior secondary school, they should have more than 400 hours of formal instruction in the foreign language. According to the English syllabus (State Education Commission, 1992) which was followed until 2000, the junior secondary English course should provide the students with a basic knowledge of the target language and a basic ability to use the language for communication through training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Major specific objectives are summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Major objectives for junior secondary English, 1992 syllabus

Knowledge/Skill	Major Objectives
Listening	understand and respond to classroom English; understand the gist of a passage retold by the teacher; understand with 70% correctness after listening three times to native speakers' recording of familiar materials at a reading speed of 90 to 110 words per minute
Speaking	ask and answer questions about texts; retell the gist of a studied text; carry out simple conversations; ask questions and talk briefly about familiar topics with the aid of picture cues; speak with basically correct pronunciation and intonation
Reading	read passages of comparable difficulty to studied texts for gist with the help of a dictionary; read with 70% comprehension a written passage with less than 2% new words at a reading speed of 40 to 60 words per minute
Writing	answer questions about texts in writing; make simple sentences using the vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns learned; write simple letters, notices, and announcements based on models given
Vocabulary	acquire an active oral and written command of 600 to 700 commonly used words; master 200 idioms and formulaic expressions; have a receptive vocabulary of another 400 to 500 words; identify the meaning and parts of speech of derivative and compound words
Grammar	master inflections and five basic sentence structures; understand relatively simple sentences containing adverbial or object clauses; use five basic tense/aspect forms; use the passive voice in simple present/past tenses; master object, complement and adverbial usage of infinitives

Given that junior secondary school leaving (JSSL) examinations are set by local educational authorities and display considerable diversity in level and scope (Research Team on JSSL English Examinations in Northern China, 2001; Research Team on JSSL English Examinations in Southern China, 2001), it is not entirely clear to what extent the students attain these criteria. Based on the rates of junior-to-senior-secondary promotion in the recent years (MOE, 2000f), it would seem that at least half of the junior secondary graduates have reached

[13] Russian and Japanese are taught mainly in Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Inner Mongolia.
[14] The percentage given here is higher than the 95% estimated by the British Council in 1995.

the required standards upon graduation. The range of proficiency seems to be between basic and lower-intermediate levels in terms of a standardized proficiency scale. However, there are significant differences between key schools, especially specialized foreign language schools, and ordinary ones (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Ross, 1993).[15] Students from the former fare much better than those from the latter (Ross; 1993).

Senior secondary school students, regardless of school type, are required to take English (or another foreign language) as a subject. The 1993 English syllabus for full-time senior secondary schools prescribes 427.5 hours of English instruction. Specialized, vocational, and skilled-workers training schools may offer more hours of English instruction or fewer, depending on the nature and goals of the schools in question. The major aim of senior secondary English is to consolidate and expand the basic knowledge and language skills acquired in junior secondary school, develop a basic oral and written command of English for communication, and cultivate reading skills and the ability to learn independently so as to lay a good foundation for further study and use of the language (State Education Commission, 1993). Specific requirements are presented in Table 1.3.

Judging by the long list of objectives, it is reasonable to say that students who successfully meet the requirements should be rather advanced in their study of English. However, there is some evidence that considerable disparity exists in the actual levels of proficiency attained. In the past five years, the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test, a standardized test designed by the Educational Testing Service (1991), was administered to about 800 PRC students studying in a six-month intensive communicative skills program in Singapore. These students were senior secondary graduates who were enrolled by a dozen of prestigious and average universities in the PRC but sent to Singapore to complete their university education. Their scores on the test showed that their proficiency ranged from advanced to lower-intermediate levels. Those from key schools in urban centers generally scored within the range from upper-intermediate to advanced, whereas those from ordinary schools and less developed areas tended to score between lower- and upper-intermediate levels.

At the tertiary level, there are two types of English courses: General College English and Specialist College English. The former is essentially an English-for-specific-purpose (ESP) course for non-English majors, and the latter is designed for undergraduates who specialize in English studies. General

[15] Currently there are 50 or so foreign language schools nationwide. These specialized junior and senior secondary schools adopt a curriculum weighted heavily in favor of foreign language teaching. They are geared to university programs for foreign language majors and train high-caliber students for future jobs that require high proficiency in a foreign language.

Table 1.3 Major objectives for senior secondary English, 1993 syllabus[16]

Knowledge/Skill	Major Objectives
Listening	understand classroom English and the teacher's explanation of new contents in English; understand the gist of a passage/story retold by the teacher and text-related questions; understand conversations on daily life that employ standard English and are carried out at a slightly slower than normal speed; understand the gist of simplified stories or passages on familiar topics delivered at a speed of 110 to 120 words per minute after listening only once; understand important details of similar materials after listening two or three times
Speaking	ask and answer questions about texts fluently; repeat or retell with brief preparation passages/texts heard or read, with considerable fluency and coherence; carry out simple conversations involving greeting, suggestion request and invitation, using the "Daily Expressions in Communication"; express intended messages with a limited number of grammatical errors and considerable clarity; speak six or more sentences in succession, with limited pauses and repetitions but considerable clarity and fluency
Reading	read with 70% comprehension passages on general topics containing less than 3% new words at a speed of 50 to 60 words per minute; guess the meaning of new words according to contextual clues and knowledge of word formation; understand pragmatic genres of writing such as correspondence, invitations, notices, memos, manuals, forms, and graphs; follow reasoning, chronological order, and spatial sequence; understand a writer's attitude, point of view, and deeper messages; infer implicit intentions according to known facts
Writing	write (at 12 to 15 words per minute) a dictation with no new words read (3 times) at a speed of 110 to 120 words per minute; ask and answer questions about texts in writing; fill in bio-data forms and write simple letters, notices, and announcements without grave errors; write a composition of 80 to 100 words in 30 minutes, with the aid of cue words, to convey messages with sufficient clarity and without grave errors in basic grammar
Vocabulary	in addition to the 600 words acquired in junior secondary school, have an active oral, aural and written command of another 600 words and a considerable number of idioms and formulaic expressions; develop a passive vocabulary of another 800 words and a certain number of idioms and formulaic expressions; identify the meaning and parts of speech of derivative and compound words; select the correct meaning of polysemes and identify the parts of speech of words that belong to more than one word class
Grammar	master ten word classes and their subcategories; master the simple present, simple past, future tenses, present progressive, past progressive, present perfect, past perfect, and past future; master the various grammatical functions of infinitive and past participle phrases; understand usage of gerundive phrases; master basic sentence types (statement, interrogative, imperative, exclamative); grasp sentence constituents (subject, predicate, complement, object, etc.) and agreement; master simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences containing noun clauses, relative clauses, and adverbial clauses; understand ellipsis and inversion

[16] This is the syllabus on which the 2001, NCEE was based.

College English is divided into two stages. The first stage is a compulsory one for non-English majors and spans the first two years of their undergraduate career.[17] It delivers about 300 hours of instruction and builds on language knowledge and skills acquired at secondary school. The second stage is a specialized elective reading course that lasts for another one or two years and is aimed at training the undergraduates to read information related to their specializations. The organization of General College English is structured by the graded standardized College English Test (Bands One to Six). A placement test is first administered to assign newly enrolled undergraduates to suitable bands. A great majority of them are placed in Band One. While some excellent students may start at an entry level of Band Two or even Band Three, a small minority of undergraduates may begin with a preliminary band. Each band normally takes one semester to complete, and a qualifying test is given at the end of each level. Those who pass the test are promoted to the next band, but excellent students can skip bands if they satisfy the necessary requirements. All undergraduates are expected to complete at least Band Four and all postgraduates Band Six. Those who fail to pass College English Test Bands Four or Six are not eligible for a bachelor's or postgraduate degree. While these key bands are tested on a nationwide basis, other bands are tested at the provincial or institutional level. Table 1.4 gives the minimum requirements of Bands Four and Six. Although it is reasonable to conclude, on the basis of these requirements, that university graduates should be at an advanced level of proficiency, it is not rare to hear complaints that they lack the necessary language skills (especially listening and speaking) to engage in effective communication (Beijing Foreign Studies University, 1992; L. Lin, 2000; D. F. Shu, 2001; S. Y. Yang, 1987). Interestingly, many graduates can score very high in internationally used standardized English proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL) or scholastic tests that contain a language component (e.g., GRE). A clear upward trend in GRE scores in China has recently caught the attention of the Educational Testing Service authorities (Sun, 2001).

Specialist College English is available in a dozen or so foreign studies universities, some comprehensive universities, normal universities and teachers' colleges. There are over 300 Specialist College English programs nationwide (Y. A. Wu, 2001). Students enrolled in such programs are trained to be English teachers, linguists, specialists in English literature or other work where a sophisticated command of English is required (Sun & Sun, 1989; Zhao & Campbell, 1995). Consequently, Specialist College English aims at a much higher level of proficiency, competence and specialization than General College English. Like General College English, it is also divided into a foundation stage and a specialized stage. Unlike General College English, it is divided into separate courses. The foundation stage generally lasts two years and consists of core courses such a intensive reading, extensive reading, listening compre-

[17] Non-English majors can opt for other foreign languages to satisfy their course requirements. However, the number of students studying a foreign language other than English is rather small (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a).

Table 1.4 Basic requirements of General College English (Bands 4 & 6)

Band	Minimum Requirements
4	have an intermediate level of competence in listening; read aloud with correct pronunciation and intonation; participate in social conversations and discussions relevant to one's field of study; read with 70% comprehension a text with less than 2% new words at a speed of 70 to 90 words per minute; have an active oral and written command of 2,300 words, and a receptive command of another 4,000 words; write a guided composition of 100 to 120 words within 30 minutes without serious grammatical errors; have a good understanding of grammar
6	understand a native speaker with reasonable ease; communicate information fluently about one's specialization; read with 70% comprehension texts on general topics with less than 2% new words at a speed of 120 words per minute, and read with some ease more advanced texts relevant to one's specialization at a speed of 70 words per minute; write a coherent text (e.g., a letter, a summary of an article, or an abstract of a thesis) of 120 to 150 words within 30 minutes with good grammatical accuracy; have an active oral and written command of 2,800 words and a receptive command of another 5,300 words

Source: College English Syllabus Revision Team (1991)

hension, speaking, writing, and grammar. The overall goal of this stage is to provide students with a firm knowledge base of grammar and vocabulary as well as an all-round development of both receptive and productive skills. The specialized stage covers two years for four-year universities/colleges and one year for three-year institutions. At this stage, in addition to some rollover courses from the first stage, a dozen of new courses are introduced, including English literature, American literature, linguistics, phonetics, stylistics, social studies, translation, and other academic courses. In total, English majors are expected to complete over 20 individual courses. Like non-English majors, they are also required to pass graded standardized tests to be conferred a degree (Bands One to Four for the foundation stage, and Bands Five to Eight for the advanced stage). Because considerable diversity exists in the curriculums and syllabuses adopted in different Specialist College English programs, it is impossible to list their specific requirements here. In general, English majors complete at least 2,500 hours of English instruction in three-year institutions and more than 3,000 hours in four-year institutions. They are expected to acquire a large vocabulary, a sophisticated knowledge of English, very high skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and a firm foundation in specialist areas (Zhao & Campbell, 1995). It is appropriate to classify their English proficiency as highly advanced. However, it must be kept in mind that considerable disparities in competence exist between graduates from four-year programs and those from three-year ones, and between those from specialized foreign language institutes or key universities and those from ordinary universities and colleges.

A Brief History of ELT in the PRC

The development of ELT in the PRC has been very much influenced by differing political, economic, social, and educational needs at different times. In

the words of Ross (1992: 239), ELT has been "a barometer of modernization." This is most clearly reflected in the production of syllabuses/textbooks and the selection of pedagogical approaches in the last five decades (Adamson & Morris, 1997). Five broad historical periods can be identified in terms of ELT policies, objectives, contents, and methodologies.

The Soviet Influence (1949-1956)[18]

The years immediately following the founding of the PRC in 1949 saw large-scale reconstruction in political, social, economic, and educational domains. Because of numerous other tasks of greater urgency, no fundamental changes were made to ELT. Initially, popular curriculums, teaching materials and methods used before 1949 were critically adopted and absorbed, with emphasis placed on making ELT serve the new republic. This situation, however, was soon to change. Largely because of Western attempts to isolate Communist China, a friendly relationship developed rapidly between the PRC and the erstwhile Soviet Union during the early 1950s, which led to a rising Soviet influence on China's politics, economy, and education (Adamson & Morris, 1997; S. Chen, 1989; S. Q. Huang, 1987; Yao, 1993). There was a strong political influence on foreign language teaching (FLT). Higher institutions and secondary schools began to offer Russian programs in 1952, whereas ELT declined dramatically (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; McGuire, 1997; Ross, 1992). In 1954, English was removed from the junior secondary curriculum, partly as a result of worsening relations with Western countries, partly as a solution to the dire shortage of English teachers, and partly as an effort to reduce the curriculum demands on students (G. Tang, 1986; Tang & Gao, 2000). Subsequently, Russian became the dominant foreign language taught throughout the country. Although ELT continued in a few senior secondary schools and institutions of higher education, it was generally viewed with "a shadow of doubt" (L. X. Tang, 1983:14), as it was generally considered unpatriotic to learn English. In EFL classrooms, Soviet educator I. A. Kairov's "five-step instructional procedure" was widely adopted (Adamson, 2001; McGuire, 1997; C. C. Yu, 1984).[19] EFL textbooks were imported from the Soviet Union or adapted from those used in the Soviet Union. The Russian model of foreign language teaching, like the traditional Chinese model, was teacher-dominated and textbook-centered, with an overwhelming emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. One of its major influences was on the introduction of the Intensive Reading Course (nowadays renamed as Integrated English or Integrated Skills Course). The *explication de texte* approach introduced via the Russian influence fitted well into the tradition of L1 literacy teaching in China,

[18] For ELT before 1949, see S. Chen (1989), Ross (1992, 1993), and K. Wang (1981) for reviews.
[19] The five steps were (a) reviewing the old material; (b) orienting the new material; (c) explaining the new material; (d) consolidating the newly learned material; and (e) giving follow-up assignments (C. C. Yu, 1984).

thrived in the Chinese milieu and has become the hallmark of ELT practices in the PRC (Maley, 1983; T. Scovel, 1983).[20]

Experimentation with Socialist Education (1957-1965)

In anticipation of increasing demands for Western technological expertise and expanding diplomatic and trade relations with foreign countries, there was a growing awareness of the importance of English in the late 1950s. This awareness was further enhanced when China's relation with the Soviet Union became strained in 1960. Interest in English as a means of access to scientific and technical information to support national development was renewed. In 1957, English found its way back into the junior secondary curriculum (Ross, 1992). The reinstatement of ELT was accompanied by a serious problem; that is, there was an acute shortage of qualified English teachers. In 1957, there were only 73 full-time junior secondary and 770 full-time senior secondary school English teachers in the whole country (MOE, 1984). Consequently, many teachers of Russian were retraining as English teachers in the late 1950s and early 1960s (K. Wang, 1981; C. C. Yu, 1984). The negative impact of this Russian-to-English retraining could even be felt many years later (S. Y. Yang, 1987).

The first unified set of secondary English textbooks was published by the PEP in 1957. In the following year, the central government decided to devolve curriculum design and textbook writing to local organizations. Subsequently, there were all sorts of experimentation with curriculums and textbooks (Shi, 1999). For example, a set of eighteen English textbooks for primary and secondary schools was written by the staff of Beijing Normal University. The devolution of curriculum and textbook writing brought along some serious problems. Curriculums tended to be unrealistic and textbooks were heavily politicized (Adamson & Morris, 1997). To address these problems, the central government instructed the MOE to develop unified textbooks for primary, secondary, and normal schools (Shi, 1999).

Into the 1960s, the PRC began a series of important political, economic and educational readjustments. In 1960, a National Cultural and Educational Conference was held to discuss ELT and its improvement. The following year saw English become a requirement for entrance to tertiary education. A new syllabus that stressed oral English and reading competence was produced in 1963, and approaches based on a combination of a thematic and a structural approach were recommended. The early 1960s can best be described as a period

[20] The strengths and weaknesses of the course have been extensively discussed by both Western and Chinese ELT specialists (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Yao, 1993; Z. Y. Zhang, 1997). Opponents argue that it hinders the development of communicative competence by stressing knowledge of form rather than awareness of functions or acquisition of skills, prioritizing reading skills at the expense of oral skills, encouraging students to assume a passive role of listening and memorizing, and containing too high a proportion of literary contents (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a: 67). Not a few Chinese teachers of English, however, see value in this course and suggest ways of improving the course by incorporating more communicative elements (Z. Y. Zhang, 1997).

of expansion in the teaching of English. In 1964, the MOE issued a seven-year program for FLT, establishing English as the dominant foreign language on the curriculums and planning to greatly increase the ratio of English-learning students to Russian-learning ones. Several sets of textbooks were produced, including the Innovative Teaching Materials compiled in Shanghai for primary and secondary use (McGuire, 1997). During this period, different methodologies such as the Direct Method, Audiolingualism (ALM), and Grammar-Translation existed side by side. Listening and speaking began to receive more attention in a four-skill approach. There was a general spirit of innovation and experimentation in education as well as a growing understanding of Western models and practices. An emerging consensus was that FLT should not be restricted to the teaching of classic literary works only and that authentic materials should be used to help students understand foreign cultures (Fu, 1986). It was also agreed that ELT at the secondary level should strive to lay two foundations: basic knowledge and basic skills.

The Decade of Chaos (1966-1976)

The Cultural Revolution, which started in 1966, disrupted China's economic and educational development and led to a whole decade of chaos and isolation. The purpose of and motivation for learning foreign languages were totally undercut (Ross, 1992). In the first few years, all broadcasts in foreign languages were banned, all imported foreign books forbidden, all ELT programs removed from the secondary curriculums, and all universities and colleges closed. The formal education system ceased to function. Although foreign language programs resumed in some institutions of higher education in 1968, there was little teaching or learning going on. English reappeared on the curriculum in some secondary schools in 1970, but ELT was essentially in a state of anarchy. Textbooks were produced at provincial and municipal levels (Tang & Gao, 2000). These textbooks were full of politically charged texts to serve the then political needs and were not based on any theories of language teaching and learning (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Fu, 1986; L. X. Tang, 1983; Yao, 1993). The prevailing approach was a teacher-centered, grammar-translation pedagogy. The quality of ELT was at its lowest. The deplorable situation remained until the Cultural Revolution was brought to an end in 1976. The negative impact of this turbulent period on the development of ELT was strongly felt in the subsequent years.

Opening up and Modernization (1977-1985)

The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the national policy of "Four Modernizations" brought in a new era of political, economic, and social development, as well as a rapid growth of commercial, cultural, and scientific exchange with the West and Japan. These developments exerted profound influences on education in general and ELT in particular (S. Q. Huang, 1987; Ross, 1993; Shi, 1999). Secondary and higher education were reshaped by a

new orientation towards economic development and national modernization. FLT regained legitimacy. At a national conference on FLT held in 1978, it was proposed that FLT at the secondary level should receive due attention and be made a core school subject (K. Wang, 1981). The dominant aim of ELT during this period was to prepare a new generation of Chinese for the language skills needed to learn science and gain technological know-how from the West. To keep up with the new requirements for ELT, the MOE issued a trial English syllabus in 1978, and the PEP produced a new unified set of textbooks for secondary English courses, which was considerably revised in 1982. With the flourishing of economy and the boom of international exchange, there was a growing enthusiasm for learning English nationwide (L. X. Tang, 1983; Yao, 1993). Although new textbooks were published, learning materials were generally in short supply (T. Scovel, 1983; Z. Y. Wang, 1982). As regards pedagogy, a combination of ALM and Grammar-Translation prevailed. Despite less than favorable conditions for learning, an English craze was sweeping the nation, as evidenced in the popularity of radio/TV English programs throughout the country. The English TV show *Follow Me* broadcasted by CCTV, for example, had a 20 million strong audience. Meanwhile, with the growing presence of Western educators in China and Chinese scholars in Western universities came the influx of new theories of education. Recent language teaching/learning theories and methods began to receive attention. In 1985, a nationwide reform in education was initiated (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, 1985), profoundly influencing the Chinese education system (Lewin et al., 1994).

Educational Reform (1986 onwards)

The in-rush of billions of dollars in foreign investment and the mushrooming of thousands of foreign-financed businesses increased the demand for a workforce proficient in English (Hertling, 1996). The general quality of ELT in China, however, could not come up to the expectations. In 1986, a survey study was conducted, under the auspices of the State Education Commission, on students from 139 secondary schools in fifteen provinces. The study found that the general level of English proficiency was rather low. A great majority of the students surveyed had only some fragmentary knowledge of English grammar, could recognize about 1,800 words, and were very weak in the four language skills (Wei, 2001). Multiple causes of the low quality of ELT were identified, including outdated curriculums, rigid teaching methods, shortage of qualified teachers, and examination-oriented instruction. Subsequently, the State Education Commission updated curriculums for various levels and organized the production of new syllabuses and textbooks. Meanwhile, it encouraged innovation in education by allowing some culturally and economically advanced cities and areas to produce their own syllabuses and textbooks. There was a significant increase in the recruitment of foreign ELT teachers to teach on Specialist College English courses and ELT teacher-training programs. At the same time, more and more Chinese ELT teachers and specialists were sent to study in Western universities. The contingent of ELT teachers was

strengthened. In 1995, there were about 400,000 full-time secondary school English teachers and 28,000 tertiary English teachers (Maley, 1995). New language learning theories and pedagogies, notably communicative language teaching, were introduced and promoted. In brief, this period of ELT in China was one of unprecedented reform powered by the drive toward student-centered, quality education.

To conclude, the development of ELT in the PRC can best be understood in the larger context of changes and shifts in educational policies, which have been, in turn, initiated and shaped by the different ideological, social, and economic dynamics of modern China in the past five decades. The brief review above clearly shows that ELT in the PRC has undergone important changes in orientation and contents. It is moving away from serving political priorities towards achieving cultural, economic and academic goals. Most recent developments also suggest a strongly pluralist approach to the construction and interpretation of national educational policies.

Unified English Syllabuses

A syllabus is an important component of a curriculum and a guide for the production of instructional materials and classroom practices. In the context of the PRC, a language syllabus reflects fundamental assumptions about the nature, functions and processes of language teaching and learning, lays down teaching and learning objectives, delimits instructional contents, and circumscribes the processes and methods of instruction. More importantly, it most clearly embodies the government's policy on FLT at a particular stage of development. Between 1949 and 2001, the MOE has issued more than a dozen unified English syllabuses for junior and senior secondary schools.[21] Those syllabuses reflected the perceived nature, orientation and goals of ELT at different times, laid down the desired standards of instruction, and prescribed or recommended what were considered the most appropriate teaching methodologies. This section briefly examines some of these syllabuses, with a focus on the most recent ones, so as to provide some insights into the development of ELT in the PRC.[22]

The first English syllabus developed by the MOE was issued in 1956. As English was not taught in junior secondary schools, the syllabus was designed solely for use in senior secondary schools. In line with the then political, economic and social priorities, the syllabus justified ELT on three counts. First, to construct socialist China, it was necessary to absorb, through mastery of

[21] See the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute (2001) for a comprehensive collection of English syllabuses issued in China during the last century. See also Adamson (2001) and Adamson and Morris (1997) for discussions of curriculum and teaching materials developments since 1949.

[22] This report focuses on the syllabuses for general secondary schools for two reasons. One is that graduates from general secondary schools are more likely to receive further formal instruction in English than those from other types of secondary schools. The other reason is that ELT in many secondary schools in the vocational-technical track either adopts or adapts the same syllabuses.

English, the latest scientific and technological achievements all around the world. Second, learning English could facilitate socialist education of the young generation. Finally, learning English could help students better understand their mother tongue, foster their thinking ability, and widen their vision. The syllabus stressed the ideological function of ELT to serve socialist education and construction, but largely failed to recognize the communicative nature of language. The pronounced attempt to subject ELT to the political and ideological needs weakened the pedagogical soundness of the syllabus (J. Z. Zhang, 1993). In the following year, the MOE (1957) issued a draft syllabus for junior secondary English because of the reinstatement of the subject in the junior secondary curriculum. The syllabus was similar to the 1956 syllabus in terms of orientation and motivation. In addition, it aimed at "motivating students to continue to learn English in the future and providing them with the relevant knowledge, skills, and techniques" (cited in Adamson & Morris, 1997: 8). Three hours per week were prescribed for the subject. The recommended pedagogy was very much influenced by the Russian educator I. A. Kairov's teaching model.

Because of the rapid expansion of ELT in the early 1960s, the old syllabuses were no longer adequate. As a result, the MOE produced a new draft English syllabus in 1963. The syllabus was based on a summary of previous experience of ELT in China and a synthesis of ideas from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. Although ideological messages still prevailed, the syllabus discouraged the view that the sole value of foreign language learning was to serve proletarian politics. Foreign language learning was perceived, first and foremost, as "an important tool for developing cultural and scientific knowledge, engaging in international interaction, facilitating cultural exchange, and fostering understanding between peoples of different countries" (MOE, 1963: 1). Several other features also distinguished the syllabus from the previous ones. First, it emphasized the development of both basic knowledge of English and basic skills to apply this knowledge. Second, it highlighted the importance of providing systematic knowledge. Third, it attempted to give balanced attention to oral and written command of English. Fourth, the time allocated for English instruction was significantly increased, totaling 1,256 hours over six years. Finally, the recommended methodology was ALM, rather than the traditional Grammar-Translation Method. Of all the unified syllabuses published since the founding of the PRC, no other syllabus has set higher teaching objectives, prescribed more teaching content, and allocated more instructional time for ELT than the 1963 syllabus.

For reasons discussed in the previous section, no new unified syllabus was produced during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. In 1978, two years after the Cultural Revolution was brought to an end, a tentative syllabus for primary and secondary English was issued by the MOE. Although by then China had embarked on the "Four Modernizations" program, there were still obvious political vestiges of the previous era in the new syllabus. The modernization orientation was reflected in the recognition of English as a tool for economic, commercial, cultural, scientific and technological exchange with

the rest of the world. The ideological vestiges, on the other hand, underpinned the conception of English as a weapon for "international class struggle" and a vehicle for carrying out "revolutionary diplomacy" (MOE, 1978). The time allocated for instruction was 656 hours, roughly half of the time prescribed in the 1963 syllabus. The major teaching aims were the provision of carefully selected basic knowledge, the laying of the two foundations (i.e., basic knowledge and basic skills), and the development of intellectual abilities. The suggested approach to ELT was a combination of the Grammar-Translation Method and ALM. The syllabus was subsequently revised in 1982 to meet the needs of ELT in key secondary schools. To raise the status of English in the curriculum, 960 hours were allocated for English instruction to students who opted for a humanities curriculum and 932 hours for those in the science track.

The year 1986 saw the publication of another new syllabus. As the nation was engaged in fundamental economic reforms in her drive to modernization, the stated goals of English instruction became less political but more economically oriented, as can be seen from the following introduction to the syllabus:

> 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." Our country has adopted the Open Door Policy; the reforms of our country's economics, politics, technology and education are being wholeheartedly implemented; throughout the world, new technological reforms are booming. In order to construct our country as a modern socialist nation, with a high level of civilization and democracy, we have to raise the cultural and scientific quality of all people in the country. We need to nurture a large number of experts who are goal-oriented and ethical, possessing culture, discipline and, to different extents, competence in various aspects of foreign languages. Under these circumstances, the value of foreign languages as important tools becomes greater. Therefore, foreign languages are listed as a basic subject in our country's secondary schooling. (State Education Commission, 1986; translation from Adamson & Morris, 1997: 19-20)

To align ELT with the government's ambitious goal of universalizing nine-year basic education, the State Education Commission produced an English syllabus for nine-year compulsory education in 1988. The new syllabus was similar to its immediate predecessor in orientation but introduced some changes. Notably, a list of functional and notional items was introduced in addition to lists of grammar points and vocabulary items (Stated Education Commission, 1988). There was an embryonic interest in teaching English communicatively.

Largely because some of the teaching objectives and contents set in the 1986 and 1988 syllabuses were too high or too difficult, both syllabuses were

revised and merged into a new one in 1990. The aims of ELT were still the same, as can be seen in the wording of the introduction, which was identical to the introduction of the 1986 syllabus. However, English became an elective course for the last year of senior secondary schooling. Upon completion of the compulsory course, students were expected to have mastered basic pronunciation and grammar, acquired a minimum of 1,800 words and a definite number of idiomatic expressions, and developed some proficiency in the four language skills (State Education Commission, 1990). Some of the pedagogical suggestions given were as follows:

- explain sparingly and focus on the development of communicative ability;
- integrate the training of the four skills, with emphasis on different skills at different stages;
- maximize the use of the target language and use the mother tongue at discretion; and
- bring into full play the directing role of the teacher and motivate students to learn.

Besides these general suggestions, specific techniques were recommended for teaching different skills, texts, vocabulary, and grammar. The suggested approach was essentially a combination of the traditional methodology and ALM. A total of 806 hours was allocated for the compulsory part of the course, and another 120 hours for the elective part.

In an effort to transform ELT and improve its quality in response to criticisms about low returns for high investments of time and resources, the State Education Commission produced a new syllabus for junior secondary schools in 1992 and another one for senior secondary schools in 1993. As the two syllabuses shared the same orientation, structure, pedagogical principles and assessment procedures, only the junior secondary syllabus is discussed here. In the introduction, a close connection was made between quality education and ELT. Mastery of a foreign language was viewed as vital to meeting the needs of opening up and reform, speeding up socialist modernization, developing students' intellectual power, and raising the level of educational quality. The major aims of ELT included

- providing students with a basic knowledge of English and developing basic communicative competence through training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- fostering an interest in learning the language;
- developing good study habits;
- laying an initial foundation for students' further study of English;
- cultivating moral integrity, patriotism, and socialist consciousness; and
- developing students' thinking ability and independent learning skills.

The syllabus divided the junior secondary English course into two stages. Stage One consisted of the first two years of schooling and allocated three hours of instruction per week for students in the 6-plus-3 track and one more hour for those in the 5-plus-4 track. Stage Two was one year for the 6-plus-3 track and two years for the 5-plus-4 track. The weekly time of instruction for both tracks was four hours. Different levels of mastery were clearly specified in both quantity and quality terms with respect to stages, knowledge, and skills. For example, while students at Stage One were required to understand the gist of the teacher's retelling of a text, those at Stage Two were expected to understand with 70% comprehension native speakers' recording of familiar materials at a reading speed of 90 to 100 words per minute (for the 6-plus-3 track) or 100 to 110 words per minute (for the 5-plus-4 track) after listening three times.

Besides the above features, what most clearly distinguished the new syllabus from the previous ones were its pedagogical suggestions. Although the infusing of ideological education into language training was still deemed imperative, emphasis was placed on teaching in accordance with the dynamics of language learning. To do so, teachers had to prioritize the development of communicative competence, drawing students' attention to the close connection between form and meaning, creating situations and opportunities for communication, and helping students transform their basic knowledge and language skills into the ability to communicate in the target language. They were required to strive for an all-round development of the four macro language skills, with different skills being emphasized at different stages.[23] They also needed to encourage students to participate actively in the learning process and cultivate learner initiatives. Importantly, the syllabus made a point of greatly increasing both language input to and output from students in the classroom.[24] It further suggested that a rich variety of extracurricular activities be developed to support classroom teaching. In addition, teachers were advised to create a more conducive language learning environment by using realia, pictures, recordings, slides, TV, movies, and information technologies. A slightly revised edition of the 1992 syllabus was published in 1995 (Tang & Gao, 2000).

To cater for diverse regional needs and to encourage experimentation in ELT, the State Education Commission published another English syllabus for pilot use in senior secondary schools in Tianjin, Jiangxi, and Shanxi in 1996. Although the new syllabus shared much with the 1993 syllabus, there were a number of important changes (State Education Commission, 1996b). First, a new rationale for learning English was advanced; that is, it could contribute to education in ideological and affective domains, foster students' intellectual development, broaden their vision, and enhance the development of individuality and specialty. Second, time allocations for instruction were reduced considerably: 349 hours for students in humanities and science tracks (427.5 hours in the 1993

[23] The senior secondary syllabus accorded the development of reading skills more prominence.

[24] In addition to this requirement, the senior secondary syllabus emphasized the connection between language and culture, stating that a knowledge of English-speaking cultures could help students use the target language more effectively and appropriately, widen their vision, and enhance their understanding of the Chinese culture.

syllabus) and 297 hours for students in a new track—practical technologies (*shiyong jishuke*). In relation to the second change, standards were somewhat lowered. For example, while the 1993 syllabus required students to understand important details of simplified stories or passages on familiar topics delivered at a speed of 110 to 120 words per minute after listening only once, the new syllabus expected students to understand only the main ideas of similar materials after listening three times. The receptive vocabulary required was 740 words, in comparison to the 800 in the 1993 syllabus. To increase language input, a new target was added that required students to cover supplementary reading materials of 100,000 and 200,000 words by the end of Stage One (the first two years) and Stage Two (the last year), respectively. Furthermore, a new pedagogical issue was highlighted. That is, teachers should strive to deal appropriately with the relation between basic linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. A useful suggestion was to teach basic knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in the context of meaningful and purposeful language use. Finally, clear specifications were made about which daily expressions in communication, vocabulary items, and grammatical structures should be mastered or merely understood at a particular stage.

In 2000, both the 1992 syllabus and the 1996 syllabus were substantially revised in response to the call for quality education, greater syllabus adaptability to new needs, and ability-oriented teaching (MOE, 2000a, 2000c). The motives for the revision are articulated in a tutorial written by the Syllabus Revision Team (2000). These motives were

- to remove elements incompatible with modern ideas of education, update teaching contents, reform teaching methods, improve teaching techniques, and set up a new comprehensive system of evaluation;
- to reflect progressive and scientific thinking on education and incorporate new conceptions of education;
- to apply new theories and findings in the field of second language acquisition, cognitive research, learning strategy research; and,
- to transform old thinking on basic foreign language education.

Because the two revised syllabuses are highly similar in all aspects except for teaching contents and instructional objectives, again only the one for junior secondary English is discussed here. In the introduction to the syllabus, English learning is justified in relation to the rapid development of information technology, the globalization of economic activities, English as an important tool for international exchange, and the basic abilities that citizens in the 21st century must possess. The extra-linguistic goals of ELT are defined as

- promoting quality education and cultivating creativity and practical competence in students through implementing the policy of all-round development and education for modernization, the world, and the future;
- instilling in students a respect for meritorious cultural traditions of other nations and an understanding of, as well as love for, the Chinese culture;

- developing students' ability to think independently and actively, expanding their cultural and scientific knowledge, enriching their cultural experience, refining their ideology and morality, and preparing them for the needs of China's social, economic and scientific development; and
- creating conditions for full individual development and laying a good foundation for lifelong learning.

To achieve these goals, teachers must stimulate students' interest in learning, help them build up confidence to overcome obstacles, foster good study habits and appropriate learning strategies, train them to manage and plan their learning effectively, and cultivate learning autonomy. Teachers should also actively develop students' cognitive skills such as observation, memorization, reasoning, imagination, and creativity. As far as linguistic goals are concerned, teachers must help students master both basic linguistic knowledge and basic language skills so as to acquire an initial ability to use English to obtain information and lay a foundation for genuine communication.

Important changes have also been introduced into specific teaching objectives. There are no separate objectives for the 6-plus-3 and 5-plus-4 tracks. Four hours a week are allocated throughout junior secondary schooling. Compared with the old syllabuses, higher requirements have been set in terms of ability to use the target language, whereas levels/scope of mastery and evaluation are considerably lowered with respect to grammar knowledge. Target vocabulary items have been expanded to include another 220 frequently used words. At least 40 hours of extensive listening of recorded materials and 100,000 words of extensive reading of supplementary materials are stipulated to increase students' exposure to English. To address some common problems that plague classroom practices, the new syllabus emphasizes the centrality of students in the learning process and requires that teacher talk time should not exceed 30% of the total class time. Teachers are also asked to make sure that only authentic, meaningful, interesting, and practical language input is provided. As far as assessment is concerned, a combination of formative and summative evaluation is advocated to stress both the process and outcomes of learning and to provide a more comprehensive picture of students' progress. Summative evaluation must include listening, speaking, and written examinations, and the number of items testing discrete-point knowledge must be reduced in favor of items examining students' comprehensive ability to use the language in context. Clearly the new syllabus is more in line with recent developments in second language acquisition research (Brown, 2001).

The discussion above indicates that two clear trends have emerged in the trajectory of syllabus development in the PRC. First, less and less ideological demand has been imposed on ELT. Blatant political messages have been phased out. Instead, more pragmatic considerations—development of cognitive skills and pedagogical appropriateness—have gained prominence. Second, there has been a growing interest in updating theoretical assumptions about language teaching and learning. Efforts have been stepped up to introduce new educational philosophies, approaches and methods into the classroom.

Together, these two trends signify a shift from what Hoiman (1992:77) terms "education for utopia" to "education for modernity."[25] Needless to say, this shift has also been reflected in the unified English textbooks compiled to implement the syllabuses. The driving force that has brought about this gradual but steady shift has been the national and societal orientation toward reform, development and pragmatic effectiveness. Thus pragmatic ethos and instrumental rationality of the wider milieu have impinged directly on the aims of the education system, including those of ELT.

Influential Teaching Methodologies

Since English was first taught in China in the mid-1800s, various approaches and methods have been adopted, modified or nativized (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; S. Chen, 1989; Fu, 1986; Ross; 1993; J. Scovel, 1983; Su, Liu & Liu, 1994). Most of these approaches (e.g., the Direct Method, the Silent Way, Situational Language Teaching, and Community Language Learning) were experimented with on a small scale and failed to produce an extensive or lasting impact on ELT in China (S. Q. Chen, 1988; Sun & Sun, 1989; J. Y. Wu, 1983b; Yao, 1993). Three, however, have had a far-reaching effect. They are the Grammar-Translation Method, ALM, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

The earliest and most widely adopted methodology was the Grammar-Translation Method. Strictly speaking, it was a product of both native and foreign influences, drawing on Chinese scholarly traditions and foreign practices in the 19th century. It is the single method that has persisted throughout the history of ELT in China. The method is characterized by systematic and detailed analysis of grammar, extensive use of translation in teaching and learning, rote learning of vocabulary, emphasis on written language, and a preference for literary classic works (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The dominant goals of foreign language learning are viewed as the ability to read in the target language and the benefits derived from the mental discipline and intellectual development experienced in the process of learning a foreign language. The belief behind the method is that a foreign language can be most effectively learned by first mastering a full set of grammar rules and then applying this knowledge of grammar in exercises—very frequently translation exercises—that require the manipulation of the morphology and syntax of the target language (Stern, 1983). Thus lessons are organized around language points which cover both grammar and vocabulary items. Grammar rules are taught deductively, usually in the students' native language, and meticulous accuracy in applying these rules is emphasized. Language is studied at the sentence level. The focus of study is on reading and writing. Successful learning is considered a matter of memorization.

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[25] Hoiman (1992: 75-76) argues that the evolution of education in the PRC can best be understood "in terms of a conceptual dichotomy between the modernist and utopian quests of socialist development." The former is a quest for advanced knowledge and productive power, whereas the latter is a pursuit of an ideological vision that can only be realized in continued socialist revolution.

There are numerous descriptions of the application of the Grammar-Translation Method in classroom practices in the PRC (Cowan, Light, Mathews & Tucker, 1979; Kohn, 1992; X. J. Li, 1984; Parry, 1996; Rao, 1996; T. Scovel, 1983; Sun & Sun, 1989; Y. Q. Wang, 1999; Z. Y. Zhang, 1997). The following is a description of a typical intensive reading class using the Grammar-Translation Method that can still be found at any level of ELT in the PRC today.[26]

- Before the lesson, students prepare extensively for the new text (about 400 words long) in their textbooks by looking up virtually every new word in a dictionary, writing down their Chinese equivalents, trying hard to understand every detail of the text, and marking out difficult phrases and sentences.
- The teacher also prepares extensively before the class, identifying all possible language points in the text, writing a detailed lesson plan full of explanations and examples, and penciling notes in the margin of the text that will enable her "to expound every likely grammar point or word meaning which may arise" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b: 183).
- In class, the teacher begins with a careful review of the language points learned in the last class, reads the text aloud herself or asks individual students to read aloud the paragraphs in turn, corrects their mistakes in pronunciation and intonation, and asks a few general comprehension questions.
- Next, the teacher goes over the bilingual list of new words provided in the textbook, discussing the meaning and parts of speech of these words, presenting antonyms, synonyms and collocations containing these words, and giving example sentences to show how these words should be used.
- Having presented the new words, the teacher starts to analyze, sentence by sentence, the text both grammatically and semantically, explain and exemplify language points in exhaustive detail, paraphrase or translate difficult sentences, and ask questions (usually literal ones) to check the students' understanding.
- After part of the text has been dealt with in such a manner, the teacher asks the students to summarize or retell the content of the covered part one after another until they "very nearly, if not literally, learn every word by heart" (Li, 1984: 8).
- Then, the teacher guides students through the written exercises of translation, sentence manipulation, blank-filling, etc., to consolidate the language points.
- Finally, the teacher summarizes the language points taught and assigns homework.

The teaching of a text can span several periods. Although a lesson like this may seem utterly boring and counterproductive to Western teachers working

[26] The description is based on the many classes observed by the author as a teacher-trainer in the PRC.

within the paradigm of CLT, many Chinese students expect a foreign language class to be taught in this way and feel that they can learn "real things" in such a class. There are deep-rooted expectations and beliefs that keep the Grammar-Translation Method alive in numerous classrooms (Hou, 1987). This issue will be further discussed in the following section.

Unlike the Grammar-Translation Method, ALM was a completely foreign approach to language teaching. It originated in the United States in the 1950s and was imported into the PRC in the early 1960's. It is an intensive, oral-based approach to the learning of a foreign language, drawing on structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology for theories of language and learning. From linguistic structuralism, the approach appropriated the conception of language "as a system of structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures, and sentence types" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 49). From behaviorism, it derived the notion of language as verbal behavior consisting of stimulus-response chains. Thus, learning a foreign language is assumed to be basically a process of mechanical habit formation based on mastering the structural elements or building blocks of the language and learning the rules that govern their combination. Some of the pedagogical principles advocated by ALM are listed below.

- Opportunities for the learner to make mistakes should be minimized because good verbal habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes.
- Memorizing dialogues/pattern drills is an effective way to form good verbal habits.
- The language skills should be taught strictly in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing because "aural-oral training is needed to provide the foundation for the development of other language skills" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 51).
- A structure-based syllabus should be used to facilitate learning.
- Contrastive analysis should be used to find out differences between the target language and the native language and thus identify possible areas of difficulties.
- Grammar should be taught inductively rather than deductively, and analogy should precede analysis.
- Drilling techniques such as imitation, repetition, substitution and memorization should be extensively employed to familiarize the learner with the patterns of sounds and structures of the target language.
- Accurate pronunciation, ability to respond correctly, and fluency should all be emphasized to develop good verbal habits.
- Teachers should model the target language and tightly control the direction and pace of learning by carefully structuring the presentation and practice of linguistic structures.

When ALM was first introduced to China, it was well received in tertiary institutions and quickly spread to other levels of education (Fu, 1986; Yao,

1993). Although some of the classroom practices advocated by ALM (e.g., emphasizing speech instead of reading and writing, de-emphasizing grammar explanations, teaching grammar inductively, and forbidding the use of translation at early levels) were against traditional Chinese approaches, the teaching methodology took root in Chinese classrooms because of other features that were highly compatible with the Chinese tradition of ELT (e.g., its emphasis on accuracy as a desired outcome, on drilling and memorization as learning strategies, on strict control by the teacher over the learning process, and on the adoption of a structure-based syllabus). Efforts were made to nativize ALM and infuse its practices into the Grammar-Translation Method. This was successful, as can be seen in the fact that some of the most valued principles, techniques and activities are retained in the latest English syllabuses and current textbooks (e.g., Grant & Liu, 1992, 1993, 1996). Two striking problems with ALM, however, are that students often fail to transfer skills acquired through pattern drilling to real communication and that practice activities tend to involve meaningless learning and language use.

CLT is the latest innovation in foreign language teaching introduced into PRC classrooms. CLT started in the 1970s in Europe and drew on developments in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse theory, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition research. What distinguishes it from the more traditional approaches is its conception of communicative competence as the primary goal of language teaching and learning. Communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) argue, consists of grammatical competence (a knowledge of the linguistic system of the target language), sociolinguistic competence (an understanding of the dynamics of communication in social contexts), discourse competence (the ability to interpret individual elements of a piece of discourse in terms of their interconnectedness and their relationship to the entire discourse), and strategic competence (the ability to employ various strategies effectively to get communication done).[27] For proponents of CLT, "the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 71). Therefore it emphasizes the interdependence between form and meaning, between language and communication, and tries to attend to both functional and structural aspects of language (Johnson, 1982; Littlewood, 1981, 1984). The learning theory underlying CLT is humanistic in nature. Richards and Rodgers (1986: 72) aptly summarize it in terms of three key assumptions: (a) that activities that involve real communication promote learning; (b) that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning; and (c) that language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

While there are various versions of CLT, they generally share some of the following pedagogical principles and practices:

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[27] Hymes (1971) is credited with originating the theory of communicative competence. See Bachman (1990) and Skehan (1998) for further discussions of the theory and implications for second language acquisition.

- Meaning is primary and teaching should be centered on communicative functions.
- Learners should be provided with ample opportunities to use the target language for communicative purposes and learn the language through using it.
- Effective communication is sought after rather than merely accuracy or fluency.
- The learning and use of language should be contextualized by means of authentic materials, situations, activities, and tasks.
- The sequencing of the teaching contents should not be determined merely by structural concerns but by considerations of themes, functions, meanings or tasks.
- Language should be taught at the level of discourse rather than at the sentence level.
- Tasks and activities that involve negotiation and maximize interaction should be used. Some of these tasks include information-gap, problem-solving, discussion, role play, simulation, improvisation, debating, and survey.
- Teaching should be learner-centered and experience-based. Students are negotiators, communicators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information. The teacher is a facilitator of communication, a needs analyst, an organizer of resources, a guide of procedures and activities, a researcher, and a learner.

CLT was introduced to the PRC in the late 1970s but failed to receive widespread support or attention initially (L. M. Yu, 2001). To be more precise, there was strong resistance to it. Ever since its introduction, there has been a heated and continued debate among both Chinese and Western ELT specialists on the necessity, appropriateness and effectiveness of adopting CLT in the PRC (Bell, 1995; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; S. Q. Chen, 1988; Harvey, 1985; Kohn, 1992; Leng, 1997; X. J. Li, 1984; X. Q. Liao, 2001; T. Scovel, 1983; Stephens; 1997; Sun & Sun, 1989; D. W. Wang, 1986; K. Q. Wang, 1986; Y. Q. Wang, 1999; J. Y. Wu, 1983a, 1983b; A. L. Xiao, 1998; C. C. Yu, 1984). One important outcome of this debate has been the identification of a number of constraints on the adoption of CLT in the PRC, which will be discussed in some detail in the following sections. Another outcome has been a growing recognition of the necessity of reconciling CLT with the traditional approaches (L. M. Yu, 2001). As a result, many proposals have been made that attempt to combine different elements of the traditional practices with CLT in various ways (Adamson, 2001; Adamson & Morris, 1997; Allen & Spada, 1983; Brelsforth & Zhang, 1989; Erbaugh, 1990; Hu, 2000; Jones, 1995; Rao, 1996, 1999a, 1999b; D. W. Wang, 1986; Z. H. Xu, 1998; Z. Y. Zhang, 1997). Gradually CLT gained credibility with and acceptance by some teachers at the tertiary level, and tertiary-level textbooks that adopted a communicative approach were published (British Council, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). CLT began to influence ELT at the secondary level

when the first communicatively oriented syllabus for secondary schools was issued by the State Education Commission in 1992. Subsequently, new unified textbooks informed by CLT were published by the PEP (Adamson, 2001; Adamson & Morris, 1997; X. Q. Liao, 2000, 2001; L. Lin, 2000). There is a growing awareness that ELT does not only involve the provision of linguistic knowledge but should also aim at the development of communicative competence.

Currently the methodological picture of ELT in the PRC is a rather complex one. Although the educational authorities and ELT specialists have been working hard to promote CLT by introducing new syllabuses, textbooks and competence-oriented tests, CLT has not gained wide currency at the secondary level. The philosophy embodied by CLT is new to numerous secondary-school teachers. Teachers who follow CLT are still a minority and usually work in better equipped schools in large cities. It is true that many claim to support CLT, but quite a large number of them only pay lip service (Leng, 1997; Ng & Tang, 1997). Worse still, many do not have a clear understanding of the principles underlying CLT. A sizable proportion of teachers still use the Grammar-Translation Method in their classrooms either because of their skepticism about the superiority of CLT over the traditional approaches or because of a range of cultural, educational, social and economic constraints (Tang & Absalom, 1998; L. M. Yu, 2001). A growing group of teachers, however, are taking an eclectic approach, drawing on different methods and trying to reconcile traditional practices with more recent innovations to meet the demand of their particular (often diverse) teaching situations (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Jones, 1995; J. Y. Wu, 1983a, 1983b). That is, they do not commit themselves to any single teaching method but try to utilize what they deem the most useful elements of all methods available. Such an approach, it can be argued, represents a more realistic and a more promising course of action in the Chinese context. Given cultural and contextual differences, there is good reason to resist the attempt to improve the quality of teaching and learning by adopting, in an uncritical and wholesale manner, approaches that have developed externally and in very different socio-cultural contexts (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; D. L. Liu, 1998). It is also important to keep in mind Watkins' useful caution that "to try to improve the products of schooling by changing just one sector…is likely to be counterproductive if other components of the system remain unchanged" (1996a: 7).

Chinese Culture of Learning

As pointed out in the previous section, there are a number of factors that constrain the adoption of educational innovations in the Chinese context. In this section, the focus is on a group of cultural influences that may prevent many Chinese teachers and students from embracing newly introduced Western approaches to language teaching which emphasize individual orientations, personal needs, verbal interaction, and self-expression. Following Cortazzi and Jin (1996a, 1996b), the report discusses these influences within a Chinese

culture of learning. By the term Chinese culture of learning is meant a whole set of expectations, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, preferences, experiences, and behaviors that are characteristic of Chinese society with regard to teaching and learning. While it is dangerous to generalize about the cultural behavior of a social group as huge and complex as the Chinese one, there are, as Cortazzi and Jin (1996a) contend, some culturally-rooted assumptions of educational practice in Chinese society. These relatively stable assumptions are often taken for granted and underpin Chinese models of teaching and learning.

Chinese conceptions of education have been much influenced by Confucian thinking (Biggs, 1996b; Lee, 1996). There are several features that merit a discussion. First, there is a deep reverence for education. Confucius attached great importance to education and saw it as a means of turning an ordinary person into a superior one and a weak nation into a strong one (Guo, 2001; W. Z. Zhu, 1992). Largely because of this perceived role of education in cultivating people and strengthening a nation, education as a goal in itself has been internalized throughout Chinese society, even by those who themselves have not received any schooling (Cheng, 2000). Hence the saying "Everything is low, but education is high" (wanban jie xiapin weiyou dushu gao). Besides the reward of the soul that comes in the form of inner satisfaction with personal development (Guo, 2001), Confucius also saw a utilitarian function of education; that is, education can bring along social recognition and material rewards (Lee, 1996; Llasera, 1987; W. Z. Zhu, 1992).[28] It is a firm belief in the Confucian tradition that through education, even a person of obscure origin can achieve upward social mobility (Lee, 1996). Arguably, these perceived functions and benefits of education have provided generations of Chinese with powerful motivating forces to aspire to success in education.

Second, education does not concern only intellectual development but also the cultivation of moral qualities (Bastid, 1987; Guo, 2001; Llasera, 1987). The curriculum Confucius designed for his disciples was oriented towards literature, behavior, loyalty and tact, and exhibited a combination of moral and intellectual education (W. Z. Zhu, 1992). The notion that education is cultivation necessarily entails the inclusion of moral education as a major component of education. Traditionally, moral education included teaching how to relate to other people in society and cultivating moral virtues such as loyalty, fidelity, altruism, modesty, and conformity—that is, how to be a good person (Paine, 1992). This emphasis on moral development is still considered the basis of successful education (Cheng, 1994). It is widely accepted that both knowledge and morality are power (Curriculum & Teaching Materials Research Institute, 2000). Third, education has traditionally been viewed more as a process of accumulating knowledge than as a practical process of constructing and using knowledge for immediate purposes. C. C. Yu aptly captures the traditionally understood relationship between the accumulation of knowledge and the use of that knowledge by comparing it to saving money in a bank and spending it

[28] A popular Chinese saying is "In books there are golden houses." See Lee (1996) for a useful discussion of the Confucian conception of the extrinsic rewards of education.

later: "When you put your money in the bank it is not important to be sure what you are going to do with it; but when you do need the money for some emergency, it is there for you to use" (1984: 35). Such a view is largely against the practice of teaching to specific needs.

Another feature of traditional Chinese education is its conception of the source of knowledge. True knowledge has been popularly held to reside in written texts, especially classics and authoritative works. Thus, learning is equated with reading books. This is attested to by maxims such as "It is always useful to open a book" and "When the time comes for you to use your knowledge, you will hate yourself for having read too little." Presumably, this explains the centrality of textbooks found in Chinese classrooms. Importantly, knowledge can be gained only with earnest effort. "The Chinese tend to associate games and communicative activities in class with entertainment exclusively and are skeptical of their use as learning tools" (Rao, 1996: 467; Leng, 1997). Still another feature of traditional Chinese education is its emphasis on maintaining a hierarchical but harmonious relation between teacher and student. Students are expected to respect and not to challenge the teacher. The reverence with which a teacher is held is reflected in the popular saying "Being a teacher for only one day entitles one to lifelong respect from the student that befits his father" (yiri weishi zhongshen weifu). Last but not least, a fundamental assumption underlying the Confucian tradition of education is that innate ability does not account for success or failure in education. Confucius was willing to take in anyone who wanted to be educated, and insisted that "no distinctions should be made in dispensing education" (youjiao wulei). There is a strong belief that everyone is educable and capable of attaining perfection. Although differences in intelligence and ability are recognized, they are not viewed as determinants of educational achievement.[29] What matters is determination, steadfastness of purpose, effort, perseverance, and patience (Biggs, 1996a; Lee, 1996; Ross, 1993). As Cheng points out, "the motto 'diligence compensates for stupidity' is seldom challenged" (1990: 164).

The above conceptions developed in traditional Chinese education have shaped perceptions of the process of teaching and learning and expectations of the qualities that a good teacher and a good student should possess. The traditional Chinese model of teaching is an "empty-vessel" one (Allen & Spada, 1982) or "pint pot" one (Maley, 1982). This is most clearly reflected in the maxim that "to give students a bowl of water, the teacher must have a full bucket of water to dispense." Such a model is essentially "mimetic" or "epistemic," in that it is characterized by the transmission of knowledge principally through an imitative and repetitive process (Paine, 1992; Tang & Absalom, 1998). Teaching methods are largely expository and the teaching process is teacher-dominated (Biggs, 1996b). The teacher selects points of knowledge from authoritative sources (usually textbooks and classics),

[29] In the Chinese culture, ability is not considered to be an immutable attribute as it is in Western cultures (Cheng, 1990). "Ability is perceived as more controllable and can be increased through hard work" (Salili, 1996: 100). Such a conception works against learned helplessness, which often results from attribution of failure to innate ability.

interprets, analyzes and elaborates on these points for the students, helps them connect the new points of knowledge with old knowledge, and delivers a carefully sequenced and optimally mediated dose of knowledge for the students to memorize, repeat, and understand. The immediate importance and potential application of the knowledge taught may not be transparent to the students, but it is believed that to internalize the carefully selected knowledge is essential for laying a foundation on which further understanding, reflective thinking, and discrimination can build. The rationale behind this is that "learners must first master the basics and only when this is accomplished are they in a position to use what they have mastered in a creative manner" (Brick, 1991: 154). Therefore, the focus of teaching is not on how teachers and students can create, construct, and apply knowledge in an experiential approach, but on how extant authoritative knowledge can be transmitted and internalized in a most effective and efficient way (Brick, 1991; Jin & Cortazzi, 1995; Paine & DeLany, 2000). The "learn by using" approach promoted by communicative language teaching does not fit in with the traditional "learn to use" philosophy.

Given the fundamental values associated with education and the deep-rooted perceptions of the nature and process of teaching, there are certain popularly shared expectations about the role of the teacher. To cultivate good citizenship, a teacher must first and foremost be a paragon of socially desired behavior for his/her students to emulate (C. C. Yu, 1984). The social and moral obligations of Chinese teachers are clearly reflected in various honorific titles, such as "the people's teachers," "engineers of the human soul," "sculptors for the future," and "gardeners." Second, a teacher should be a virtuoso of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Paine, 1990). To make sure that knowledge can be transmitted correctly and appropriately, a teacher must have already mastered a profound body of knowledge and have effective skills to impart his/her knowledge "in the most accessible way possible" (Brick, 1991: 155). Thus a good teacher is one who knows what is useful and important to the students, has an intimate knowledge of the students' level, carefully prepares lessons, has all the correct answers at all times, and dissects, presents and explains knowledge in a masterly manner to ensure ease of learning by the students. Third, a teacher must assume a directive role, having the sole prerogative in deciding what to teach and exerting complete control over the class all the time (Tang & Absalom, 1998; Young, 1987). This is to make class events fully predictable, guarantee the smooth delivery of carefully planned contents, and give a sense of security to both teacher and student. Given this desired control and security, it is little wonder that approaches incorporating freedom, unpredictability, and student initiatives are generally not well received (X. J. Li, 1984).

Good teachers consider it their fundamental responsibility to ensure that all students progress satisfactorily (Brick, 1991; Cheng, 1990; Ross, 1993). If a student fails to learn what is taught or progress in a satisfactory manner, it is considered, to a very high degree, a result of the teacher's failure to motivate the student to learn, to present knowledge clearly enough or to supervise the learning process. Another exclusive responsibility of teachers is to evaluate their students' progress. It is taken for granted that the teacher as knower and

giver of knowledge has the sole right to evaluate the students' performance. It is for this reason that both Chinese teachers and students tend to be suspicious of activities like peer evaluation, as they believe it is the teacher's job to evaluate and that peers are not qualified to correct others' work (Jones, 1995). Still another desired role of a teacher is that of a mentor or parent. Teachers are expected to be caring, helpful, willing to pass on their experiences to the students, and ready to teach them about life (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Jones, 1995; Rao, 1996). They should be available for pastoral advice on the best course of action for a range of issues from the correct way to study to most personal problems (Brick, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1994; C. C. Yu, 1984). Because of these perceived roles of teachers, it is difficult for Chinese teachers and students to accept learner-centered, interactive learning that de-emphasizes the transmission and mastery of authoritative knowledge as the most important goal of teaching and learning.

In the Chinese culture of learning, the process of learning can be characterized by four R's and four M's. First, learning is essentially a process of reception. Students are expected to receive and retain, with an open mind and without preconceptions, knowledge imparted by their teachers and textbooks (Paine, 1991). Second, learning is also a process of repetition. To achieve knowledge and understanding, students repeatedly study what they do not understand (Marton, Dall'Alba & Tse, 1996; Watkins, 1996b). The belief in the role of repetition in helping to bring out understanding is reflected in the Chinese saying "Read one hundred times, and the meaning will emerge." Like reception and repetition, review is also perceived as a key element of successful learning. Students review what they have received and repeated not only to consolidate learning but also to gain new knowledge and to deepen understanding. As Confucius put it, "by reviewing the old, one learns the new." This means when students attain, through constant reviewing, a fuller understanding of what they have already learned, it becomes newly acquired knowledge to them (C. C. Yu, 1984). The last R of learning is reproduction. Students are expected to be able to accurately reproduce the transmitted textual knowledge on demand from the teacher or tests (Paine, 1992; Rao, 1996). Clearly, there are tensions between these culturally-rooted perceptions/practices and recent educational approaches that promote student-centeredness, flexible reading strategies, constant exposure to large quantities of novel materials, and critical transformation of knowledge.

The four M's of learning in the Chinese tradition are meticulosity, memorization, mental activeness, and mastery. Meticulosity refers to attention to the smallest detail of knowledge. There is no tolerance for ambiguity. Biggs (1996b) speculates that the Chinese tendency to attend to details could have been influenced by the nature of learning to read in Chinese. Learning the thousand of Chinese characters and comprehending shifts and shades of multi-layered meanings residing in the juxtaposition of a limited number of characters encourage fine analysis of details (Parry, 1996; T. Scovel, 1983; Z. G. Zhang, 1983). Memorization is the most valued learning strategy of Chinese learners (Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Du, 1997; Ng & Tang, 1997; Y. R. Zhu, 1997).

However, it should be distinguished from rote learning, a stereotyped image many Western researchers have mistakenly given to the Chinese strategy (Biggs, 1996b; Marton et al., 1996). Research has shown that Chinese learners do not rote learn more often than Western students (Biggs, 1996a, 1996b; Goh & Kwah, 1997; L. Lin, 1999; Ma, 1999). The way memorization is carried out and used by Chinese learners suggests that it is part of a deep approach to learning. Students are not encouraged to engage in mechanical memorization (C. Zhou, 1997). Instead, they are encouraged to memorize with understanding; that is, to memorize what is understood and to understand through memorization (Lee, 1996; Marton et al., 1996; C. C. Yu, 1984). Because of this emphasis on memorization with understanding, mental activeness rather than verbal activeness is valued (Jin & Cortazzi, 1995). Successful learning and understanding are believed to be attainable through active mental analysis, questioning, discriminating, and reflection (Lee, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b). Finally, learning is never considered complete until full mastery is achieved. No approximation to knowledge or pretension to understanding is tolerated. This is why Confucius exhorted his disciples to "say yes, when you know; say no when you don't" (zhizhi wei zhizhi buzhi wei buzhi). It can be argued that the four M's of learning are largely incompatible with pedagogical practices that advocate a holistic approach to learning, downplay the importance of memorization, stress verbal interaction at the expense of inner activity, and encourage speculation (e.g., guesswork) and tolerance for ambiguity.

Perceptions of the importance of education and the nature of learning have inevitably impinged on what is valued most in a Chinese student. To begin with, students should have positive attitudes towards learning and schoolwork (Salili, 1996). They should be keen on pursuing ever more knowledge, because a precondition for being a good learner is to know more (Paine, 1990). Second, in line with the transmission model of teaching, students should maintain a high level of receptiveness, whole-heartedly embracing the knowledge from their teacher or books. They are expected to respect and cooperate with their teacher (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b) and not to challenge the transmitted knowledge or present their own ideas until they have mastered sufficient knowledge to make informed judgments (Brick, 1991). Third, students should aspire to high academic achievement so as to be useful people to society, "to glorify their ancestry" (guangzong yaozu), and to bring pride to their family (Lee, 1996; Salili, 1996). To achieve all these, they must take learning seriously, be prepared to sacrifice other pursuits (e.g., social life) for the sake of study, and be willing to spend a great deal of time on study, even on apparently boring tasks. They should never be complacent with their own progress and always set themselves more difficult goals. They must have the diligence, fortitude, perseverance, and patience "to grind an iron bar into a needle," as a Chinese proverb puts it. In addition, students are required to be mentally active (rather than verbally active), intolerant of ambiguity and striving for precision in understanding. Given these expectations and the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, Chinese students tend to feel uneasy in a more egalitarian learning environment and find it difficult to suspend their beliefs to

engage in light-hearted learning activities on the one hand and critical self-expression on the other.

Before moving on to a discussion of social, economic, and infrastructural factors that influence ELT in the PRC, it is important to sound a note of caution concerning the above discussion of the Chinese culture of learning. Because the aim of the discussion is to reflect what is deemed the most widely shared conceptions in Chinese society, the picture presented above is naturally an abstracted one and may not match a specific context perfectly. There are also two other reasons for treating the discussion as merely a general frame of reference. For one thing, although culturally-rooted beliefs and expectations are relatively stable, that does not mean that they do not change. There is some evidence that the Chinese culture of learning is evolving in response to social and economic changes (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Lau, 1996; Stephens, 1997). For another thing, given the huge student population, regional differences, and ethnic complexity in the PRC, there is much diversity in teaching/learning styles, preferences and strategies among Chinese teachers and students (Gilbert, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Melton, 1990). Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the perceived tensions between traditional Chinese conceptions of education and modern innovations are not necessarily unsolvable. In this regard, recent efforts in adopting new approaches to ELT in well-established urban schools have scored considerable success.

Social, Economic and Infrastructural Factors

Besides cultural influences on ELT practices, there are also a number of social, economic, and infrastructural factors at work. The impact of these factors is often felt in the form of regional disparity. Historically, there was unbalanced development of ELT in different parts of China. ELT started earlier and developed more rapidly in coastal areas and large cities than in remote areas. Between the 1860s and the 1940s, missionary and state-sponsored schools and tertiary institutions in the economically advantaged areas either had immersion English programs or had English as a core subject in their curriculum (Bastid, 1987; Fu, 1986; Ross, 1993; Su et al., 1994). The time allocated for English instruction was quite generous, teaching materials were usually imported from abroad, and Western teaching methods (e.g., the Direct Method and the Natural Method) were adopted (Su et al., 1994; K. Wang, 1981). These schools and tertiary institutions turned out a reasonably large number of highly fluent English speakers, some of whom were then involved in ELT themselves. Consequently, a basic foundation was laid for further development of ELT. The economically underprivileged remote areas, by contrast, had few schools and could not even meet the needs of developing minimal mother-tongue literacy, not to mention English instruction (Hayhoe, 1992). As a result, there was virtually no tradition of ELT in these areas; ELT had to start from scratch after 1949.

Into the 1980s, the differing speed in economic reform and development between the eastern coastal areas/large cities and the western inland areas

resulted in varying demands for English proficiency. To precipitate economic development in the PRC, limited national resources were first concentrated strategically to transform the eastern coastal areas, and the effort was subsequently sustained to speed up the progress already taking place there (Postiglione, 1992). The rapid economic growth in these areas has brought with it the influx of foreign companies, technological transfers, joint ventures, overseas tourists, and cultural and commercial imports. All these changes have contributed to a growing demand for people proficient in English from a whole range of professions, businesses, workplaces, and enterprises. As a result, there has been an escalating awareness of the importance and utility of English among people in these economically developed places. Proficiency in English is seen by students and parents as a prerequisite both for admission to a domestic or Western university and for a lucrative job or career after graduation (Hertling, 1996). Thus ELT has attracted not only general attention but also expanding investment from the local governments and various sectors of the economy. On the other hand, the lag in development of the interior rural areas has limited the demands for English proficiency and hence the development of ELT there. The uses of English in these areas are largely limited to the domain of education (Zhao & Campbell, 1995). Students study English mainly to secure a place in an institution of higher learning (Fan, 1999). However, only a minority of them are able to make their way to tertiary institutions (Paine & DeLany, 2000; Postiglione, 2000). Consequently, the motivation to learn English is low among the majority of students, who entertain no hope of a tertiary education. Coupled with other problems to be discussed below, the quality of ELT in these inland areas is low (H. X. Zhang, 2001). As these areas and their student population account for more than 70% of China's total land area and student population at the secondary level, the national level of ELT is significantly pulled down.

Differences in social and economic development have also created a widening gap between learning environments in the economically developed regions and those in the less well-off interior (Bush & Coleman, 1998). Secondary schools in the former generally have more financial resources, better facilities, more competent staff, and better-trained entrants. Many urban schools are now provided with a whole range of modern instructional technologies from basic facilities such as overhead projectors and tape-recorders to highly advanced equipment including state-of-the-art multimedia language labs (Ross, 2000). The coastal and urban regions' economic prosperity and better living standards have helped their schools not only attract a disproportionate number of university graduates but also lure many qualified teachers from less developed areas. Ambitious privileged schools in metropolises even recruit native-speakers to teach their English classes and upgrade the language proficiency and professional skills of their local staff. For example, about 15% of the primary and secondary schools in Shanghai have at least one foreign teacher on their staff. Furthermore, many urban secondary schools are affiliated to prestigious universities or have established connections with such universities, and consequently they can more easily enlist help from the

universities with their in-service teacher training.[30] Due to their connections with higher institutions of learning, their staff also tend to be better informed of new educational theories and methods, because tertiary institutions have a tradition of being the first sector of the Chinese education system to experiment with new educational ideas and import modern developments from the outside world (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hayhoe, 1987; S. Q. Huang, 1987). Students in the coastal and urban areas generally start learning English in primary schools and, as a result, are reasonably prepared for English study at the secondary level. All these factors have contributed to the rising level of ELT in the economically advanced areas.

In contrast to the optimistic picture of urban and coastal schools, schools in the rural inland areas tend to be less adequately equipped and staffed (Henze, 1992; D. P. Yang, 2001a). Quite a number of these schools even have financial difficulties in repairing dangerously dilapidated school buildings.[31] Generally, up-to-date instructional resources are in short supply. Some schools do not even have radio and recording facilities, and there is a dire lack of teaching and learning materials. Many English teachers, especially community-sponsored (minban) ones, have not received adequate pre-service or in-service training, lack the necessary subject knowledge and professional skills to adopt new teaching methods, and teach up-dated textbooks in traditional ways. Classroom practices often take the form of "chalk and talk." As few primary schools offer English classes, most students start to learn English from scratch after they go to secondary school. To complicate the situation, a great majority of ethnic minority students are concentrated in the western interior areas. It is already a difficult task for them to cope with bilingual (mother tongue and Chinese) instruction (J. Lin, 1997; Postiglione, 2000; M. L. Zhou, 2000). To learn a third language well is simply an unattainable goal for most of them.[32] Given the above problems, it is understandable that the quality of ELT in the inland regions is much lower than that in the eastern coastal areas.

Different social environments in the economically developed and under-developed areas have also affected the way English is taught and learned. Students in urban centers such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou have considerable exposure to English outside the classroom. English books, magazines, newspapers, TV programs, videos of English movies, VCDs of English songs, and Internet access are readily available (British Council, 1995; Zhao & Campbell, 1995). It is not infrequent to run into native speakers of English (McKay & Ferguson, 2000). The opportunities for students to use English for some communicative and recreational purposes have not only

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[30] There are more specialized foreign language schools and prestigious universities in the coastal and urban areas than in the interior regions.

[31] According to D. P. Yang (2001a), there was a floor space of thirteen million square meters of dangerous school premises nationwide in 2000. These dangerous school buildings were concentrated in western rural areas. In some western provinces, the proportion of dangerous school buildings ranged from 3% to 5.32%, with the proportion in some extremely poor counties being as high as 28.3%.

[32] For years, little research has been done on FLT for ethnic minority groups, and no relevant policy has been formulated.

created a relatively conducive learning environment but also contributed to the impetus for an orientation towards developing communicative competence in students. Such uses of English outside the school setting, however, are largely missing from the underdeveloped inland areas (McKay & Ferguson, 2000). Furthermore, because of the economic boom experienced in the coastal areas, there is more opportunity for employment there and hence less pressure for students to compete for tertiary education.[33] As a result, students, especially those in key schools, are less affected by examination-oriented teaching. In contrast, students in the western inland areas depend largely on a tertiary education for a good job. Consequently, key schools in these areas are compelled to align their ELT with the NCEE.

Besides the afore-mentioned social, economic, and infrastructural factors, there are also a number of other constraints on the reform of ELT practices throughout the country. Four of them are worth singling out. The first one is a general lack of knowledge of the cultures of English-speaking countries on the part of English teachers (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Leng, 1997; D. L. Liu, 1998). Without such knowledge, it is difficult to develop communicative competence in students, one component of which is sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). The second constraint is class size. According to the CERN (2000d), there were about one million junior secondary classes nationwide in 1999, and around 40% of them had more than 55 students. The sheer size of such classes makes it very difficult to carry out communicative activities, most of which are best suited to much smaller groups (Leng, 1997; D. L. Liu, 1998; Ng & Tang, 1997). The third constraint is the limited time given for English instruction (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; D. L. Liu, 1998; Ng & Tang, 1997). At present, no more than four contact hours a week are allocated for English in secondary schools.[34] However, a very heavy curriculum has to be covered within these hours. Because communicative teaching activities tend to be time-consuming, many teachers avoid or skip such activities in compliance with the pressure to cover the prescribed knowledge contents. The last constraint is the Matriculation English Test of the NCEE, which until very recently has encouraged a traditional knowledge-oriented approach to ELT (Leng, 1997; Lewin & Wang, 1991; Rao, 1996; A. L. Xiao, 1998). Because of the paramount importance of the test and its longstanding emphasis on discrete-point grammar and vocabulary knowledge, many ELT researchers consider it one of the most powerful influences on teachers' resistance to educational innovations in the PRC (Hertling, 1996; X. Q. Liao, 2001; D. L. Liu, 1998; L. Lin, 1999). The test has been undergoing some changes (X. J. Li, 1990; Li & Wang, 2000). Hopefully, the changes will bring along some positive washback on classroom practices.

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[33] While the economic prosperity has brought along new jobs that require higher educational qualifications, it has also created many jobs (e.g., those in the service and retail sector) that normally do not require a tertiary education.

[34] Specialized foreign language schools allocate more time for FLT.

Training of English Teachers

Since the PRC started to open up to the outside world and embarked on the huge endeavor of reform and modernization, increasing attention has been paid to teacher education, because of the conviction that without a strong contingent of qualified teachers it is impossible to turn out competent personnel of science and technology needed for national development. Investments in teacher training have been significantly increased. Besides regular government allocations of funds, the central government allocated an ad hoc RMB¥2.9 billion for subsidizing tertiary institutions of teacher education between 1980 and 1997 (Bureau of Teacher Education, 1998). During the same period, loans from the World Bank amounting to US$210 million were spent on upgrading 156 tertiary institutions of teacher education, and financial aid worth US$20 million from the UNICEF and the UNDP were used to equip 203 normal schools and in-service teacher training schools (Bureau of Teacher Education, 1998). There has been a dramatic expansion of tertiary providers of teaching training from only twelve institutions in 1949 to 229 in 1998. Table 1.5 summarizes basic statistics of the specialized teacher training institutions in 1998. Between 1980 and 1995, there were more than 5.6 million graduates from the tertiary institutions of teacher education and normal schools (Y. M. Chen, 1999). Another 1.4 million graduated from 1996 to 1998.

Table 1.5 Basic statistics on specialized teacher training institutions, 1998

Level	*School*	**Enrolment**	**Entrant**	**Graduate**	**Teacher**
Tertiary institutions	229	693,600	251,100	196,800	76,600
Normal schools	875	921,100	319,300	305,800	63,400
Institutes of education	190	212,000	82,200	66,200	18,700
In-service training colleges	2,087	371,000	121,600	168,200	46,300

Source: CERN (2000b)

Despite the large number of graduates turned out in the last two decades, there has been a severe shortage of primary and secondary teachers, especially qualified teachers. As stipulated in the Teacher Act of the People's Republic of China enacted in 1993, the minimum academic qualifications required for a senior secondary, junior secondary, and primary teaching post are, respectively, a bachelor's degree awarded by a (normal) university/college, a sub-degree awarded by a teachers' college or an equivalent institution, and a diploma awarded by a normal school or a senior secondary school. According to these requirements, a quite high percentage of teachers, especially those working in senior secondary schools do not possess the requisite academic qualifications. Table 1.6 gives the proportion of teachers with required qualifications at primary and secondary levels in 1999. One-third of general senior secondary teachers did not have the requisite credentials. The situation was even worse for

vocational senior secondary schools, where a majority of teachers did not meet the stipulated standards.

In discussing teacher qualifications in the Chinese context, it is necessary to keep two important issues in mind. First, the standards concerning the minimum academic qualifications have been motivated not so much by the needs of teaching at the different levels as by the actual capacity of the Chinese institutions of teacher education to turn out teachers with higher qualifications. There would seem to be no intrinsic reason to set a sub-degree from a teachers' college, rather than a bachelor's or master's degree, as the minimum academic qualification required for a junior secondary teaching job. That such a standard has been set is largely due to the inability of the tertiary institutions to provide junior secondary schools with enough teachers holding higher academic qualifications. Second, academic qualifications cannot be equated with professional competence, though current Chinese discourse on professional qualifications of teachers tends to ignore the distinction. A teacher with the required credentials may not be a professionally competent one.

Table 1.6 Academic qualifications of primary and secondary teachers, 1999

Level	Total No. of teachers	No. of teachers with required credentials	%
Primary schools	5,860,500	5,620,200	95.90
Junior secondary schools	3,187,500	2,725,400	85.50
General senior secondary schools	692,400	456,000	65.85
Specialized secondary schools	273,700	195,700	71.49
Vocational senior secondary schools	296,100	120,000	40.53

Source: MOE (2000f)

As regards the academic qualifications of teachers of English, no official national statistics are available for the last two or three years. However, two sets of figures can serve as useful indicators. Table 1.7 provides the national statistics on secondary school teachers of English in 1996. At the junior secondary level, teachers holding the required credentials added up to 80.8% of the total number. At the senior secondary level, only 43.76% of the English teachers had the required credentials. It is estimated that in the past five years there has been a more than 10% annual increase of secondary English teachers with required qualifications.[35] The impressive increase notwithstanding, the national level is much lower than that of Shanghai, the most developed city in the PRC.[36] As can be seen from Table 1.8, even in Shanghai, nearly 13% of the

[35] Based on the figures provided in the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute (1998: 297) and the Board of China Education Almanac (1996), the annual increase of secondary English teachers with required qualifications was 12.41% for 1992, 10.09% for 1993, 12.24% for 1994, 15.47% for 1995, and 16.52% for 1996.

[36] According to Liu and Gong (2000, cited in L. M. Yu, 2001), only 89.4% of junior secondary teachers of English and 55% of senior secondary teachers held required credentials in 2000.

senior secondary English teachers did not meet the minimum requirement of academic qualifications in 2000. In summary, there is an urgent need both to provide more new English teachers with required qualifications and to upgrade those in-service teachers who do not come up to the qualification requirements (Bureau of Teacher Education, 1998).

Table 1.7 Academic qualifications of secondary English teachers, 1996

Credentials	**Junior Secondary**		**Senior Secondary**	
	N	%	*N*	%
Bachelor's degree or above	23,491	5.90	33,521	43.76
Sub-degree (*zhuanke*)	297,999	74.90	41,239	58.83
Normal school diploma	54,651	13.74	1,362	1.78
Senior secondary diploma or below	21,745	5.46	486	.63
Total	397,886	100	76,608	100

Source: Board of China Education Almanac (1996)

Table 1.8 Academic qualifications of secondary English teachers in Shanghai

Credentials	**Junior Secondary**		**Senior Secondary**	
	N	%	*N*	%
Bachelor's degree or above	2,225	33.55	2,058	87.02
Sub-degree (*zhuanke*)	4,295	64.76	305	12.90
Normal school diploma or equivalent	112	1.69	2	0.08
Total	6,632	100	2,365	100

Source: The Shanghai Education Commission (personal communication, X. Y. Huang, 2001)

As is the general case in the rest of the world, teacher education in the PRC comprises two strands: pre-service training and in-service training. The bulk of pre-service training is undertaken in specialized teacher training institutions, though training programs are also provided by TV universities and some 180 comprehensive universities (Y. M. Chen, 1999). As indicated earlier, institutions of pre-service training fall into three categories. Normal universities and colleges offer four-year degree programs and train teachers for senior secondary schools. Teachers colleges provide two- or three-year programs that lead to a sub-degree and prepare teachers for junior secondary schools.[37] Normal schools offer three- or four-year programs that provide teachers for primary schools and kindergartens. In 1998, there were 76 normal universities/colleges, 153 teachers' colleges, 811 normal schools of primary education (pushi), 61 normal schools of pre-school education (youshi), and three normal schools of special education (CERN, 2000b). As English was not a required subject in primary schools until 2001, pre-service training of English

[37] A majority of two-year teachers' colleges are located in areas where the shortage of teachers is particularly acute.

teachers has been mainly undertaken by normal universities/colleges and teachers' colleges.

In the following discussion of pre-service training of English teachers, the focus is on the curriculum for three-year teachers' colleges. Although there are guidelines at the national and provincial levels, individual colleges have considerable autonomy in interpreting and implementing these guidelines (Adamson, 1995; Sharpe & Ning, 1998). Consequently, there are some variations across individual colleges. In spite of these variations, all curriculums comprise three categories of courses: general courses, educational courses, and specialized courses. General courses are compulsory in institutions of higher learning throughout the country and closely follow the guidelines drawn up nationally. In the case of three-year teachers' colleges, the general courses include politics, university Chinese, and physical education. Politics consists of history of the Chinese Revolution, Marxist philosophy, and political economics, and is taught two hours a week throughout the program. University Chinese is taught only in the first year and amounts to about 100 hours of instruction. Physical education is conducted in the first two years and accounts for two hours a week. Educational courses include educational studies and psychology, each two hours a week for one semester.[38] The courses are not specially designed for pre-service English teachers and are taught by lecturers from the education departments of the colleges. There are officially approved textbooks for the general and educational courses, but the choice among them lies with individual colleges.

Like the general and educational courses, there are unified curriculums and textbooks for specialized courses in normal universities/colleges and teachers' colleges. Again, individual institutions have considerable freedom to adapt the curriculums and choose which approved textbooks to use. Table 1.9 reproduces the officially recommended curriculum for English majors in three-year teachers' colleges.

The compulsory courses form the core of the curriculum and take the lion's share of the total teaching time. The predominant aim of these courses is to improve pre-service teachers' knowledge of English and develop their competence in using the language. The teaching of integrated English is centered on selected texts, which are used to transmit knowledge of phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse on the one hand and integrate training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing on the other. The four language skills are more intensively developed in the individual courses of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The course of phonetics aims at providing students with an essential knowledge of the English sound system. The grammar course is responsible for helping students develop a systematic and comprehensive knowledge of the structure of English. The course of British and American studies provides a cultural introduction to British and American society,

[38] Throughout Chinese tertiary institutions, an academic year is divided into two semesters. The first semester runs from September to January, followed by the winter vacation. The second semester starts in March and ends in July, followed by the summer vacation. Each semester lasts about 20 weeks, 18 of which are devoted to instruction.

including politics, history, geography and customs. Finally, the two teaching-related courses—secondary English methodology and professional skills for

Table 1.9 Curriculum for English majors in three-year teachers' colleges

Type	Course	Hours/week	Duration
Compulsory	Integrated English	4-8	6 semesters
	Listening	2	6 semesters
	Speaking	2	4 semesters
	Reading	2-4	2 semesters
	Writing	2	1 semester
	Phonics	2	2 semesters
	English grammar	2	2 semesters
	British and American Studies	2	2 semesters
	Secondary English methodology	2	2 semesters
	Professional skills for secondary teachers	2	6 semesters
Elective	English literature	4	2 semesters
	Introduction to English linguistics	2	1 semester
	Translation	2	1 semester
	Second foreign language	2	2 semesters
	Computer-assisted English teaching	1-2	2 semesters
	English testing	2	1 semester
	English teaching and learning	2	2 semesters

Source: Teachers College English Syllabus Team (1993)

secondary teachers—provide basic professional training by introducing ELT theories, methods, techniques, and teaching materials that are deemed applicable to teaching at junior secondary schools. Students' progress in the above courses is assessed by tests designed in accordance with six levels of requirements. Tables 1.10 and 1.11 summarize the major requirements of Levels Four and Six (Teachers College English Syllabus Team, 1993). Upon completion of the compulsory courses, students should pass at least Level Four. Students from better-equipped teachers' colleges are expected to pass Level Six.

Individual colleges can choose to offer some of the electives listed in the syllabus, if they have the necessary resources. However, the national syllabus recommends that only a limited number of hours be given to electives. The most popular electives are English and American literature, introduction to English linguistics, and computer-assisted English teaching. Other electives are offered only in a limited number of teachers' colleges.

All pre-service teachers are also required to undertake six weeks' teaching practice in their last semester. Normally this is the first and only time that student teachers gain direct teaching experience during their pre-service training (Paine, 1992; Sharpe & Ning, 1998). Paine (1990, 1992) provides vivid

Table 1.10 Level Four requirements for English majors

Area	Requirements
Phonetics	have a basic and systematic knowledge of English sounds and pronunciation rules; use this knowledge in one's own phonetic training; acquire a relatively strong ability to recognize, correct and demonstrate pronunciation and intonation
Grammar	acquire a relatively systematic and comprehensive knowledge of English grammar; have a clear understanding of grammatical notions; achieve formal accuracy; have the basic ability to conduct linguistic analysis
Vocabulary	have a productive command of 2,000 words and most frequently used phrases; have a receptive command of another 2,500 words; have the ability to make use of context in learning and memorizing vocabulary
Listening	understand with 80% comprehension materials slightly easier than the texts studied in Integrated English and read at a speed of 120 words per minute; understand the gist of news broadcast at a relatively slow speed by English-speaking countries after listening twice; understand lectures/presentations by native English teachers or experts that are within the scope of learned knowledge
Speaking	answer questions about, retell and discuss listening materials for 3 to 4 minutes, with clarity of messages, basic appropriacy of discourse, correct pronunciation and intonation, and no grave grammatical errors; carry out English conversations on daily life or social topics up to the standards described above
Reading	read at a speed of 70 words per minute and understand the gist, major points or important details of general texts or abridged literary works containing less than 5% new words, using inference skills; cover reading materials that total one million words; read with 70% comprehension a text of 750 words with less than 2% new words in five minutes
Writing	answer questions about, retell, summarize, outline, and take notes of reading materials in writing; write a 200-word essay on a given topic within an hour, with clarity, coherence, reasonable grammatical accuracy, and stylistic appropriacy; write letters, memos, notices, invitations, etc. in accordance with conventional forms and with discoursal appropriacy
Competence	use acquired knowledge and language skills to communicate in specified domains
ELT theory Professional skills	master typing skills; have an initial ability to use English to organize extracurricular English activities; have a knowledge of basic ELT theories and the pedagogical process of junior secondary English; have a basic understanding of the general patterns underlying secondary English teaching; master the basic methods and techniques of secondary English teaching

and detailed descriptions of how teaching practice is conducted. Before the practicum begins, experienced teachers from secondary schools are invited to brief the students on ELT in secondary schools and share their experience of effective teaching with the students. When the time for the practicum comes, the students are assigned in groups to different local junior secondary schools. Each group is under the charge of a supervising lecturer from the teachers' college. The lecturer makes frequent visits to the host school to coordinate the practicum program with the teaching programs of the host school, supports the student teachers by providing consultation on teaching problems, checks their progress, and observes their teaching. Each student teacher is also assigned to a mentor in the host school whose duty is to help induct the student teacher into

Table 1.11 Level Six requirements for English majors

Area	Requirements
Phonetics	speak with natural pronunciation and intonation; acquire reading-aloud skills; have basic mastery of methods commonly used in teaching phonetics in secondary schools; understand the major phonological differences between British and American English
Grammar	have an understanding of methods frequently used to teach grammar in secondary schools; have the competence to put this knowledge to practice; have the ability to judge, analyze, distinguish, and correct grammatical errors
Vocabulary	have a productive command of 2,500 words (including the 2,000 required at Level Four) and frequently used phrases; have a receptive command of 3,500 words (including the 2,500 required at Level Four)
Listening	understand with 80% comprehension materials slightly easier than the texts studied in Integrated English and read at a speed of 140 words per minute; understand the gist of news broadcast at a normal speed by English-speaking countries after listening twice; understand the gist or major points of a native English speaker's conversation or talk on daily life or social topics
Speaking	converse with a native English speaker on daily life or social topics with clarity of message, reasonable appropriacy of discourse, natural pronunciation and intonation, and no grave grammatical errors; talk about a familiar topic for five minutes after brief preparation up to the standards described above; have the competence to conduct curricular and extracurricular activities in English
Reading	read medium-level literary works or newspapers/magazines at a speed of 80 to 100 words per minute and understand with 70 to 80% correctness the gist, major points or important details; cover reading materials that total 750,000 words, in addition to the required amount at Level Four; read with 70% comprehension a text of 1,000 words with no more than 3% new words in five minutes
Writing	have an understanding of the features of and techniques for writing narrative, descriptive and expository essays; write a 250-word essay on a general topic within an hour, free of serious grammatical or idiomatic errors and with coherence and clarity; write a report or review of a reading text with completeness, clarity, accuracy, and appropriacy; write lesson plans and feedback in English
Competence	use acquired knowledge and language skills to communicate in specified domains
ELT theory Professional skills	have the ability to analyze secondary English textbooks, to carry out lesson preparation, and write lesson plans; acquire an initial competence to engage in secondary English teaching; know how to use language labs and other audio-visual aids

the various aspects of secondary ELT. The first two weeks of the teaching practicum are preparation time; that is, the student teachers observe their mentors, discuss the observed lessons, and prepare their own lessons collectively. Towards the end of this preparation period, each student teacher gives a dress rehearsal of his or her carefully prepared lesson, with fellow student teachers acting as pupils. Both the supervising lecturer and the mentor are present in the rehearsal and decide whether the student teacher is well prepared for actual teaching. With the approval of the supervisor and the mentor, the student teacher starts solo teaching in the third week. Student

teachers typically teach four or five hours a week for three weeks. The last week of the practicum is reserved for reflecting on the teaching experience and writing a comprehensive teaching practice report. Each student's performance is assessed jointly by the supervisor and the mentor and given a grade. The grade is recorded and carries the same weight as any of the other courses in the overall assessment.

The curriculum adopted in a two-year teachers' college or a normal university is very similar in structure to the three-year curriculum described above. The major differences lie in the amount of teaching content required and the level of mastery aimed at. There are fewer electives on a two-year curriculum and fewer hours for the compulsory courses. However, there is a tendency to squeeze three years' contents into a two-year program because it is a common belief that a significantly reduced curriculum may fail to provide trainee teachers with the necessary level of English knowledge and skills. In general, students in two-year programs are expected to meet only Level Four requirements. The curriculum adopted by a normal university or college, on the other hand, delivers more instructional contents and prepares students to attain a higher level (Level Eight) of specialized knowledge and competence. There are more compulsory specialized courses, some of which are only electives on the three-year curriculum. There are also more electives for students to choose from. Some of the added courses include applied linguistics, English lexicology, stylistics, and pragmatics. Teaching practice is also increased to eight weeks. Overall, graduates from four-year programs are better prepared than graduates from three-year programs in English proficiency and subject-matter knowledge, but not necessarily so in professional competence.

Researchers who study teacher education in the PRC have identified a number of problems with the pre-service training sector. Two of these problems are particularly worrying. The first one is the pedagogy adopted in training courses. The predominant approach to teaching is teacher-centered, lecture-based, and oriented toward textual knowledge and examinations (Adamson, 1995; Paine, 1992; Sharpe & Ning, 1998). Student activities such as group discussions, oral presentations, and micro-teaching are rare. There is a strong tendency for teacher-trainers to adopt a theoretical stance in most of the subject-matter courses. Such practices subconsciously socialize trainee teachers into a traditional pedagogical model which is incompatible with the drive to reform classroom teaching. As A. L. Xiao (1998: 28) points out, "when some of the students who have been taught with [a traditional method] turn out to be English teachers, they are most likely to use the same method in their teaching." The second problem with Chinese pre-service teacher training is the disparity between time invested in academic coursework and that allocated for professional training (Chapman, Chen & Postiglione, 2000). Although there has been a significant increase in time devoted to education-related courses from approximately 6% of the total curriculum in the 1980s (Paine, 1990, 1992), there is still a strong bias in favor of proficiency work and subject-matter knowledge. Education-related training typically takes up only 15% of the total compulsory coursework, and the total time trainee teachers spend in secondary

schools is only about 5% of their college-based learning time. There are at least three factors contributing to the strong focus on subject-matter knowledge and proficiency development. The first one is the traditional Chinese emphasis on academic knowledge (Maley, 1983; Paine, 1990). The second one is the widely held belief that "professional skills will 'develop' once the student has embarked on full-time teaching" (Sharpe & Ning, 1998: 62). The third factor has to do with the fact that English is a foreign language in the Chinese context and that without intensive work on subject-matter knowledge and proficiency, most pre-service teachers cannot attain the level of English proficiency or linguistic knowledge required by their future teaching jobs. The need to raise trainee teachers' English knowledge and skills is exacerbated by the relatively low quality of candidates enrolled by institutions of teacher education (Adamson, 1995). Largely because of the relatively poor economic rewards and other career-related disadvantages frequently associated with the teaching profession, most high-caliber and better prepared secondary graduates do not apply to teacher training institutions (Adamson, 1995; Buley-Meissner, 1991; Paine, 1991).

Given the current situation of pre-service education in the PRC, in-service training is the most important way to strengthen professional education. In-service training takes two forms: off-the-job and on-the-job training. Off-the-job training may last from a few months to two years and is provided by institutes of education, in-service teacher training colleges, training centers jointly run by Chinese and overseas universities, and in-service training programs run by normal universities or colleges, teachers' colleges and normal schools (British Council, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). Some secondary teachers of English in the more prosperous metropolitan centers are even sponsored by the local governments to participate in teacher training programs in Western universities. Shanghai, for example, has been sending groups of secondary teachers of English to Lancaster University for short-term training in the past few years. Hainan Province has also been able to send five secondary-school teachers each year to a one-year postgraduate program in English language teaching offered by the National Institute of Education in Singapore. There are several noteworthy tendencies manifested in off-the-job in-service training. First, short-term training programs (i.e., those that last less than a year) tend to emphasize professional development by providing considerable teaching-related coursework, while long-term training programs are inclined to stress development of subject-matter knowledge and language proficiency. The latter programs are usually designed to upgrade participants' credentials to the required level and are modeled on the curriculum of pre-service training programs. Second, training programs offered by domestic institutions are likely to give too much prominence to language training whereas those provided by overseas universities tend to pay sole attention to professional work (D. L. Liu, 1998). Third, a better balance between proficiency and professional development is often achieved in training programs jointly developed, staffed and run by Chinese and overseas institutions (Ward et al., 1995). Finally, off-the-job training is becoming increasingly available and important to raise the quality of ELT at the secondary levels (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a).

Like off-the-job in-service training, on-the-job training also takes many forms. The most important ones are correspondence education programs, evening university training courses, satellite TV education, self-study examinations, and professional activities, including collective preparation of teaching, lesson observations, and participation in seminars and workshops. For the sake of space, only professional activities are discussed here. Secondary-school teachers in the PRC are organized into teaching and research groups (*jiaoyanzu*) according to the grade levels they teach. Teachers of English are no exception. This system of organization has evolved from the *kafedra* system imported from the former Soviet Union in the 1950s. Members of a teaching and research group prepare their weekly teaching collectively, discuss problems arising from teaching, and share professional experience (Paine & Ma, 1993; C. C. Yu, 1984). In preparing weekly lesson plans, the members decide on the amount, pace, and methodological issues of instruction through discussion and negotiation. Once decisions are made, the members typically divide the labor of writing the lesson plans among themselves according to each other's strengths. The prepared lesson plans are then distributed to each teacher. The individual members follow the collectively prepared lesson plans closely and introduce minor changes only when necessary. While some researchers (e.g., Paine, 1990, 1992; Ross, 1993) criticize such collective work for imposing conformity on teaching and reinforcing traditional methodologies, there are some obvious advantages. One is that it encourages professional exchange. The way collective lesson planning is conducted clearly taps individual teachers' strengths and can produce a synergetic effect. Professional activities of this nature also provide novice teachers with the much needed support and security (Ross, 1993). Finally, a teaching and research group can be the locus of new ideas and innovations when some of its members have received up-to-date professional training, or better, when a well trained native English teacher is involved (Ng & Tang, 1997).

Lesson observation is another important way for teachers to develop professional expertise in the PRC. There are three major types of classes available for observation. To begin with, a teacher can sit in a colleague's class and learn from him/her. Most Chinese secondary schools, if not all, require their teachers to observe each other's classes and set the number of observations that each teacher must complete (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). Consequently, such lesson observations have become a routine practice, and normally teachers do not decline their colleagues' requests to observe them at work. The other two types of lesson for observation are demonstration and competition classes. These classes can be organized at school, county/district, provincial and national levels.[39] Teachers who conduct such classes are those who have

[39] A national English teaching contest was held in Hefei in 1999. The contestants were 33 senior secondary teachers of English from different parts of the country—large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin as well as interior areas like Yunnan, Guizhou, and Tibet. Each contestant had only one day to prepare his/her lesson on a given topic, and the lesson was delivered in a totally unrehearsed context because the teacher did not know the students until he/she entered the

achieved recognized excellence in teaching or who have developed successful innovative approaches. As a result, demonstration and competition classes often attract many teachers and are regarded as models to emulate. These classes can be very powerful means to promote experimental thinking and classroom innovation on a mass scale. However, a potential problem with such classes is that the observers may go away with some new teaching techniques but without a full understanding of the principles informing the classes partly because of a general lack of in-depth interaction with the demonstrators/contestants and other follow-up activities.

Deeper professional interaction is made available through seminars and workshops conducted by ELT specialists, successful experimentalists, and master teachers. These seminars and workshops are organized by local education bureaus or institutes of education, and provide opportunities for professional dialogues between practitioners and specialists. Such seminars and workshops are usually given to promote new teaching approaches, prepare teachers for new syllabuses, or train them to use new textbooks. The participants then share what they have learned with their colleagues back at their school. Although seminars and workshops of this kind are useful, they tend to be infrequent. Given the current endeavor to reform ELT, and because of their value for further development of practicing teachers' professional expertise, they should be institutionalized, especially in the less developed rural areas where professional support for in-service teacher is lacking.

Recent Important Developments

As the Chinese government stepped up its effort to develop and modernize the country in the mid-1980s, there was increasing dissatisfaction with the quality of education and a growing awareness of the deficiencies in practices prevailing in the domain of education. In particular, it was felt that the longstanding policy of adopting unified curriculums, textbooks, and examinations throughout the country not only ignored the diversity of regional needs and developments but also stifled educational innovation. As a result, a top-down movement of educational reform was initiated to raise the quality of education. One of the important measures taken was to decentralize decision-making and allow considerable regional autonomy in exploring and implementing new approaches to education. This has led to new developments in, among other things, curriculum design, textbook production, testing, and research on education. These developments have produced, and will continue to exert, profound influences on the education sector. This section introduces some recent important developments in ELT, using what has been happening in Shanghai, the forerunner of ELT reforms in the PRC, as an illustration.

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classroom. The contest was well received and the expertise of the contestants was impressive (Hu, 2000).

Curriculum Reform

By 1985, many criticisms had been leveled at the imposition of unified primary and secondary curriculums nationwide. While nationally drawn up curriculums had been used to ensure educational equality and control over the quality of education in the past, widening differences in the pace of social and economic development between different parts of the country underscored the need for curricular diversification. In response to this need, the State Education Commission staged a new policy about curriculum development (Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute, 2000; Ding, 1999). While the production of primary and secondary curriculums and textbooks for most parts of the country remained an undertaking of the State Education Commission, educational authorities in seven economically developed provinces were allowed to develop their own textbooks. Moreover, Shanghai and Zhejiang Province were entrusted with the task of pioneering curricular changes in basic education and providing relevant experience for curriculum reforms in other parts of China. In 1988, Shanghai set up its Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission and started the first phase of the curriculum reform. During the first phase of the curriculum reform, the commission produced a draft curriculum for both nine-year basic education and senior secondary education. After years of trial, both curriculums were revised (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 1998a, 1998b).

In the new curriculums, English is given much prominence, being second only to Chinese and mathematics in terms of curriculum time. That English carries so much weight follows from the municipal government's ambition to develop Shanghai into a first-class international metropolis. There has been a clear recognition of English as an important resource that the municipality can harness in promoting international exchange, fostering economic progress, acquiring scientific knowledge and technological expertise, and facilitating educational development. To quote the Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission (1999: 3), "to develop world-class foreign language teaching programs in Shanghai is a prerequisite for turning the municipality into a world-class international metropolis." To realize this ambitious goal, the Shanghai Education Commission has worked out a ten-year development program (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 1999). According to this program, by 2003, about 11,000 young and senior teachers of English at the primary and secondary schools will have participated in refresher courses in language teaching and learning, and between 1,500 and 1,800 core teachers will have received ELT training in overseas institutions. Meanwhile, about 400 foreign teachers of English will be recruited to improve the quality of primary and secondary ELT in the municipality. It is planned that in five to ten years' time Shanghai will be able to offer world-class English courses to its primary and secondary students.

Among the many ELT-related changes introduced in the curriculum reform, two are particularly noteworthy. One has been the fast expansion of English into primary schooling, first Primary Five, then Primary Three, and

now Primary One. While the curriculum for nine-year compulsory education (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 1998b) required that English instruction start at Primary Three, the rapid development of ELT in the primary schools made this requirement obsolete in just two years' time. By 2000, nearly 85% of all the primary schools in Shanghai had offered English classes at Primary One (Teaching Research Institute of the Shanghai Education Commission, 2000). Beginning with the autumn semester of 2001, all the remaining schools have also started to teach English at Primary One. The popularization of ELT throughout primary schooling is a major measure taken to ensure that by the time students graduate from senior secondary school, they will have achieved strong competence in English.

The second important change is the introduction of content-based English instruction (CBEI) in some key primary and secondary schools. In the past few years, a number of reform-minded schools have been experimenting with integrating English learning with the learning of other subjects. At Heping School, English is used to teach primary mathematics, science, arts, ballet, IT, secondary biology, and a few other subjects. For subjects that are not taught in English (e.g., secondary mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, and politics), technical terms, formulas, laws and definitions are presented in both Chinese and English. Similarly, at No. 3 Girls' High School, English-medium senior secondary mathematics, biology, ecology, and computer science have been available since 1999. Other schools, including Fushanlu Primary School, Lihuili Secondary School, New Huangpu Experimental School, Shanghai High School are also active proponents of CBEI and have achieved impressive results. Encouraged by these results, the Shanghai Education Commission has decided to expand the scope of CBEI experiments (Teaching Research Institute of the Shanghai Education Commission, 2000). Extensive experimentation is to start in municipality-level key schools in 2001 and district-/county-level key schools in 2002. It is projected that by 2005 most schools will have been involved. To direct experimentation with CBEI, a strong research team has been formed that consists of professors, principals, and experienced teachers. High on its research agenda are the production of suitable CBEI textbooks and the training of enough qualified CBEI teachers, both of which must be adequately addressed if quality CBEI is to occur on a large scale.[40]

[40] Most of the textbooks used in CBEI are imported from abroad, for example, *New Primary Science, New Active Mathematics, Kid Works,* and *World Environment Atlas*. They are not designed specially for Chinese students and often do not fit in well with the Chinese education system. As for CBEI teachers, some are teachers of subjects other than English by training but have taken additional tutorials in English. Others are teachers of English who have received some training in the content areas. Still others are native English speakers recruited overseas. Currently, the pool of qualified CBEI teachers is too small to meet the needs of more extensive experimentation with CBEI.

New Textbooks

In the Chinese context, English textbooks are crucial to the quality of ELT, not least because they are the most important, if not the only, source of English input to many students. Since 1986, the State Education Commission has adopted a new policy regarding the production of textbooks for use in primary and secondary schools (Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute, 2000). The policy was conceived to carry out reforms of textbook development in two phases. In the first phase, several series of textbooks would be produced at the provincial level based on a single national syllabus but serving the needs of different regions. In the second phase, plural series of textbooks would be developed around multiple syllabuses to further diversify education. To ensure the quality of provincial textbook production, the State Education Commission set up a steering committee in 1986 to assess newly written primary and secondary textbooks and grant publication permissions to those coming up to standards (British Council, 1995; State Education Commission, 1987). Subsequently, several universities and provincial agencies of education were commissioned to produce whole packages of textbooks (including English ones) for use in different regions. As far as English textbooks were concerned, several groups were responsible for developing new series for use: the PEP developed two series for use in average junior and senior secondary schools nationwide; Beijing Normal University developed a series for use in the 5-plus-4 track; the Southeast Normal University and the Guangdong Education Commission created a series for use in well-equipped schools in economically prosperous coastal regions; the Southwest Normal University and the Sichuan Education Commission wrote a series for use in economically underdeveloped regions; and Shanghai a series for its own use. After years of coordinated efforts, a new crop of English textbooks came out, and the goal of the first phase of the textbook reform has largely been achieved (Bai, 1996; Ding, 1999; Shi, 1999).

The new English textbooks are based on more up-to-date language teaching and learning theories and are superior in quality to the old national series produced in the early 1980s. Junior English for China (Grant & Liu, 1992, 1993, 1996) and Senior English for China (Jacques & Liu, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 1998), the two series developed by the PEP in collaboration with Longman and the UNDP, have made an especially strong impact on secondary ELT in the PRC. Before the series were released, they went through extensive piloting. Junior English for China, for example, was piloted on 500,000 students in 25 provinces and municipalities from 1990 to 1993 (Wei, 2001). Currently, the two series are used in about 70% of secondary schools nationwide (PEP Foreign Languages Section, 2001). Rather than implanting a "pure" version of CLT, the textbook writers have adopted an eclectic approach, trying to synthesize some CLT principles with existing practices (Adamson, 2001). "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" (Adamson & Morris, 1997: 23). Lessons are organized not on the basis of linguistic structures but around topics which cover scientific knowledge, culture-specific activities, cross-cultural information, and ethical behavior. To support teachers in their use of the textbooks, a wide range of resources are provided that include teacher's books, workbooks for written exercises, reading practice books, cassette tapes, CD-ROMs, wall pictures, and stick figures. Each teacher's book is prefaced with a comprehensive introduction which details the teaching objectives, pedagogy, time allocation, support resources, teaching steps, instructional techniques, and methods for training the four skills. There is also a detailed teaching plan for each lesson, containing tips for handing each component. Because of such information, the teacher's books are, in a very real sense, methodology training textbooks.

During the first phase of Shanghai's curriculum and textbook reform, Shanghai International Studies University and the Teaching Research Institute of the Shanghai Education Commission developed a set of 20 English textbooks (the New Primary and Secondary English series) for use from Primary Three to Senior Secondary Three in Shanghai's schools. Like the PEP series, this set of textbooks tries to graft new pedagogical ideas to prevalent practices. It adopts a structural-functional approach to syllabus realization. The format of each lesson (consisting of a text, a drilling section, and a homework component) follows the traditional practices, but a high premium is placed on the development of communicative competence. In addition to the traditional emphasis on reading and writing, listening and speaking also receive a fair share of attention. The textbooks are accompanied by teacher's books, workbooks, cassette tapes, video tapes, and wall charts. Each teacher's book clearly lays out the teaching objectives, time allocation, main teaching contents, and specific requirements. Furthermore, suggestions are given about how to handle the relationship between linguistic knowledge and language skills, between teaching and learning, between listening/speaking and reading/writing, and between single-skill and integrative-skill activities. To help teachers create opportunities for classroom interaction, there are also practical suggestions about pair work and group work. The textbooks generally have been well received by better-qualified teachers in key schools, although less well-trained teachers have complained about the innovations (Ng & Tang, 1997). Currently, a great majority of schools in Shanghai have adopted the textbooks.

Since 1996, the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission and Oxford University Press have been collaborating on a new series of English textbooks, Oxford English (Shanghai edition). Most textbooks in the new series have been published, and the remaining ones will have been published by 2003. The series is adapted from the Oxford English series (English First! On Target! and Oxford English) and has incorporated some of the latest developments in textbook production. The textbook writers conceptualize communicative competence as comprising four essential dimensions: cognitive skills, linguistic knowledge, personal experiences, and interpersonal communication strategies. To help students acquire communicative competence, a number of innovations have been adopted. Perhaps the most significant one is the introduction of a

learner-centered approach that strives to meet students' needs and engage them in purposeful communication in meaningful contexts. Students are encouraged to react to, reflect on, and make creative use of the information provided by the textbook and the teacher to complete stimulating tasks and activities. Another innovation is the adoption of a theme-based principle of organization. An individual textbook consists of several modules, each of which is further divided into a number of units. A theme of general interest to students runs through a module, with its constituent units covering different aspects of the theme. The themes are wide-ranging and contain a strong cultural element. A third innovation is task-based learning. Each lesson is structured into pre-task, during-task, and post-task sections to provide students with the language necessary for completing a meaningful task, to help them use the language to perform the task, and to follow up the task with further activities that aim to stimulate the communicative use of the learned knowledge both in and outside the classroom. Other features of the textbooks include progressive recycling of language knowledge and skills, large doses of language input, attention to learner autonomy, and considerable flexibility for teachers to select teaching contents in accordance with students' ability and needs. While the textbooks have clear advantages over the more traditional ones and are being promoted enthusiastically, the big challenge for the educational authorities is to train a large contingent of teachers to use them effectively in a short time. Without adequate training, it is very likely that the new textbooks will be taught with traditional practices (L. Lin, 2000; Ng & Tang, 1997).

Test Reforms

Since the NCEE was reinstated in 1977, it has been holding sway over secondary education, because it has been the main access route to university places for a huge population of secondary graduates (Feng, 1999; Lewin & Wang, 1991; Ross, 1992).[41] As the gross enrolment rate of regular post-secondary education is only about 5% of the whole age group, it has become the most important task of regular senior secondary schools to help students pass the NCEE.[42] Hence examination-oriented teaching has been prevalent. Aligning teaching with the NCEE would not have had so deleterious an effect on secondary education if the NCEE had encouraged all-round quality education. For many years, however, the NCEE encouraged narrowness and dependency by testing mainly rigid textual knowledge and largely ignoring abilities and creative use of knowledge (Ross, 1992). As part of the NCEE, the Matriculation English Test

[41] Between 1977 and 1997, twelve million secondary graduates were able to pass the NCEE (MOE, 1998a). At present, the NCEE serves a test population of up to three million every year (Li & Wang, 2000).

[42] According to the MOE (1998a), of the 22.98 million primary-one pupils in 1985, only 1.08 million were able to make their way to university in 1997. The gross enrolment rate was only 4.69%. Even when those involved in non-formal tertiary education were included, the gross enrolment rate was only 9.07%. In 2000, the rate (regular and non-formal tertiary education combined) was raised to 11% (D. P. Yang, 2001b).

was perhaps more plagued by those problems than tests for other subjects. As an illustration, up to 1988 an overwhelming majority (at least 85%) of the items on the test were multiple-choice and blank-filling items (Lewin & Wang, 1991).[43] Such items tested largely discrete-point knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary and focused on linguistic accuracy. This is why many researchers (e.g., Hertling, 1996; X. J. Li, 1984; X. Q. Liao, 2001; L. Lin, 2000; T. Scovel, 1983; Y. A. Wu, 2001) have identified the Matriculation English Test as one of the main causes, perhaps the single most powerful one, of many English teachers' resistance to educational innovation.

The criticisms of the NCEE did not go unheeded by the educational authorities. In 1985, the MOE convened a conference on reforming the NCEE (MOE, 1998a). Largely based on the proposals made at the conference, a number of influential decisions were made to promote test reforms. First, experimentation was to be made with the implementation of competency examinations in senior secondary schools "as a more well-rounded assessment of all students' achievements as well as a means to counter the pressure on schools to pretzel their teaching around the [NCEE]" (Ross, 1992: 74). It was hoped that by making successful completion of all competency examinations a precondition for taking the NCEE, the negative sway of the latter as a selection instrument over secondary education would be greatly reduced and more balanced attention would be given to the teaching of all subjects. Shanghai was chosen to pioneer competency examinations. Later, encouraged by the positive results of Shanghai's pilot experiment, the State Education Commission decided to implement competency examinations nationwide in 1990. The second major decision was to lower the pressure of the NCEE on students by reducing the subjects tested.[44] Again, Shanghai was entrusted with the task of piloting experiments. To facilitate the experimentation, Shanghai was allowed to design and administer its own version of the NCEE. This practice continues up to date. Another significant decision concerned the standardization of the NCEE and the improvement of its intrinsic power—its validity and reliability. A task force comprising researchers and specialists from several educational agencies and universities in Guangdong was formed to undertake the exploratory work. After years of extensive piloting, analysis and refining, the NCEE was improved considerably in terms of reliability, validity and discriminating power (MOE, 1998a). As reported in X. J. Li (1990), the intrinsic power of the Matriculation English Test was also enhanced and largely positive washback was achieved. The last important decision had to do with the orientation of the NCEE. It was required that the contents tested be strictly based on the syllabus for each subject and that greater emphasis be given to the

[43] For 1984 and 1985, all the items were multiple-choice and blank-filling ones. Even in 1996, multiple-choice and blank-filling items still carried more marks than test items of other types.

[44] There were seven subjects in the NCEE for science students (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, Chinese, foreign language, and politics) and six for arts students (mathematics, Chinese, foreign language, politics, geography, and history). The pressure on NCEE candidates was almost unbearable, "especially during the last months before school-leaving, when all class hours (plus extra ones) [were] given up to a hectic, intensive preparation for the [NCEE]" (X. J. Li, 1990: 394).

assessment of abilities (MOE, 1998a). While they did not change the structure of the NCEE at once, these requirements did produce a gradual transformation. They provided the initial impetus for several changes in the Matriculation English Test, including a gradual decrease of discrete-point grammar items, a transformed reading subtest, the inclusion of a writing component, and recent work on a listening and a speaking subtest (Li & Wang, 2000).[45] There are signs that the transformed Matriculation English Test is effecting some far-reaching changes in secondary ELT.

As mentioned above, Shanghai spearheaded the implementation of senior secondary competency examinations (Shanghai Educational Examination Center, 1989a, 1989b). The system developed by Shanghai, and later adopted with minor modifications nationwide, consists of competency examinations for nine subjects—Chinese, mathematics, foreign language, politics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and biology. These examinations are based on the curriculum guidelines and syllabuses for the subjects, and are taken upon completion of a particular subject.[46] Examination papers are set by the Municipal Educational Testing Center and each examination is administered to all eligible candidates throughout the municipality at the same time. Each examination is graded on a 100-mark scale and students who score below 60 fail the examination. Students who pass all the nine competency examinations are awarded a senior secondary school competency certificate, which pre-qualifies the holder for sitting the NCEE. While the implementation of competency examinations has not put an end to the practices of NCEE-oriented teaching, it has succeeded, to a considerable extent, in drawing attention to the teaching of some hitherto neglected subjects and represents an endeavor to improve educational quality.

Along with the institutionalization of the competency examinations, Shanghai also initiated a new NCEE system in 1987 which continues to be used. In the new system, NCEE candidates from Shanghai sit only four examinations. Three of these examinations are on "core" subjects and are compulsory for all candidates (MOE, 1998a). Because of its strategic position in the modernization scheme, the subject of foreign language is designated as a core one (the other two core subjects being Chinese and mathematics). The fourth subject tested is one of the other six compulsory subjects in the senior secondary curriculum, namely, politics, history, geography, physics, chemistry and biology. The university or college a candidate applies for decides which of these subjects is examined. The new system is based on four related arguments. First, since survivors of the competency examinations have attained, at least in principle, the standards set for all the compulsory senior secondary subjects,

[45] There is some objection to the inclusion of an oral subtest in the Matriculation English Test, on the grounds that such a subtest will put students from less developed regions at a great disadvantage and consequently exacerbate unequal access to education (D. P Yang, 2001a).

[46] The nine competency examinations are given at different times: history in Senior One; Chinese, geography and biology in Senior Two; and politics, mathematics, foreign language, physics and chemistry in Senior Three.

there is no need to test them on most of the same subjects again.[47] Second, it is a waste of resources, energy and time to test students on subjects which are only remotely related to their specialization in university. Third, to reduce the number of subjects tested can alleviate pressure on students and discourage NCEE-oriented education. Finally, the new system can better cater for students' preferences and bring out their specialty. These arguments have been supported, to various extents, by the actual results.[48]

With regard to the subject of English, Shanghai's test is more oriented towards the assessment of language skills than the national Matriculation English Test. The English test in 2000 is an example. The test consisted of seven sections: listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, cloze, reading comprehension, Chinese-to-English translation, and guided writing. The items that tested language skills totaled 47, in contrast to 65 items testing grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Although the skills-related items were fewer in number than grammar and vocabulary items, they were discourse-oriented and took a longer time to answer. The listening comprehension section involved listening to a short conversation, a longer conversation, and two short passages. The reading comprehension questions were based on four passages, each about 400 words long. The guided writing task required the candidates to compose an essay of 100 to 120 words based on the simple clues given. The marks awarded to the skills-related items accounted for more than 60% of the total marks. According to the Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission (1999), the proportion for listening comprehension will be further raised, its contents will be more closely tied to communicative functions, and an oral subtest will be added that can more directly test communicative competence. The prominence given to language skills will undoubtedly direct teachers' attention to developing these skills.

Besides the English competency examination and the Matriculation English Test in Shanghai's NCEE, a third English test is gaining attention and importance. This is Shanghai's Banded English Proficiency Test for primary and secondary students. The test consists of five bands: Band One is the qualifying level of primary English, Bands Two and Three the basic and advanced levels of junior secondary English, and Bands Four and Five the basic and advanced levels of senior secondary English (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 2000). All the bands are mainly based

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[47] However, the competency examinations cannot replace the NCEE simply because the number of students who pass the examinations far exceeds the enrolment capacity of universities and colleges. Consequently, it is necessary to retain the NCEE as a selection instrument.

[48] Shanghai's success has encouraged the State Education Commission to allow other provinces to experiment with their own NCEE systems. There are currently seven different versions of the NCEE (D. P. Yang, 2001a). Most provinces adopt a 3+2 system which has a science and an arts version—Chinese, mathematics, and foreign language as three core subjects plus history and geography for arts students and physics and chemistry for science students. Guangdong's system is similar to Shanghai's except for an additional general test. Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jilin, Shanxi and Tianjin administer the three core tests to all candidates. In addition, candidates for a science degree program must take a general science test, candidates for an arts degree program a general arts test, and candidates for sub-degree programs a test on a fourth subject.

on Shanghai's primary and secondary English curriculum standards. At present, Bands One, Two and Three are available, while Bands Four and Five are forthcoming. The first administration of Bands One and Two in 1998 attracted more than 200,000 primary and junior secondary students, of whom nearly 170,000 passed. In the following year, another 300,000 sat the two bands. In its current form, each band of the test consists of a listening and a reading subtest. An oral subtest is being piloted in schools in several better-quipped districts and counties. The test is graded on a scale of fail, pass, and distinction. Each band is administered once a year, and students can sit any band they want to, irrespective of their year levels. Those who fail can repeat the test. Effort is being made to enhance the technical sophistication of the test and to institutionalize its certification. The significance of the test lies in its potential to link up with English teaching in the higher and non-formal education sectors. The test is intended to replace the English competency examination and probably the Matriculation English Test in 2003 (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 1999). There is every reason to believe that a test of a similar nature will be institutionalized in other parts of the PRC if Shanghai's experiment proves to be successful.

Research on ELT

In their review of ELT in the PRC, Cortazzi and Jin commented that research on ELT and applied linguistics was "an area which need[ed] attention" (1996a: 75). While this comment is still pertinent, there has been some encouraging progress in the last decade. Because of the self-imposed isolation from the world during the Cultural Revolution, China lagged far behind the developed countries in educational research in general and research on applied linguistics in particular. When the door was reopened in the late 1970s, Chinese ELT practitioners and researchers initially were overwhelmed by the developments of linguistics and applied linguistics in the West. Subsequently, they were busy introducing or translating Western linguistic theories, syllabuses, English teaching materials, and international English tests (Gao, Li & Lu, 2001). There was, however, little empirical research on ELT and applied linguistics done during the first decade of opening up and reform. Most of the so-called research published took a work report format—"a general summary of the authors' achievements in the past with anecdotal support, followed by general suggestions for future practice" (Gao et al., 2001: 3; R. Q. Liu, 1996). Other research included impressionistic discussions of the application of imported theories and teaching materials on the basis of personal experience in the classroom. Such "barren empiricism" (G. Z. Xu, 1996: 8) apparently could not meet the needs of ELT development in China.

Since the late 1980s, there has been a rising awareness of the inadequacy of research on ELT and applied linguistics. The general lack of methodological awareness and training in the field of ELT has been recognized. University-based leading ELT specialists and researchers (e.g., Gui, 1988, 1997; R. Q. Liu, 1996; G. Z. Xu, 1996) have strongly voiced their concern with the low quality

of research and repeatedly called for a shift from work-reportism to rigorous, date-based research that is more in keeping with the international research convention. To improve methodological literacy, books of research methods have been published or are forthcoming (e.g., Gui & Ning, 1997; R. Q. Liu, 1999). Research by a sizable number of Chinese teachers and researchers trained in overseas universities have begun to impact on the field. There has been a remarkable increase in empirical research (Gao et al., 2001). *ELT in China 1992*, for example, is a collection of 47 empirical studies: "a first sample of China's ELT writings that are research-formatted, data-based plus computer-serviced" (G. Z. Xu, 1996: 8). These developments are not restricted to university-based research but have spread to secondary ELT. Research done by primary and secondary teachers that exhibits considerable methodological rigor and utilizes experimental designs has begun to appear in professional journals for primary and secondary English teachers (e.g., Jiang, 1997; Shang & Qiao, 1998).

In Shanghai, research on FLT at primary and secondary levels has received considerable attention. A program of further education for in-service foreign language teachers in secondary schools was worked out in the early 1990s. Training in educational research figured prominently in the program. The training scheme required secondary teachers of foreign languages to take courses in educational measurement and assessment, educational statistics, FLT theories and methodologies, and so on (J. Z. Zhang, 1993). Teacher research has been actively promoted (Shanghai Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission, 1999). There is a growing interest in empirical and action research (e.g., Jin, 1998). It must be acknowledged, however, that much of the research being done currently is still non-empirical and merely reports on personal experience in following new teaching methods, new textbooks, new curriculums, and so on. Because of the rapid introduction of new curriculums, syllabuses, and teaching materials, there are great demands for models of operation to emulate, and, consequently, many research-minded teachers are preoccupied with descriptions of effective use of new textbooks, useful classroom techniques, and so on. There is an apparent need for more research that seeks to answer clear and specific research questions, adopts systematic data collection, and employs rigorous analysis techniques.

In summary, despite some progress and encouraging trends, research on ELT and applied linguistics in the PRC still leaves much to be desired. Ideally, all current and future developments of ELT in China should be based firmly on systematic research, monitoring and evaluation (Y. A. Wu, 2001). To improve the quality of research on primary and secondary FLT, efforts should be stepped up in the following respects. First, research methodology courses should be added to the pre-service training curriculums to prepare trainee teachers for further professional development. Second, greater research collaboration between school teachers and university-based researchers should be promoted so that the latter's expertise can be tapped in service of pre-college FLT. Third, more avenues for publishing research and disseminating research findings should be opened. Meanwhile, international publications of FLT

research (e.g., *ELT Journal* and *TESOL Quarterly*) should be made increasingly accessible to pre-college teachers of foreign languages to encourage development of a research culture. Finally, cooperation in research between Chinese teachers and their foreign counterparts should be strengthened so as to exploit both parties' advantages and promote international professional exchanges.

Conclusion

The PRC's reform and modernization program has brought about remarkable progress in ELT within a quarter of a century. China is gaining English proficiency very rapidly (Hertling, 1996). Although there are still many problems in the field of ELT, some of which exist on an immense scale and are not easy to solve, tremendous efforts are being made with great resolve. With the entry of the PRC into the WTO, there is a greater commitment to, and stronger enthusiasm for, raising the quality of ELT at all levels. This opens up a host of opportunities for collaboration between the PRC and foreign countries, especially those that have valuable expertise in ELT (Maley, 1995). It is clearly a win-win situation. Given the breath-taking size of the English-learning population in the country, there is huge commercial interest for foreign collaborators. To conclude this report with the same words Maley (1995) used to conclude his commissioned report on the PRC for interested British providers of ELT goods and services:

Opportunity knocks. But it may only knock once.

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Japan Country Report

Language and English Education in Japan

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The Population and the Language Situation in Japan

The total population of Japan is 126,686,000 (Management and Coordination Agency, 1999). This figure includes 1,556,000 non-Japanese residents, who constitute about 1% of the total population. Among this 1%, Korean nationals are about 41%; Chinese, 19%; Brazilians, 14%; Filipinos 7%; followed by Americans, Peruvians, Thais, Indonesians, British, and Vietnamese (Ministry of Justice, 1999). The number of non-Japanese studying Japanese in Japan was 93,331 in 1999. This was an increase of approximately 8 times since 1975 when the number was 10,429 (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 1999). This can be attributed to the globalization of the world economy and cultural exchanges: more people want to learn Japanese for commercial (employment) purposes.

Japanese is the only common language among this largely homogeneous population. It is used by almost all residents in Japan, although regional and social varieties of spoken Japanese exist. Minority languages have not attracted much attention in society nor in the academic field; there are attempts to "re-position Japan as a multilingual nation" (Maher, 2001). The movement to demythologize the monolingual image of Japan is exemplified by works such as Noguchi and Fotos (2001) that try to shed light on minority language cases including those of Ainu and Okinawan indigenous peoples, or those of Brazilian immigrants. However, the number of minority language users remains very small. For example, Ainu is the only officially recognized minority language in Japan. Yet, according to a Hokkaido government report, the Ainu population residing in Hokkaido is 23,767 (Hokkaido Government, 1999), and the number of the Ainu speakers is estimated to be less than 100.

The term Kokugo, literally "the national language," is the standard Japanese language taught as a subject for Japanese students from the 1st to the 12th grade. In addition to the modern Japanese language, subjects taught at junior high and high school levels include classical Japanese (Kobun) and classical Chinese reading (Kanbun). All of these are required for entrance examinations for many universities. It is a common belief that the literacy rate in Japan is almost 100%, and basic literacy has not received much attention as a social or an educational issue.

In addition to Japanese language requirements, a foreign language is required from the 7th through 12th years of study (junior high and high school). This standard is set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Although English is not compulsory, English is chosen by almost all the students as a subject to meet the foreign language requirement, and English is taught at all secondary schools. At the university level, a second foreign language such as French, German or Chinese tends to be chosen in addition to English. English is often associated with the idea of "internationalization" of Japan, and the language plays an important role in the screening process of education, job searches and company promotions.

A Brief History of English Education in Japan

William Adams (1564-1620) was probably the first English-speaking person to land in Japan. His ship reached Bungo (now Usaki City, in Oita Prefecture) on April 19, 1600. It was almost two hundred years later when English was officially taught for the first time. This came about following the landing of a British ship (the Phaethon) at Nagasaki in 1808. While Dutch, French and Russian were the languages of the West studied in Japan until this incident, the Tokugawa government ordered interpreters to start studying English after the British arrived. The most important incident influencing the spread of English in Japanese society was the Japan-US Treaty of Amity and Commerce signed in 1858 following Commodore Perry's visits, by which the US-Japan diplomatic relations officially began (Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

During the early Meiji era (from 1867), Japan opened its door to the West. As opposed to the earlier forced opening, Japan now stopped its isolation policy and welcomed westerners, namely British and Americans. The modern system of formal education was inaugurated in 1872 (MEXT, 1980). In the 1890's, the language education system was formally established for middle and higher secondary schools. English became the main foreign language, while French and German were offered in higher schools as a second foreign language. Language study was closely associated with modernization (meaning "Westernization"). English was mostly taught by native English speakers, many of whom were Christian missionaries. English-medium classes were held at institutions of higher learning to encourage students to absorb information from abroad by reading foreign documents.

However, as Japan won the Japan-Sino War and the Japan-Russo War, the rapid Westernization movement slowed down and nationalism emerged. During the previous era, everything from the West was thought to be advanced while the traditional Japanese system was looked at in a more negative light. However, at this time, blind worship toward the West came to be criticized; the use of Japanese, instead of English, was promoted as a medium of higher education under the slogan "education in Japan in Japanese" (Inoue, then Minister of Education). In the early 1900's, foreign texts and teachers were gradually replaced by Japanese texts and teachers. Japanese scholars who had studied abroad became influential in the field of English education. English became primarily a subject of study, mainly learned for the purpose of reading written texts rather than as a means of communication. Even after the nationalistic movement of this period ended, English was widely adopted as a screening process for elite education. As a result, the so-called Juken Eigo (English for the purpose of the entrance examination) became the main goal of learners rather than English for communication. The focus of their learning was on the memorization of grammar and vocabulary for translating English into Japanese, with little attention paid to pronunciation or use (Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

In 1921, Harold E. Palmer, an English linguist and specialist in language teaching, was invited to Japan as an advisor to the Ministry of Education.

Various schools in Japan experimented with his "Oral and Direct Methods." Since they required a much higher command of English than most Japanese teachers of English could handle, the methods were not generally used.

Shortly before and during World War II, the study of English was discouraged because it was the "enemy language." However, this policy was completely reversed after the war. The Japanese school system was drastically reorganized by the General Headquarters. Formal schooling since then has consisted of six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, three years of high school and four years of college (the 6-3-3-4 system). English again came to be considered a tool for practical communication for some and was adopted as a subject in the educational reforms of 1947. In 1954 more than half of the junior high graduates (equivalent to the 9th grade) went on to high school, and by 1956 English was adopted as a subject for the entrance examinations to all high schools in Japan. Although English was not a required subject by law, it became a de facto requirement for students in order to enter high schools. As there was competition to enter prestigious schools, the motivation of the learners again centered on the acquisition of Juken Eigo.

Today, education is compulsory through the third year of junior high school (9th grade), and 97% of all Japanese junior high school graduates go on to high school (MEXT, b_menu, n.d.). Any foreign language can theoretically be taught to fulfill the foreign language requirement in junior high and high schools, but in practice almost all schools offer only English for this requirement.

In general, primary schools do not offer any foreign language courses, and secondary schools do not offer foreign languages other than English. Therefore, very few primary school students take English classes, while most junior and senior high school students do (more than 99%). However, starting in April 2002, because of guideline reforms (MEXT, a_menu, n.d.), many primary schools will start teaching English, mostly oral English without relying on the writing system, as a part of the "international understanding" education classes.

Most universities have an English section as part of their entrance examinations. This drives the study of English at the high school level just as the English entrance examination for high school drives English study in junior high. A foreign language (or two) is required for many university degrees, and most students take English. Some universities today are emphasizing the communicative aspects of English, though the majority of English classes are still traditional reading classes.

In addition to formal settings of English learning, many Japanese study English at private English conversation schools or in English courses offered by their companies. Both radio and television offer English courses for different levels of ability. Study-abroad programs are also widely available for learners both in formal schools and private institutions.

An Overview of the Current Educational System in Japan

In 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law were enacted. The 6-3-3-4 system of formal education was established with a goal of equal opportunity in education (MEXT, Formal Education, n.d.). This Fundamental Law and the 6-3-3-4 system still apply (see Figure 2.1). In Japan, many children attend kindergarten for one, two or even three years before entering elementary school. All children are required to go to elementary school at the age of six and junior high school at the age of twelve. The total nine years of schooling is compulsory, and almost all students finish junior high. Ninety-seven percent of all junior high students go on to senior high school for three years at the age of 15. Almost half (49.1%) of the senior high school graduates go to university or junior college when they are 18 years old. Many students study at a preparatory school (*yobiko*) or at home for one or more years after high school, trying to pass the entrance exam to a prestigious university. University education lasts for four years leading to an undergraduate degree.

A new system for universities began in 1949. A junior college system was established on a provisional basis in 1950 and on a permanent basis in 1964, following an amendment to the School Education Law. Colleges of technology were established in 1962 to provide lower secondary school graduates with a five-year system of continued education. At first, these colleges were limited to offering courses in engineering and mercantile marine studies, but following an amendment to the School Education Law in 1991, they are now able to offer courses in other fields, as well as non-degree courses for graduates (MEXT, Formal Education, n.d.). Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 show the increasing rates of enrollment at upper secondary, junior colleges, and universities. As of May 1995, total enrollment was 8,370: 246 in elementary (primary) schools and 9,295,335 in secondary (lower and upper combined) (MEXT, Formal Education, n.d.). A breakdown of the total number of educational institutions, students and teachers can be found in Appendix A.

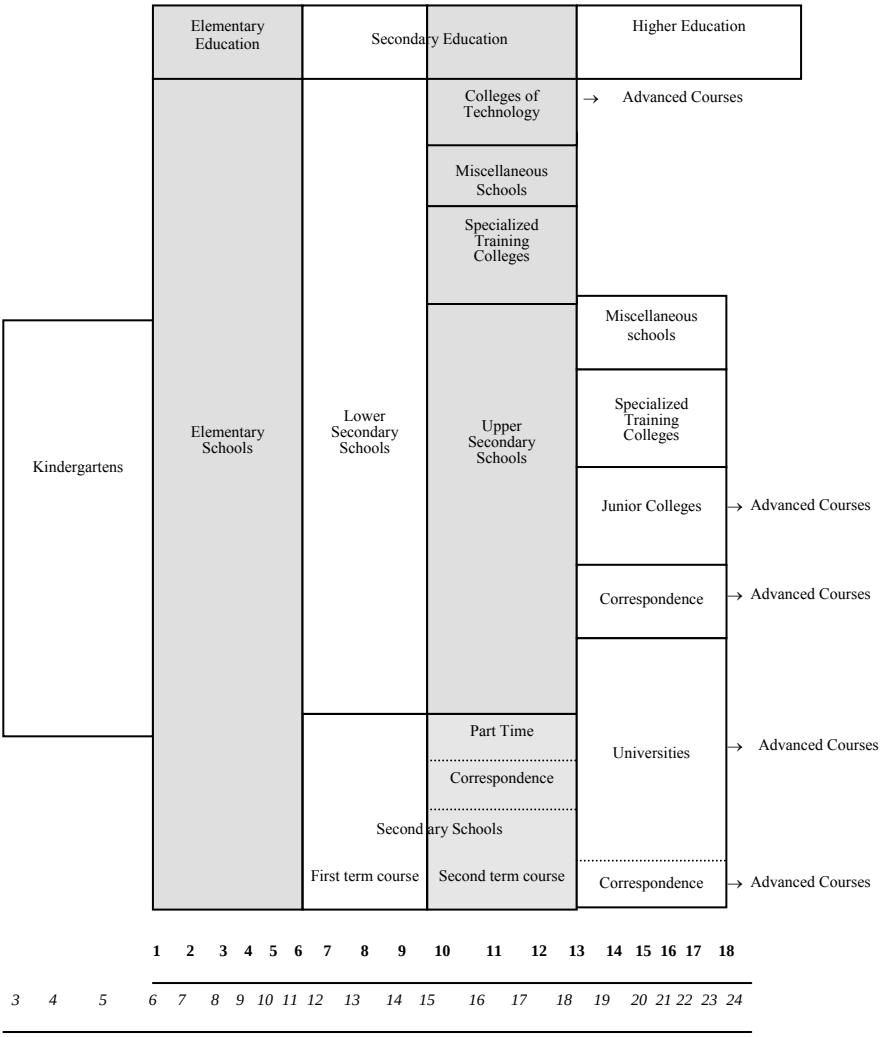
Table 2.1 Increases in enrollment at different stages of education, by proportion of age group

Year	Kindergarten	Elementary	From lower to upper secondary	Continuing for higher education*
1955	20.1	99.77	51.5	10.1
1965	41.3	99.81	71.7	17.0
1975	63.5	99.91	91.9	37.8
1985	63.7	99.99	93.8	37.6
1995	63.2	99.99	95.8	45.2

Source: MEXT, b_menu (n.d.)

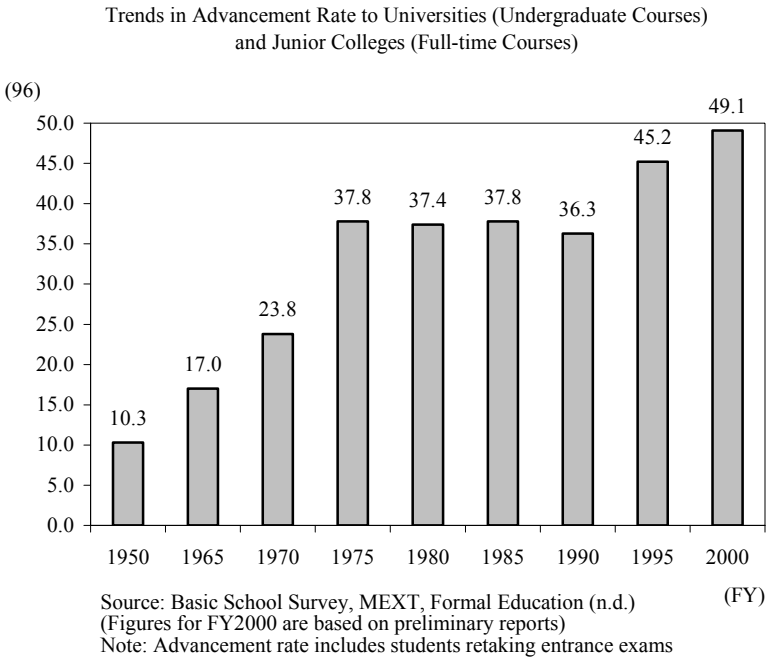
*Higher education in this case includes junior colleges and universities.

Figure 2.1 Overview of the Japanese school system



Source: MEXT, Formal Education (n.d.)

Figure 2.2 Post-secondary enrollment advances



MEXT is currently addressing the advancement of educational reform with a view toward four perspectives:

- enhancing "education of the heart"
- realizing that education develops individuality and provides diverse choices
- respecting autonomy of individual schools
- promoting change at the university level and encouraging research

This information is being promoted to the public in various forms. For example, MEXT has posted information on its web site to answer public questions. The agency states:

> In the past, we have aimed to develop a willingness to attempt active communication in a foreign language. In future, focusing more on actual speaking and listening, we are working to develop the basic and practical ability to communicate in terms of daily conversation and simple information exchange.... In addition, children at elementary schools will also learn English conversation through introduction of hands-on learning appropriate for elementary school students. (MEXT Website, Formal Education, n.d.)

One on-going attempt at encouraging more communication in English language learning settings is the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program, which has been running since 1987. Native speakers are hired to team teach with local staff as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), usually at secondary but some also work in elementary schools. In addition, ALTs participate in school activities, interacting with the staff and students. The number of ALTs has risen steadily since the program's inception: from 813 in 1987 to 5,241 as of July, 1997 (MEXT, Formal Education, n.d.). Furthermore, as we head towards the 21st century, globalization and the expansion of information technologies have become particularly urgent issues. As a result, it will be necessary to further enrich foreign language education and computer education (emphasis added by author).

Settings of English Language Learning in Japan

In this section, the current formal English learning settings are described in junior high school, high school and university (adapted from Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

Junior High School English Education

Most Japanese students start learning English when they enter the first year of junior high school at age twelve. MEXT does not stipulate English as the only foreign language taught in public junior high schools—learners can choose other foreign languages. However, almost all junior high schools teach only English as a subject to fulfill a foreign language requirement because English is a major subject along with math and Japanese for high school and university entrance. In addition to studying English at school, many students attend juku in the evening after school where they are trained to solve questions for the entrance examinations (in the Tokyo area, 75% of the junior high students attend juku).[1]

Public schools offered five hours per week of English until 1981, when the number of hours was reduced to three (Table 2.2). The content of the English courses offered in public junior high schools is controlled by MEXT guidelines. According to the guidelines, the purpose of English education is to give students a practical command of written and spoken English and to promote understanding of the cultural and social backgrounds of English-speaking peoples. English is also intended to help students develop individuality and social, civic, and vocational competence, and to understand the democratic heritage, since democracy developed, to an important extent, in English-speaking countries (Kimizuka, 1968). The guidelines prescribe what sounds,

[1] *Juku* and *yobiko* are similar since both are intended to prepare students for high-stakes entrance examinations. However, *juku* are usually part-time, after school classes for current high school students, whereas *yobiko* are full-time, day schools for students who have finished high school.

sentence patterns, words and grammatical categories are to be taught in junior high English classes each year. For example, up to 1,050 words can be taught in junior high school, and a list of 490 words must be taught. The guidelines also control which aspects of culture, geography, history, and so on, should be included. They also supply specific activities for developing different skills (Imura, 1978).

Textbooks used in junior high English classes must be approved by the Ministry. Draft copies of proposed junior high textbooks are examined by Ministry officials and "outside experts," mostly school teachers and university professors, to see whether the texts conform to the guidelines. Textbooks for public junior high schools are chosen by each district for all of its schools, with the advice of the prefectural board of education. Thus, individual teachers in public schools have no control over the texts used in their classes. There are only five different junior high school textbooks used in public schools, and one of them is used in half of all junior high schools throughout the country. Students and teachers complain that these textbooks put too much emphasis on grammatical aspects and not enough on interesting content (Imura, 1978).

Table 2.2 Historical overview of changes in English class hours

Year	***Old System*** / ***New System***	***1*** / ***1***	***2*** / ***2***	***3*** / ***3***	***4*** / ***1***	***5*** / ***2***	***3***
1881		6	6	6	6	5	
1886		6	6	7	5	5	
1894		6	7	7	7	7	
1901		7	7	7	7	6	
1911		6	7	7	7	7	
1919		6	7	7	5	5	
1931		5	5	6	2-5	2-5	
1943		4	4	(4)	4-7	4-7	
1951		(4-6)	(4-6)	(4-6)	(5)	(5)	(5)
1981		(3)	(3)	(3)	(4)	(5-8)	(3+∞)
1993		(3-4)	(3-4)	(3-4)	(2-6)	(6)	(4-6)
2002		304	3-5	3-5	5	5	2-8

Notes: Numbers in parenthesis indicate electives. "Old System" indicates junior high for five years, and "New System" indicates the current 3-3, junior high-high school system
Source: Adapted from *Eigo Kyoikushi Shiryo 1*.

Class size is relatively large—about forty students in each class. Many students start studying English in junior high school with eager anticipation. Unfortunately, due to the emphasis on memorization and learning about English, rather than using English for the purpose of communication, many lose interest. In addition, it has been pointed out that high school teachers are, as a rule, better qualified than junior high teachers (Kumabe, 1978).

High School English Education

High school English classes are also controlled by the MEXT guidelines. The goals of English classes listed in the guidelines apply to high school English courses, and as in junior high schools, the content of courses (the vocabulary, grammatical items, etc.) are prescribed for each year. A maximum of 1,900 words may be introduced (1,800 after 2002), so a high school graduate has usually learned fewer than three thousand words. The content of high school English courses is heavily influenced by the content of university entrance examinations. University entrance examinations are said to emphasize reading and grammatical aspects, and not give enough attention to the oral/aural skills. This may explain the emphasis on reading and grammar found in junior high and high schools.

Public high schools offer four hours of English per week. English I, which students take during their first year of high school, is an extension of junior high school English. English II (reading) is offered during the second and third years of high school. It is supplemented by "Oral Communication," "Reading," and "Writing" classes. Private schools often have more hours of English per week than do public schools. They typically offer five to six hours of reading and one to two hours of conversation. Some high schools also offer supplementary English lessons before or after school or during vacations to help prepare students for university entrance exams. Many students also attend classes at *jukus* or have a private tutor. In the Tokyo area, 33% of the high school students attend *jukus* (*Nihon Kodomo o Mamoru Kai*, 1984).

A typical high school English class is based on a reader and grammar book. Like junior high textbooks, textbooks at the high school level must be approved by the MEXT. In the case of high school, textbooks are chosen by the school rather than the district. Still, the individual teacher has little control over the textbooks.

University English Courses

The English score is usually given the highest weight in the entrance examination. It is believed that students must read books in English at the university level and that the English score is highly correlated with students' analytical and logical thinking skills. Although there are no guidelines for the foreign language requirement, unlike in junior-high or high school, most four-year universities require all students to take two foreign languages. Each school may reduce or increase, or even eliminate, language requirements to provide students with more flexibility in the entire curriculum. Non-English majors usually take four to twelve credits in the first foreign language (usually English) and four or more credits in the second foreign language (usually French, Chinese, or German). Many teachers choose their textbooks according to their own interests. In other words, there is virtually no control by MEXT over what university professors can do in classes.

Other settings of English language teaching and learning include private language schools and company training programs.

Private Language Schools

Many learners attend private language schools where instructors are usually native English speakers. According to a survey conducted by NOVA, the largest private language school in Japan, the top five purposes of learners were given in the following order: career, travel, job, study abroad/homestay, hobby. These private institutions give learners opportunities to practice English speaking and listening skills in a private lesson or in a small group. They also offer specific courses for airline, hotel or computer business. Classes specifically targeted for small children are also common.

Students are usually placed according to their level rather than their age or grade level. Many native English speakers are hired as teachers in language schools, either part-time or full-time, the majority of whom are from the US, the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada.

Company Training Programs

Language classes, usually English conversation and sometimes business writing, are also provided by companies in the international business field. Most of these companies contract with private language schools. Classes are held during working hours or before/after working hours. Standardized test such as STEP, TOEFL or TOEIC are used to select employees for opportunities to study abroad or promotion. In addition, some companies offer intercultural training for international business and successful social interaction.

Teacher Training Programs and Teacher Qualifications

English teachers are trained in the school of education or in the teacher training course at the university level. All junior-high and high school teachers are required to have a teaching certificate, and they are employed based on an examination by boards of education for public schools. National requirements for the teaching certificate include six credits in English linguistics, six in English literature, two in composition and conversation, sixteen in related subjects such as American literature, and fourteen in professional courses which include educational psychology, methods, educational principles and practice teaching (Torii, 1983). These requirements do not emphasize teaching methods, practice teaching or performance in English. For example, many composition classes only require students to translate independent sentences from English into Japanese, not to write a meaningful essay. Methods classes are usually too large to give students the opportunity to actually practice using the methods that they learn. Because these classes must cover the history and theory of English teaching, the law as it relates to English education, the course of study, and so

on, as well as methods, little time can be spent studying or practicing teaching methods.

In order to be hired, a graduate who has received a teaching certificate must also pass a prefectural or municipal hiring examination. Hiring examinations are also said to emphasize theoretical knowledge rather than performance. Several times more graduates receive certificates than are hired to teach.

University faculty members are not required to have a teaching certificate, but they should have appropriate academic qualifications, which in theory means a doctorate or a master's degree plus some university teaching and research experience. Universities also hire many part-time language teachers, both native and non-native speakers of English.

For technical schools, language schools, *juku*, companies, and instructional programs for children, there is no standard requirement. Many schools require an undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement. Since language schools emphasize English conversation, native (or native-like) speakers of English are hired. *Juku*, which emphasize preparation for entrance examinations and supporting education for school classes, usually hire Japanese teachers who have high teaching skills.

Current Issues of English Education in Japan

The interdependency in the world economy inevitably demands more people in the work force who are capable of communicating with people from other countries. As English plays a major role in many aspects such as trade, science and entertainment, the recent guidelines of English language education in Japan issued by MEXT clearly emphasizes the development of communicative skills of learners of English. The goal of foreign language education is identified as "to promote active participation in communicating in a foreign language," while it used to be "to promote interests in language." (Takahashi, 2000: 6). One example of this new policy is the introduction of a new course at the high school level, "Oral Communication."

This trend, emphasizing the practical side of English, was accelerated in the most recent guidelines, issued in 1999. Listening and speaking skills are to be emphasized in junior high school English education, while speaking and writing skills are considered important aspects to promote *hyogenryoku* (the ability to express oneself). In 1998 "foreign language" finally became an officially required subject in junior high schools, which ended the discussion, more than one century old, regarding pros and cons of requiring a foreign language in the compulsory education system. Entrance examinations are currently being reviewed by some universities to solve technical issues of introducing a listening comprehension part in the near future. Introduction of a listening component is expected to send a message to high schools to give more emphasis to the communicative aspect of language learning.

The most heated discussion surrounding English education in Japan was triggered by a 1998 guideline which opened up the possible introduction of

English as a subject in the third grade in elementary schools. The title of the course is "Education for International Understanding." The current starting age of English education (12 years old) in Japan is higher than most countries in the world (see Table 2.3). English instruction for children (elementary school students or younger children) has been mainly private so far.

Table 2.3 Years of English education in Asian countries

Country	*starting age*	*duration of study*	End of Compulsory Education			End of Secondary Education		Late
			age	*% of learners*	*Time/ week (mins)*	*age*	*% of learners*	*Time/ week (mins)*
Hong Kong	6	13	14	*	320	18	*	320
Philippines	7	10	13	100	400	16	100	200
Korea	8	10	14	*	200	17	*	*
Finland	9	10	15	99	90	18	98	150
Israel	9	9	16	100	180	18	100	180
Russia	10	7	15	55	120	17	55	120
Thailand	10	8	13	95	200	17	95	400
Norway	10	9	15	100	135	19	45	225
France	10	9	16	96	180	19	97	180
Japan	**12**	**6**	**14**	**100**	**135**	**17**	******	**200**
Iran	12	6	14	100	200	18	100	180
Switzerland[a]	14	6	16	70	**	19	50	**

[a] French Speaking
* No information given
** Figures vary
Source: *Sekai 25kakoku no gaikokugo kyouiku* (1999).

In addition to the introduction of English in elementary schools, the discussion of officialization of English as a second language was initiated by the Prime Minister's advisory committee under the ex-Obuchi cabinet (cf. Funabashi, 2000). During the long-term economic depression in Japan in the 1990s, it seems that more people were realizing the importance of English education as a tool for national security, although strong opposition to officializing English as a second language was also expressed (Iino, 2000). The discussion seemed to fade after the death of Obuchi in 2000. Currently, English education in Japan is criticized for its inefficiency evidenced by the fact that the average score of TOEFL is lower than that of neighboring Asian countries (see Appendix C) despite years of study. Although the low average score of TOEFL may be partially due to the large number of examination participants in Japan as compared to the smaller "elite" participants in other countries, the figures do not show superiority of the Japanese English education system in any way.

It has also been pointed out that the level of students in general is decreasing in Japan largely due to 1) the shrinking birth-rate, 2) the increasing number of students who are able go on to higher education, and the 3) *yutori kyoiku* policy ("relax" education policy, e.g., lesser schooling hours) by MEXT. All in all, this creates less competition at the entrance examinations.

It is expected that universities pay more attention to the fact that almost half of the high school graduates enter universities (including junior colleges) and to what aspects of English language proficiency are expected of them at the entry level. This directly questions the content of the English education curriculum of both high school and university levels, and the way of selecting applicants during the entrance examinations, i.e., whether the transition from high school level to university level is coordinated at all. If the goal of English language education is to promote the communicative aspect of English rather than English as a content subject, universities must reform their ways to measure the applicants' English proficiency by introducing new measurement such as listening comprehension in the entrance examinations or interviews to measure speaking skills. Despite the fact that there are many technical issues such as facilities for listening comprehension tests and the marking efficiency and fairness of subjective examinations, some universities have taken initiatives to introduce listening sections. National universities as well as some private universities might introduce a listening section in the standardized entrance examination in the near future.

While Japan is not yet facing minority language/group issues as seriously as other countries, the interdependency of global economy will result in a situation where more and more Japanese people will interact with people from other countries both within Japan and abroad. English education in this regard needs much more attention from wider perspectives in Japanese society.

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Appendix A: Total Number of Educational Institutions, Students and Teachers (1995)

Type of institution	Number of institutions			
	Total	National	Local public	Private
Kinder garten	14,856	49	6, 168	8, 639
Elementary	24,548	73	24,302	173
Lower Secondary	11,274	78	10,551	645
Upper Secondary	5,501	17	4,164	1,320
Colleges of technology	62	54	5	3
Junior colleges	596	36	60	500
Universities	565	98	52	415
Special training colleges	3,476	152	219	3,105
Miscellaneous schools	2,821	3	59	2,759

Type of institution	Number of students			
	Total	National	Local public	Private
Kinder garten	1,808,432	6,778	361,662	1,439,992
Elementary	8,370,246	47,318	8,254,741	68,187
Lower Secondary	4,570,390	34,500	4,300,507	235,383
Upper Secondary	4,724,945	10,161	3,288,245	1,426,539
Colleges of technology	56,234	48,927	4,517	2,790
Junior colleges	498,576	13,735	24,134	460,647
Universities	2,546,649	598,726	83,812	1,864,114
Special training colleges	813,347	18,288	35,471	759,588
Miscellaneous schools	321,105	56	4,059	316,990

Type of institution	Number of full-time teachers			
	Total	National	Local public	Private
Kindergarten	102,992	293	24,921	77,778
Elementary	430,958	1,777.426,003	426,003,	3,178
Lower Secondary	271,020	1,679	257,870	11,471
Upper Secondary	281,117	634	215,230	65,253
Colleges of technology	4,306	3,748	386	172
Junior colleges	20,702	1,122	2,219	17,361
Universities	137,464	57,488	8,256	71,720
Special training colleges	36,433	780	2,524	33.,129
Miscellaneous schools	16,304	6	254	16,044

Source: MEXT (2000)

Appendix B: TOEFL Scores in Asian Countries

	Paper-based			Computer-based		
Country	No. of Examinees	Average Score	Order	No. of Examinees	Average Score	Order
Singapore	23	-	-	810	255	1
Philippines	92	584	1	7,461	234	3
India	30,658	583	2	7480	243	2
Sri Lanka	57	571	3	1,152	218	5
China	70,760	562	4	10,961	211	8
Nepal	71	560	5	1,327	205	10
Indonesia	87	545	6	7,956	203	12
Pakistan	6,274	542	7	1,986	228	4
Malaysia	218	536	8	2,058	218	5
Korea	61,667	535	9	14,862	198	15
Vietnam	531	530	10	1,232	196	17
Hong Kong	9,427	524	11	5,552	205	10
Bangladesh	3,885	515	12	725	214	7
Myanmar	867	515	13	199	207	9
Thailand	15,054	512	14	3,038	193	19
North Korea	336	510	15	1,043	178	23
Taiwan	32,967	510	16	10,071	194	18
Macao	556	506	17	141	201	14
Japan	100,453	501	18	20,554	188	21
Afghanistan	153	493	19	147	197	16
Cambodia	102	488	20	135	203	12
Laos	49	466	21	48	187	22
Mongol	17	-	-	259	191	20

Source: Educational Testing Service (1999-00).

Singapore Country Report

Policies on English Language Education and Economic Development

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Introduction

Among economists and those interested in economic development, Singapore is known for its rapid growth after World War II; however, among language specialists and educators, it is known for its well-established bilingual policy and high literacy rates. It is also recognized for governmental policies, sometimes controversial ones, which have been used to build up a new nation state from an inter-racial, largely immigrant, culture following the termination of colonization. In Singapore (as in many other contexts), language planning is inextricably intertwined with education, economic development and nation-building because it is strongly influenced by Singapore's socio-political history as well as perceptions of how best to foster economic stability and growth through employment and industrial development. The impetus and implementation of language policy, in tandem with economic and educational policy, have been driven by top-down forces. However, bottom-up processes based on social interaction, personal goals and "invisible language planning" (Pakir, 1997) have also been at work as seen in language shift, maintenance and indigenization. Although these bottom-up processes are sometimes in conflict with the policies of the government and educational system, they often work in concert.

This report will focus on Singapore's language planning and educational policy efforts with reference to the way these have been used for and supported by economic development and nation-building. A historical perspective will be used beginning with some social and political history and an overview of vital statistics. Subsequently, the development of the educational system will be described from the 1959's through the 1970's followed by a discussion of connections between economic initiatives and education/language planning. The impact of planning on language shift and language maintenance will be reviewed. The final sections report on current issues including discussion of language standards, educational expenditures and newer initiatives from the 90's (up to and including 2001). The emphasis throughout will be on language education, especially English language (EL) education, as an example of language planning, and on the way EL education is connected to economic development in the government discourse and life of Singaporeans.

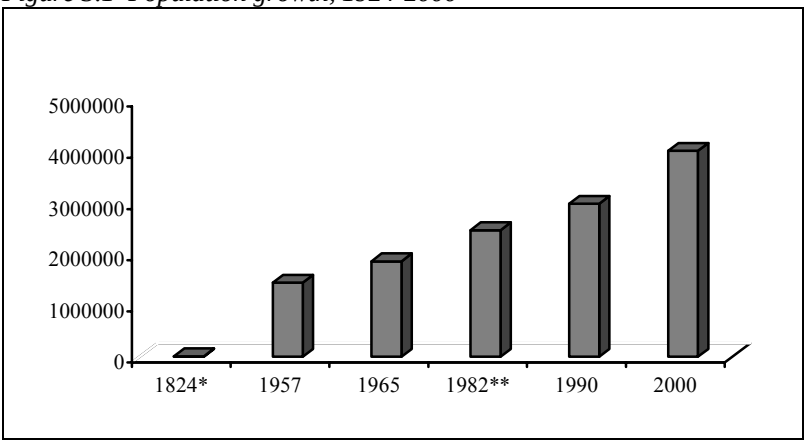
Historical Background and Demographics

Singapore is a former British colony in South East Asia, located just off the tip of Malaysia. Geographically, it is a small nation with one main island and several smaller ones comprising in total 647.5 square kilometers. Self-government was achieved after World War II, in 1959. This was followed in 1963 with the union of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (now Sabah) into a new federation, Malaysia. However, in 1965 Singapore separated

from Malaysia and established an independent nation (Ministry of Information and the Arts [MITA], 2000a).[1]

As shown in Figure 3.1, Singapore has undergone rapid population growth starting with 1,445,929 inhabitants in 1957 (census figures as found in Chew & Degani, 1969: 85), 1,864,000 in 1965 (Chew & Degani, 1969: 92) and increasing to 4.02 million in the year 2000 Census. The year 2000 figures show an increase of over one million from the 1990 census when the population was 2,986,500 (Singapore Department of Statistics [Singstat], 2000a). The ethnic make-up of Singapore has always been predominantly Chinese, with Malays and Indians as other major ethnic groups. Recent census figures show the current Chinese population as 76.8%, Malay as 13.9%, Indian as 7.9% and "Other," indicating other ethnic groups, as 1.4% (Sigstat, 2000a).[2] Resident population by ethnic group is shown in Table 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Population growth, 1924-2000



*The first population census was taken in 1824 (MITA, 1999: 9)
** A. Tan (1984: 55).

Currently, 74% of the population is made up of Singaporeans; one out of four residents is foreign. In contrast, Singaporeans made up 86.1% of the population in the 1990 census; thus, the percentage of non-Singaporeans residing in Singapore is on the rise. Paul Cheung, Chief Statistician, has noted that this increase is similar to what is happening in other large cities internationally (MITA, 2000b).

[1] A brief history with further details can be found at Singapore InfoMap: *History* (http://www.sg/flavour/profile/history/indexh.htm). A more personal account of this era can be found in Lee Kuan Yew's memoir, *The Singapore Story* (1998).

[2] For the year 2000 Census, basic population characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity, nationality) were taken from the register. Other data were taken from a 20% sample of the population, collected by Internet enumeration (solicited), computer-assisted telephone interviewing and field work. For an explanation of the census, including data collection and analysis methods, see the Singapore Department of Statistics web site (www.singstat.gov.sg).

Table 3.1 Resident population of Singapore by ethnic group, 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000	1990 %	2000 %
Total Population	2,705,115	3,263,209	100	100
Ethnic Chinese	2,102,795	2,505,379	77.7	76.8
Ethnic Malay	382,656	453,633	14.1	13.9
Ethnic Indian	190,907	257,791	7.1	7.9
Other ethnicities	28,757	46,406	1.1	1.4

Source: Singstat (2000a).

Literacy and Education

Singapore has four official languages: English, Mandarin (often referred to simply as "Chinese"), Malay and Tamil. English is considered to be the "working language" of the country, but all four official languages are taught in schools from Primary One through Secondary.[3] Literacy rates in at least one official language are high, with 93% of the population over 15 years of age considered to be literate (Singstat, Dec. 1, 2000b).[4] This is an increase from 89% in 1990. There is a concomitant increase in English literacy: 70.9% of the population is literate in English only or English plus another language as compared with 62.8% who claimed English literacy in 1990. In addition, bi- or multilingual literacy has increased in the last ten years (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Bi- and multilingual literacy in Singapore, 1990 and 2000

	Ethnicity									
Official Languages	Total		Chinese		Malay		Indian		Others	
	1990	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*
English	62.8	70.9	59.2	67.6	72.0	79.7	80.2	87.0	92.2	90.4
Chinese	62.2	64.7	79.1	82.2	0.5	0.3	1.0	0.7	5.4	5.9
Malay	16.3	16.8	1.6	2.8	95.9	97.3	27.1	24.9	31.1	26.8
Tamil	3.7	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	50.5	51.3	0.2	0.3

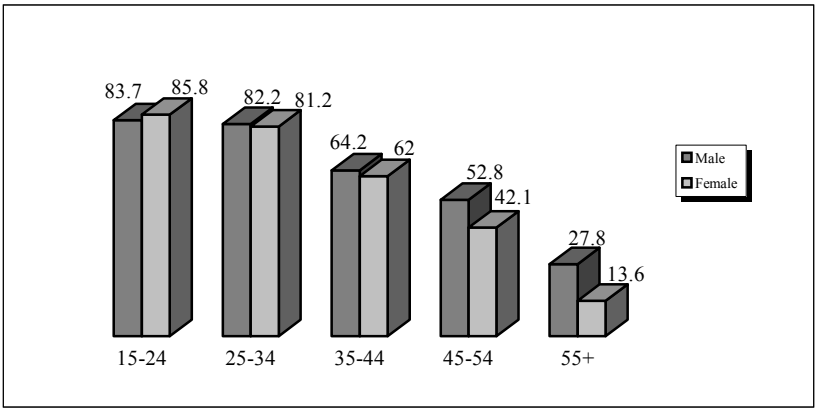
Figures shown are percentages of the literate resident population for each group.
Source: Singstat (2000b).

School enrollment is high, 98% in the 7-17 year age group. Enrollment figures are little changed from the reported 97% enrollment for 1990. The high enrollment can be considered a sign of the high value placed on education since school attendance has not been compulsory up to now. The figures for those receiving higher educational qualifications is shifting upwards: 53% of those

[3] This point is emphasized in the *Improving Primary School Education* report written in 1991 (Review Committee).
[4] *Literate* is defined as able to "read with understanding," usually with reference to the daily newspapers (Singstat, n.d., "*Definitions*").

aged 15-24 complete upper secondary or have higher qualifications as compared with 27% in 1990; 49% of those 25-39 have more education than in 1990 when the reported figure for this age group was 18% (see Figure 3.2). Thus, the younger portion of the work force is more educated overall. There has also been a move toward increased training among those who have not finished secondary school or have not gone on for post-secondary education. Among those with secondary education or less, 13% engaged in further training in 2000 as compared with 9.2% in 1990.

Figure 3.2 Proportion of population with secondary education, 2000



Source: Singstat (2001c).

A Compulsory Education Bill was passed on October 9, 2000 which requires all Singapore children born in Singapore after January 1, 1966 to attend six years of primary school (MITA, 2000c).[5] The Bill was initiated by comments from the Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong (PM Goh), who noted that as much as 3% of the Primary One cohort were not registered in national schools. The government considers that it is essential for all children to receive a basic education which will provide a common core of knowledge and a basis for further education, as well as building national cohesion through a common educational experience (Committee on Compulsory Education, 2000).

Language Policy: Historical Overview

Singapore is multilingual in policy and in practice. "Multilingual" in the case of Singapore means that different languages are used by different individuals across various contexts and that bi- or multilingualism is fostered by educational policy. As noted above, there are four Official Languages and one National Language. The National Language is Malay; the Official Languages

[5] There are some exceptions to this bill including those who attend religious schools, those who receive exemptions for home schooling, and those with disabilities who require special education.

are English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil (MITA, 2000d). English is considered to be the "official working language" (K.Y. Lee, 2000a). Mandarin, Malay and Tamil are considered to be the "Mother Tongues" for the three dominant ethnic groups, as discussed below.

The establishment of Malay as the National Language is rooted in the social and political history of Singapore as well as its geographic location. After World War II, Singapore was under British rule, as it had been before the war.6 At that time, education was differentiated by language and ethnic group, with each ethnic group looking toward their heritage country for standards. English education was supported by the British; Chinese education, though dominant in number of enrolled students (see Table 3.3), was relatively neglected by those who governed. Employment opportunities favored those with an English education. Therefore, as de Souza (1980) has pointed out, the number of students enrolled in the different streams did not correspond with employment opportunities after schooling.

Table 3.3 Enrollment in streams of education in 1950

Stream (by ethnicity/language)	No. of Pupils
Chinese	72, 951
English	49, 690
Malay	8, 579
Tamil	1,205

Source: de Souza (1980: 204).

Educational, economic and political concerns came together in *The All-Party Report* (All-Party Committee on Chinese Education [All-Party Committee], 1956). Initially assigned to look at the situation of Chinese education, the All-Party Committee used the report to establish basic principles for a national education system in Singapore.[7] As Bokhorst-Heng has noted, "The central premise of the All-Party Committee's recommendations was that diversity was problematic" (2000: 156). The report argued for creating unity out of diversity through establishing a common language and through bi- or trilingual education. Although many post-colonial countries abandoned the language of the colonizers upon independence, *The All-Party Report* emphasized the potential use of English for inter-ethnic communication as well as for commerce and trade with other countries.[8] For policy makers, English was seen as a tool to foster ethnic cooperation rather than an implement of colonization. The choice was controversial, but the Committee supported their ideas with reference to social integration through a lingua franca that was not the mother tongue of any one group. In effect, the report initiated Singapore's bilingual education policy.

[6] During the war, Singapore was occupied by Japanese forces. See *Singapore Country Report, 2000: History* (Singapore Info Map, n.d., http://www.sg) for more details.
[7] A historical list of important educational reports in Singapore is given in Appendix A.
[8] For an example of a contrasting case in a neighboring country, see Ożóg's (1993) discussion of bilingualism in Malaysia.

Somewhat paradoxically, at the same time that arguments were being presented for including English as an official language and lingua franca, *The All-Party Report* also called for universal learning of Malay as a language of national unity (i.e., unity with Malaya). A proposal to teach Malay in school and to use Malay as a medium of instruction was made as well as proposals to teach English and use English plus Mother Tongues as media of instruction.

Self-government was established in 1959 and efforts to merge Singapore with Malaya (now Malaysia) were begun. A major policy document, *The Tasks Ahead: PAP's Five Year Plan,* detailed future plans for Singapore.[9] Economy, education and language were all discussed in depth. With reference to the learning and use of Malay, *The Tasks Ahead* stated, "The study of the Malay language will not only act as a bridge that will span simultaneously our four streams of education but it will also help to cross the Straits of Johore into the Federation" (People's Action Party [PAP], 1959: 4). At this stage in Singapore's historical development, Malay was given greater status and prestige than it had been previously: it was taught as a second language for all non-Malays; teachers were required to pass a qualifying exam in Malay; Malay-medium secondary schools were started; and a National Language and Culture Institute was established for the development of Malay (de Souza, 1980: 209-210).

The Tasks Ahead also laid out a plan for a bilingual society with multilingual education following the principles given in the earlier *All-Party Report* (1956).

> At least two of the following languages, English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil should be the media of instruction in their respective schools, and that language teaching should be of the best possible standards, so that the future educational system of Singapore will produce students equally conversant in two, if not three of those languages. (All Party Committee, 1956: 10, as cited in de Souza, 1980: 207)

Four educational streams were established, one for each official language. The rationale for this decision was not only one of unity (inter-ethnic unity within Singapore and unification with Malaya) but also of economic benefit: a better educated workforce was needed for the planned industrialization. "Our education problem cannot be approached merely from the academic or conventional view-point of education experts. It must be considered in relation to our political and social needs. There cannot be education for education's sake, like art for art's sake. Education must serve a purpose" (*The Tasks Ahead*, Part 2, 1959: 1-2).

Despite the efforts at unification, Singapore separated from Malaya in 1965. Thus, the need for universal knowledge of Malay among Singaporeans, as part of confederation with Malaya, was eliminated. The need for a lingua franca to unify the multiethnic/multilingual population of Singapore was not

[9] The PAP (People's Action Party) emerged as the dominant party at this time and has remained so up to the present.

diminished, however, and establishment of such a language through education was still part of government thinking and policy making. The Republic of Singapore Independence Act (1965) upheld Malay as the National Language; English, Tamil, Mandarin and Malay were established as Official Languages in Singapore and as media of instruction in schools (Yip, Eng, & Yap, 1990). Use of English, already significant in commerce, law and government, continued to grow and was fostered by the bilingual education policy of the new nation.

Development of a Bilingual Policy

Bilingualism was to play a role in both ethnic and national identity. By offering instruction in the ethnic language, to maintain ethnic identity and culture, as well as instruction in English, to prepare for work in the industrialized and international trading economy, the government planned to eliminate the "problem" of multiple languages and ethnic identity. This was not easily achieved:

> We realised that English had to be the language of the workplace and the common language. As an international trading community, we would not make a living if we used Malay, Chinese, or Tamil. With English, no race would have an advantage. But it was too sensitive an issue for us to make immediate changes. To announce that all had to learn English when each race was intensely and passionately committed to its own mother tongue would have been disastrous. So we left the position as it was, with four official languages—Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English. (K. Y. Lee, 2000b: 170)

The All-Party Report (All-Party Committee, 1956) was instrumental in establishing a policy which maintained vernacular language schools as different "streams" but worked toward a common curriculum and parity in education (de Souza, 1980; Yip et al., 1990). It explicitly connected official languages with languages of instruction and the development of national cohesion, stating, for example, "Without one or more common languages officially encouraged in Singapore and offered in the schools, the ideal of unifying the various races into one people cannot be realized" (All-Party Committee, 1956: 9). The intertwined themes of national cohesion, economic development, and ethnic identity thread through the public discourse on language education from this time on. As the Secretary of State for Education, Aline Wong (2000), stated, "From the start, the independent government recognized that education is not just a means to train a workforce, it is also a most effective means to build social stability and a sense of national identity among the diverse population."

As noted above, under the British prior to World War II, there had been no unified educational system. Each ethnic group (including sub-groups within the

three main ethnicities) established their own schools using their respective vernacular languages.[10] Yip et al. point out,

> By subsidizing English medium schools and leaving the Chinese community to bear the full burden of financing Chinese medium schools, and by allowing parents the freedom of choice over the language-stream for their children, the British were seen by the Chinese community as setting out to destroy the culture and language of the Chinese. (1990: 4)

In the post-war/pre-unification era, the British had required that all schools devote one-third of curricular time to English, exacerbating the Chinese communities' suspicion that their language and culture were being pushed out. As more English medium schools were built and greater job opportunities were offered to those with an English education, Chinese students started to migrate to the English schools (de Souza, 1980; Yip et al., 1990; Lim & Gopinathan, 1990). While Pakir has noted that parents opted to send their children to English-medium schools because they realized this held "the key to a better future for their children" (1997: 61), Wilson (1978: 142, as found in Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 144) has also pointed out that there were insufficient places in vernacular schools so parents did not have entirely free choice if they wanted education for their children. This was particularly true in the early days of the nation, in the phase of "quantitative expansion." Thus there were both push and pull forces encouraging parents to send children to English-medium schools with growing antagonism toward the English schools and the use of English as medium of instruction.

Employment opportunity was foregrounded as a way to establish social stability (cf. Goh, 1969). As international trade was seen as a way to build up industry and employment, English was promoted as a resource for development of the national economy. The need for a language of inter-ethnic communication has already been discussed. Based on these twin needs, together with issues of ethnic identity, political (in)stability, and the establishment of a "meritocracy" which would supersede cronyism and "communalism" (i.e., ethnic-based politics), the bilingual policy evolved to mean the study of English plus one official language (Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil).

Studies of a official language other than English language came to be called "Mother Tongue instruction." While Mother Tongue (MT) is more usually defined as "a first language which is acquired at home" (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985: 184) or, "the language spoken to the child when (s)he first learned to speak (from 0 to 2 or 3 years of age)" (Veltman, 1991: 148), MT in Singapore came to be defined not by home language use or first language learned but by ethnicity (Kuo, 1980: 42-43) and official language. This is in keeping with the official justification for MT study as a way of "transmitting moral values and cultural traditions" (Wong, 2000).

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[10] In this case, "vernacular languages" is used to note that each community had a free choice in the language used; no national languages had been established, so there were no designations of "Mother Tongue."

> In the Singapore context, Chinese, Tamil, and Malay have to be seen not only as means of communication but also as symbols of ethnicity, supported by the weight of historical and cultural tradition. Consequently, the formulation of policy has had to take into account the fact that cultural and political issues are inter-woven with language policies. (Gopinathan, 1980: 177)

The officially designated MT may not correspond to the dominant home language because MT is designated as one of the official languages of Singapore: Mandarin, Malay or Tamil. Thus, those of Chinese ethnicity study Mandarin, even if they speak a different language at home, and those of Malay ethnicity study Malay.[11] The picture for Indians and MT instruction is more complex as more Indian languages have been added to the educational system over time. Details will be given below in the explanation of the development of the educational system.

Throughout the 60's and 70's, schools that used both English and Mother Tongues as media of instruction continued. This continued to be a sensitive issue—especially among the Chinese-educated. Demonstrations occurred at prominent Chinese schools such as Nanyang University and Ngee Ann College. There was also opposition in the press and from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. However, more and more students were enrolled in English-medium schools and, as schools needed government funding, more vernacular schools accepted dual language programs including English. English-medium instruction began to dominate and by the mid-80's all schools were English-medium (Wong, 2000) with part of the curriculum geared toward instruction of the Mother Tongue language.

In brief, in the 50's schools used vernacular languages or English as the medium of instruction; as the bilingual policy was developed and implemented, study of at least two languages (English plus MT) was required in all government-funded schools. The study of MT was justified by the need to foster education (initially) and by the desire for ethnic (historical and cultural) ties, while the study of English was justified by the need for a language of inter-ethnic communication in Singapore and for communication in business and commerce. Thus, language planning in Singapore has always been explicitly connected with education, economic development, and nation-building.

Bonding a Nation: Language, Education, and Economy

As mentioned above, Singapore is known internationally for the economic growth it has achieved since the time of independence. Senior Minister (SM) Lee Kuan Yew recalled that the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1957 was

[11] Ethnicity is determined by the ethnicity of the father (S. H. Tan, 1995: 5).

only US$400. [12] This had grown to US$22,000 by 1999 (Lee, K.Y., 2000b: 13). Sessor described the situation at that time:

> When Lee Kuan Yew took power, he found himself governing a mosquito-infested swamp dotted with pig and chicken farms, fishing villages, and squatter colonies of tin-roofed shacks. The streets of the central city were lined with shophouses—mostly two-story buildings with ornate facades. A family would operate a business on the ground floor and live on the second floor…often without plumbing and electricity, and housing as many as ten people in a room…. (1992, as found in Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 128)

The Singaporean government has always maintained that Singapore must base its economy on human resources since there are scant natural resources on the island.

> Singapore's national wealth lies in our human resources and our human potentials must therefore be developed to the fullest possible extent. An educated and enlightened population is our guarantee for a prosperous future. (Ong, 1966, as quoted in Yip et al., 1997: 7)

The government continues to take this stance as government officials promote 1) an educated, bilingual labor force that can participate in a global market, 2) changes to the economic structure that emphasize service industries, and 3) continuing education as a way for workers to stay relevant in the "New Economy." The connection between the national economy, individual employment and education is stressed repeatedly in policy statements and speeches by government officials. For example, the website of the Ministry of Education (MOE) states unequivocally that education is oriented toward employment and citizenship: "Our people must be equipped with the values, skills and knowledge for long-term employability as individuals, and for the long-term responsibility as citizens" (MOE, 2000a). [13]

Early in its history, Singapore relied on an entrepot economy with a limited percentage of the population in high level manpower positions: Chew and Degani (1969) estimated that only 32,822 individuals were involved in professional, technical, and administrative positions. However, the main employment issue in Singapore at that time was not *type* of employment opportunities as much as it was *lack* of employment opportunity. In the lead-up to independence, development of industry and employment opportunities held a central place in the nascent government's economic plans. In their policy

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[12] Lee Kuan Yew was Singapore's first Prime Minister and remained in the post from 1959 to 1990. Goh Chok Tong was then appointed and Lee Kuan Yew became a member of the Cabinet as Senior Minister. In this paper, Lee Kuan Yew will be referred to using the title that is appropriate for the time period under discussion, as with others in the political establishment whose names re-appear in different capacities.

[13] Singapore Government agencies use their websites actively to provide public information. A list of useful websites can be found in Appendix B.

documents, the PAP reaffirmed their concern for employment: "The main economic problem that faces Singapore today is to provide increasing opportunities for employment" (1959: 19), and, "The objective of the economic policy of a People's Action Party government will be to obtain for the general masses of the people, a happy, full and secure livelihood" (*ibid.*).

In discussing the possibilities for economic development and modernization during Singapore's younger days, Neville reported that human factors were more problematic than limitations in natural resources:

> Physical aspects of the site, however, have generally been less significant than human factors…. The rapid growth of the ethnically diverse population and the large numbers of people residing and seeking employment in the restricted area of the city-state largely determine the scale of the problem of modernization particularly in the fields of economic development and social change. (1969: 53)

He estimated that as many as 40,000 jobs would be lost with the pull-out of the British after the war (1969: 57). These job losses were expected to influence mostly those who were English-speaking since "The Chinese-educated had no place or role in the official life of the colony, which employed only English-educated locals as subordinates" (K. Y. Lee, 1998: 167). Employment for the Chinese-educated, who had had few opportunities for employment under the British, was also a concern.

After independence, led by the PAP with Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister, Singapore's government continued to emphasize economic growth as a way of providing employment and thus ensuring social stability. Development of the economic system through industrial growth was seen as the most immediate way to provide employment. "The unemployment problem appears to have overshadowed all other problems in Singapore and has become almost the exclusive reason for industrialization" (Goh, 1969: 128). Despite this emphasis on ameliorating unemployment, the increase of employment positions in the manufacturing sector at that time was less than 40% of the goal. Goh attributed this to the conflicting goals of labor-intensive versus capital-intensive industries—with capital-intensive industries often leading to greater productivity but lesser employment in the short run. This foreshadowed the turn toward increasing development in the service sector in the 80's and the 90's and types of education which would prepare future workers for employment in that area.

Education, increased literacy, and technical training were seen as key ingredients for creating and sustaining an industrial economy. This is in keeping with standard economic principles for transition from one economy type to another (e.g., agrarian to industrial) and with concomitant changes in requirements for training of the labor force: changes in the economic base require different skills of laborers, and different skills may require changes in education (type and quantity). These changes are mutually reinforcing. Thus, in Singapore, along with a push for increased industrialization, the time period

immediately after independence emphasized uniform, universal education through primary school with increased literacy skills and bilingualism. "Among human investments, primary education may be the most effective for overcoming absolute poverty and reducing income inequality" (Nafzinger, 1990: 239). Subsequently, development in secondary education was pursued. This will be discussed below, in the section on development of the educational system. It is important to recognize that parallels in industrial and educational development were neither coincidental nor incidental—education was seen as a key part of economic development and of nation-building.[14] Language education, especially English language education, had a special role to play in both.

The Singaporean Education System: Historical Development

1946-1965

The period from 1946-1965 is characterized as a period of *conflict resolution and quantitative expansion* for education by Yip et al. (1990).

> It was a long and difficult process to unify the education system in an ethnically plural society. Language and culture are highly emotional issues. It was particularly difficult for the majority community to embrace a policy which put a common language above the language of the majority. (Wong, 2000)

Conflicts arising from inequities in the educational system were addressed through attempts to fund schools equally, encourage education in multiple languages and establish a common curriculum. In addition, an ambitious school building program was started and all children were encouraged to enroll in school. Enrollments increased substantially during this period: 31% for primary students (from 272,254 to 357,075) and 135% for secondary students (from 48,723 to 114,736) (as reported by Yip et al., 1990: 6). The percentage of students in English schools increased (from 47.4% in 1959 to 61.4%), while the percentage enrolled in Chinese schools began to fall (from 45.9% in 1959 to 30% in 1965) (Education Study Team, 1979).

A detailed discussion of the changes in this period can be found in Yip et al. (1990); however, a few points should be noted:

- The structure of the educational system was set up following the old Chinese model: six years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and two years of pre-university preparation. This basic structure is still in use today.

[14] See Gopinathan (1997) for description, and Bokhorst-Heng (1998) for discussion of the role of government discourse in these processes.

- Common syllabuses for school subjects were established as were common examinations. Although the content and form have, of course, changed over time, the use of common syllabuses and examinations at the same educational level across schools has continued.
- Integrated schools which accommodated students from at least two language streams were created to encourage racial integration.
- Secondary school was restructured, establishing vocational, technical and commercial tracks in separate schools in addition to an academic track.

1965-1978

The period from 1965 to 1978 was one of *qualitative consolidation* (Yip et al., 1990) following the decision to separate from Malaysia. School enrollment continued to increase at all levels and in all types of educational institutions, as can be seen in Table 3.4.

From the point of view of language education, several crucial changes were instituted during this period. First, bilingual education was made compulsory in 1966. Also at this time, bilingual education came to mean English plus one other language. Although Malay was maintained as the National Language, government inducements for non-Malays to learn and use Malay were dropped. Second, exposure time in the second language (the language which was not the main medium of instruction) was increased not once, but twice: in 1966 and again in 1972 when it was raised to 40% of instructional time. Third, content courses in the second language were required: students in Primary One in non-English medium schools took Science and Mathematics in English while students in Primary Three in English medium schools took History in their second language. However, this policy was revised in 1971 when it was found that the language in the history books was above the ability of the second language students.

Table 3.4 Changes in school enrollment, 1964 and 1974

	Primary	**Secondary**	**Technical & Vocational**	**Universities & Colleges**
1964	348,167	99,592	871	12,693
1974	337,816	174,177	6,250	17,802

From 1969, secondary students were required to cover the second language in their School Certificate level examination. Equal weighting was to be given to first and second languages from 1973, and double weighting was given to the second language in the common Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) from 1975. Also in 1975, the exposure time for the second language was increased to 40%. From 1976, PSLE mathematics and science tests were to be done in English (Yip et al., 1990). Thus, language education, especially English language education, was given more prominence through 1) increased

instructional time, 2) spread across school subjects, and 3) use and increased weight in common examinations.

The move from Chinese stream schools to English stream schools continued, due in part to increasing industrialization and Westernization. Eighty-eight percent of the school population was in English stream schools by 1978 (Education Study Team, 1979: 1-1). One governmental response to this was to initiate Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools which would offer courses in English and Chinese at advanced levels and "preserve the unique cultural and traditional values taught in the old Chinese schools" (C. H. Teo, 2000a). Here the joining of language planning and socio-political engineering to establish a bilingual population while maintaining ethnic groups and their identities is evident.

Attempts at integrating the bilingual policy in all schools did not go smoothly. Lim and Gopinathan (1990), in their report on the development of curriculum planning in Singapore, note that problems arose in the early 70's over amount and type of instruction as well as materials used and lack of curricular planning. The Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development (ACCD) was created in 1970. This unit of the MOE was established to identify educational objectives and develop a new curriculum to meet those objectives. According to Lim and Gopinathan, the "ACCD apparently believed that improvement in Second Language acquisition could be better achieved through improved Second Language learning rather than through subject matter teaching which it felt required greater language competence" (1990: 67). However, the impact of politics on education became evident as the government pushed for an immersion model which taught content courses in the second language. Writing at that time, Gopinathan said, "The idealization of language continues to persist, causing the formulation of problems and policies to be very often a matter of politics rather than that of pedagogy" (1980: 179).

One other change to the educational system during this period is worthy of note: the Institute of Education (IE) was established. The IE was given responsibility for teacher training and development, including the training of school administrators, and for educational research. Previously, teacher-trainees had attended courses at Teachers' Training College in the morning and taught in the schools in the afternoon (Yip et al., 1990: 7). The establishment of the IE can be seen as part of a movement toward professionalizing teaching in Singapore. [15] Of particular importance for language teaching was the development of similar standards for teacher training across language streams as well as the establishment of more similar working conditions and benefits for EL and MT teachers.

[15] More information about the history and mission of NIE, the former IE, can be found at www.nie.edu.sg

1979-1984

The 50's through the 60's and into the 70's were considered to be periods of *survival-driven education* (Ang, 2000). However, there were complaints about the system overall, especially in terms of the number of students who did not "survive." An Education Study Team was formed to examine the educational system in depth, including educational wastage (in terms of students failing terminal exams at different stages of promotion and high attrition rates), literacy levels, bilingual education as it was implemented at that time, and administrative problems at the MOE. The final report, commonly called *The Goh Report* after its chairman Goh Keng Swee, was completed in 1978 and published with a response from the Prime Minister in 1979. It had a major impact on revisions to the education system and to implementation of the bilingual policy.

According to *The Goh Report* (Education Study Team, 1979),

- 71% of those who entered Primary One went on to secondary school, but from secondary, only 14% went on to pre-university courses (3-2);
- less than 40% passed terminal examinations (PSLE and "O" levels) in both First and Second Language (3-4);
- 33% of the student population in the English stream and 25% of the student population in the Chinese stream did not meet the minimum literacy standard at the Primary Six level (3-4).

Referring specifically to problems of teaching in languages that were not home languages and to adapting to local socio-cultural factors, the committee wrote:

> It has not occurred to many Singaporeans how unnatural the present school system is. Most school children are taught in two languages—English and Mandarin. 85% of them do not speak either of these languages at home. Our system is largely modelled on the British pattern but the social and demographic background could hardly be more dissimilar. If, as a result of a world calamity, children in England were taught Russian and Mandarin, while they continue to speak English at home, the British education system would run into some of the problems which have been plaguing the schools in Singapore and the Ministry of Education. (1979: 1-1)

A summary and discussion of the criticisms and recommendations in that report can be found in Lim and Gopinathan (1990). The results, in terms of revisions to the system, will be highlighted here including adoption of specific educational objectives, a revised educational structure, ability streaming at different points in the new system, and different options for level of language study through primary and secondary.

Educational Objectives

Since the 1960s, and continuing to this day, the two general objectives of education in Singapore have been:

> To ensure that our children learn a common, basic core of knowledge and skills that would prepare them for employment and further training; and
> To give our children a common educational experience which would help build national identity and social cohesion, with multiracialism and meritocracy as the cornerstones of our nation. (Committee on Compulsory Education in Singapore, 2000: 7)

However, the Education Study Team noted that up to 1978 educational goals had not been clearly stated, specific objectives had not been spelled out, and "The basic objective of developing literacy was not explicitly recognised" (5-1). In response, PM Lee Kuan Yew stated that the overall goal of education was to "educate a child to bring out his greatest potential so that he will grow into a good man and a useful citizen" (1979: iii). The job of elucidating specific educational objectives devolved to the ACCD of the MOE. Specific statements of objectives were created for each area of study and each level of schooling.

The New Educational System and Streaming

During this period, a "New Educational System" was introduced which established the path of education from pre-primary to tertiary and subsequent employment. One concrete change which was claimed to facilitate educating "a child to bring out his greatest potential" was the inauguration of a tracking, or streaming, system. Though unpopular internationally as an educational measure, *The Goh Report* justified their recommendation by stating,

> If we are to avoid the unacceptable attrition rates of the past, it will be necessary to introduce the principle of teaching children at the pace at which they can absorb instruction. In an ideal world, this means that each child will learn at his or her own pace. But we do not live in an ideal world and it is necessary, because of constraints of money and manpower, to reduce the process of teaching into systems.... Educationists and others who oppose streaming of children according to their ability to absorb instruction often forget that the final result could be even more cruel to the children who do not make the grade and suffer repeated failures. (Education Study Team, 1979: 1-4)

Study in the first three years of primary was to focus on language learning in order to establish a foundation for later content learning. At the end of the third year, examinations would be given and students would be "streamed" for

their subsequent primary years based on the results.[16] In primary grades 4-6 students were placed in a "Normal Bilingual Course," an "Extended Bilingual Course" or a "Monolingual Course." The "Normal" course involved three years of upper primary study before the PSLE; the "Extended" course covered the same material but gave the students more time, taking five years before the PSLE. Students in the "Monolingual" course also studied for five years beyond Primary Three (until Primary Eight), but they were then streamed into vocational training rather than taking the PSLE and going on to academically-oriented secondary schools (see Figure 3.3). The role of language learning, both English and MT, was central to the new system: children who did well would attempt to learn two languages to a high level of proficiency; the average children would do one language for a high level of proficiency and the other as a "second language", implying lower proficiency. Children of "lower ability" (as defined by results on streaming exams) were to focus on one language so that they would be fully literate in at least one language.

Streaming continued in Secondary where the top 10%, based on PSLE results, went into a "Special" track which prepared them for "O" level exams in four years. These students went into the SAP schools and studied two languages at the highest level, English and Higher Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil. Students in the "Express" course also prepared for the "O" level exam in four years and studied two languages; however, they studied only one language, English, at the highest level. In other words, these two streams were differentiated by the difficulty of the language courses and the level of proficiency they were expected to attain in each of the two languages studied.

Secondary students in the "Normal" stream, like those in the "Express" stream, studied one language for high proficiency and one language at "second language level," with lower expectations of overall proficiency. However, their course of study differed in terms of time and final testing: after four years they took an "N" level exam rather than the "O" level exam. If they did well on this exam, they continued their studies for one more year, then sat for the "O" level exam. Those who did not do well on the "N" level exam could go on to vocational training. In this way, students were expected to proceed at their own pace through primary and secondary education. Those who were not academically inclined could expect to go on for vocational or technical training so that they could become active members of the workforce. In theory, lateral movement was possible at each step if a child was having difficulty or performed well.[17]

The different streams stressed different proficiency outcomes for the second language. However, English as the "first language" (i.e., first school language) was even more heavily emphasized than before. Approximately 50%

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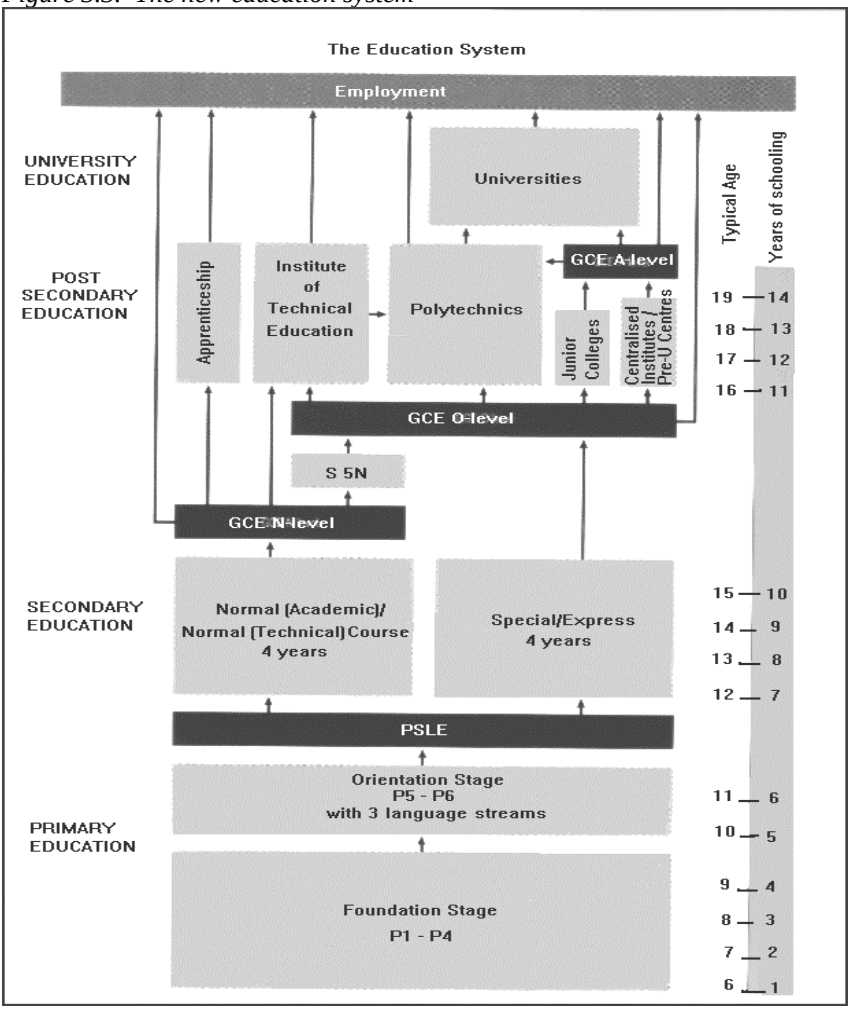
[16] This was subsequently changed to the end of the fourth year of primary school based on the *Improving Primary School Education* report (Review Committee, 1991).

[17] A schematic representation of possible lateral movement in primary school is available at the MOE Web site (http://www1.moe.edu.sg/primary.htm).

Figure 3.3. The new education system



Source: MOE (2001a).

of curricular time was devoted to English in Primary One through Primary Three. Math, Arts and Crafts, Physical Education, and Health Education were all taught in English so that, by this time, all schools were effectively English-medium schools. MT was taught as a separate subject. Students in the Monolingual stream studied MT only as a "Spoken Second Language": English was the language of academics and literacy. Moral Education was taught in all streams at all levels. MT was the language of instruction for this subject as explained in *The Report on Moral Education* (1979):

> ...though the preservation and transmission of Asian moral values and cultural tradition can be carried out using an alien language, i.e., English, it

> will not be as effective as the mother tongue. In the process of translation, distortions are likely to occur as it is subject to individual interpretation. (as found in Tan, Gopinathan, & Ho, 1997: 410)

However, at upper secondary (Secondary Three and Four), English was the language of instruction because, "student would not be able to participate effectively in the discussions because of their limited second language proficiency" (Report on Moral Education 1979, as extracted in Tan et al., 1997: 410). "Religious Knowledge" also became compulsory at upper secondary from 1982. To accommodate the different religious groups in Singaporean society, different classes were offered. These classes were intended to "reinforce what has been learnt in Moral Education and provide a viewpoint from the tradition of one of the great religions" (Tay, 1982, as cited in Yip et al., 1990: 20). This was in keeping with the intention that education should develop "the child morally, intellectually, physically, socially and aesthetically" (MOE, 2001b) so that he/she could become a good citizen as well as a valuable member of the workforce.

1985-1991

By the mid-80's, the view of education as a vehicle for preparing a future workforce, instilling a national identity (and national loyalty) and instituting language policy was well established. All government and government-aided schools used the same curriculum with English as the medium of instruction (Wong, 2000).[18] According to Yip et al. (1990: 24) the educational vision at this time could be described as *towards excellence in education* since this was a time when the emphasis was on refining the educational system. However, Lim and Gopinathan point out that "the three major concerns, bilingualism, moral education and technical education continued to dominate the attention of planners" (1990: 76).

Religious Education was dropped as a required subject in 1989, at least partially because it was difficult to teach the subject content without proselytizing (Lim & Gopinathan, 1990: 78). Instead, a Civics course which would focus on community values rather than religious beliefs was introduced. At the MOE, curriculum development teams were by now well established with responsibility for preparing common syllabuses for all schools, core curricular projects for continuous upgrading of the curriculum and locally produced materials.

Significant changes were made to EL teaching in primary schools with an eye toward developing a more communicative curriculum that would have more emphasis on fluency and meaning, and less emphasis on form and accuracy (Ang, 2000). The Reading and English Acquisition Programme (REAP) was initiated for students in Primary 1-3. This program drew from Language

[18] Government-aided schools are heavily subsidized but are not fully government funded. See Appendix C for an explanation of the different types of schools and/or go to the MOE web site (www1.moe. edu.sg/educatio.htm).

Experience Approach (Stauffer, 1970), Shared Book Approach (Holdaway, 1979) and Book Flood. It was a book-based program which aimed to improve reading and language skills while fostering positive attitudes (Ng & Sullivan, 2001). At upper primary levels, the Active Communicative Teaching (ACT) program was adopted. This program encouraged the use of authentic materials and a wide variety of activities to encourage pupil participation and interaction (Ang, 2000: 6). The implementation of both programs was accompanied by teacher training in the schools and at NIE. However, it is not clear how much teaching practices changed or whether teachers adopted the new philosophy of teaching with less focus on accuracy and drillwork.

An important change in the languages of schooling was the decision that minority Indian groups would be able to establish classes in non-Tamil Indian languages (i.e., Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu) starting in 1989. However, each community had to arrange for their own instructional materials, teachers and funding (C. H. Teo, 1997a). These languages were included in the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLEs) beginning in 1995.

An important structural change was the establishment of Independent Schools—schools which follow the national policies (such as bilingual education), but have more flexibility in setting their fees, establishing their own admission policies, selecting their staff, and planning how to implement curriculums. This was based on yet another influential educational policy document, *Towards Excellence in Schools* (Education Study Team, 1987). The "School Excellence Report" was prepared by a study team following investigations of commendable institutions in other countries. The study team recommended that greater autonomy be given to principles, teachers and educational institutions to encourage decentralization and to allow more flexibility in the educational system.

Economic impacts were also considered in educational revisions. Specifically, technical education and workforce training were scrutinized in light of the changing economic situation in Singapore. The recession of 1985 forced the government to re-think the economic structure; this influenced the educational system. A report by the Economic Committee recommended that ways be found to lift the median level of education, to provide continuous training and upgrading of skills, to increase intakes for education at the post-secondary level and to provide a more broad-based education (Yip et al., 1990: 24-25).

1991-2000

Education in the 90's became more unified, more professionalized, and more efficient. Thus, it could be considered a period of *efficiency-driven education* (Ang, 2000). School enrollments continued to rise: enrollments for primary school in 2000 was 305,992 and for secondary was 176,132 (MOE, 2000b), whereas the figures for 1990 were 257,757 and 160,542 respectively (MOE, 1990). In 1995, due to an increase in births related to the Year of the Dragon

(an auspicious year for births in the Chinese calendar), 53,000 students entered Primary One (Davie, 2001a).

Moves to establish Autonomous Schools—schools which are fully funded by the government but have more flexibility in curriculum implementation—were initiated and more SAP schools were established. (For more explanation of the different school designations at secondary level, see Appendix C.) With reference to the latter, there were logistical problems with establishing SAP schools for Tamil and Malay. Due to the small population of students pursuing Higher Tamil and Higher Malay, only a few schools had the staff needed. As a result, students who took Higher Tamil or Malay were not able to do so at their own school but had to travel to the MOE Language Centre (MOELC).

For English Language, new syllabuses were implemented at both Primary and Secondary in 1991 (Curriculum Planning Division, 1991a, 1991b). Continuing the idea of more communicative teaching, a thematic approach was adopted. The new syllabuses did not specify particular methodologies or techniques. Instead, recommended themes for each year of study were given along with instructional objectives, a list of resources, and suggested activities. Specific information on grammar instruction was provided at the back of the syllabus, based on teachers' requests for more support in this area. Required textbooks were prepared by MOE materials writers. Universal examinations continued. As a result, although the syllabuses were intended to be flexible, required textbooks and universal examinations became the guiding focus of instruction.

The "New Education System" continues to be used with some important modifications based on recent educational initiatives. These initiatives are closely tied to economic developments; therefore, they will be discussed after a broader picture of economic development and educational connections has been presented.

Economic and Educational Links

Currently, Singapore's economy relies on a strong import and export trade, not only for goods but also for services. Strong regional links influence economic growth as well as decline as evidenced by the recession of 1998 when there was an economic slide throughout Asia and a concomitant weakening in the Singaporean economy.[19] According to Mark Stone of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Asia and Pacific Department, "As a small open economy, Singapore is more vulnerable than most countries to external economic developments.... Singapore's resilience appears to be rooted in strong fundamentals and a willingness to take timely and effective policy measures in response to the crisis" (1999: 127). In discussing these fundamentals, Stone refers to structural initiatives that encourage employment, measures that encourage liberalizing the financial sector, as well as fiscal and monetary policies. The last two seem to have less direct linkage with education and

[19] Economic growth in 1998 was a mere 0.4% while in 1999 it rebounded to 5.4% (MITA, 2000d).

language policies. However, current employment policy is directly connected to education, including language education, and liberalization in the financial sector has indirect links to education and language as well since it encourages internationalization.

In order to remain relevant in import and export trade, the government has implemented different economic strategies since the 1960's: Import Substitution for a short time just after independence (1960-1964), Export-oriented Industrialization (1965-1975), Industrial Restructuring (1975-1989), Capability Building and Economic Diversification (1986-1998), and, currently, Transforming into a Knowledge-Based Economy (Ministry of Trade and Industry [MTI], n.d., "Economic Development"). At each stage, the different emphases for import and export engendered differing emphases on workforce development, especially in regard to required education, language, and employability. These changes in economic development plans frequently corresponded to changes in the educational system, although they did not align completely (see Figure 3.4). For example, during the 60's and 70's, economic initiatives emphasized building up basic industries for import (1960-1964) and export (1965-1975) to provide for the economic survival of the nation. This corresponded to a period of "survival-driven education" (Ang, 2000) which emphasized basic education and encouraged learning of English. Currently, there is a push for developing a "Knowledge-Based Economy" and a concurrent emphasis on "Ability-Driven Education." Both of these make up part of the government's vision for *Thinking Skills, Learning Nation*, of which more will be said below.

Figure 3.4 Timeline of economic and educational development initiatives

Economic Development		Educational Development	
1950 ↓	Entrepot	1946 ↓	Survival-Driven Education (SDE): Conflict-Resolution & Quantitative Expansion
1960 ↓	Import Substitution		
1964 ↓	Export-oriented Industrialization	1965 ↓	SDE: Qualitative Consolidation
1975 ↓	Industrial Restructuring	1979/1980 ↓	Efficiency-Driven Education: Refining Education
1989 ↓ Present	Capability Building & Economic Diversification	late 1980's ↓ Present	Ability-Driven Education: Toward Excellence in Education

The ability to implement different import-export trade strategies interacted with the emphasis on human resource development through education and Singapore's future-oriented planning. For example, in response to the recession

of 1998, the government initiated *ManPower 21*—a program to encourage upgrading of human resources (B. Y. Lee, 1999). Greater participation in particular industries such as life sciences, telecommunications, banking and finance that were seen to be most viable for future employment (individual) and economic development (national) was encouraged through public statements, union encouragements (including newsletter columns, career advice, and course offerings), as well as financial incentives such as matching grants and scholarships.[20] Economic development in specific industries was encouraged through structural reform measures which encouraged greater competition in the services sector (IMF, 2000).

Service industries are a crucial part of Singapore's economy with 74% of the work force employed in financial services, transport and communications, hotels and restaurants, or wholesale and retail trade. Manufacturing and construction employ 26.4% and 6.1% of the resident population respectively (Singstat, 2000d). The change from a manufacturing/export economy to a knowledge-based, service economy requires higher levels of education and literacy for initial and continued employment. Therefore, government officials expect that higher levels of education will continue to be needed in order to sustain Singapore's national economy, individual employment, and social stability.

In recent years, the labor force overall has held at about 63.2% (IMF, 2000) with some ups and downs as economic conditions varied.[21] Currently, there is concern about another recession (Aggarwal, 2001). The government encourages school-age residents and citizens to continue their education through secondary and beyond. This is managed though speeches and advertisements, through financial incentives in the way of limiting fees for public education and special financial plans such as the EduSave scheme and through continuing education initiatives such as *School of Life-Long Learning*, described below.[22]

Efforts at economic development via workforce development have emphasized education, especially through "Life-Long Learning," a stated Ministry of Manpower (MOM) strategy. For example, the Skills Redevelopment Program helps workers to upgrade and acquire certified, and employable, skills through partnership programs with businesses and tertiary educational institutions and with tuition grants through an expanded Skills Development Fund.[23] Many of these efforts imply the use of (or improvement of) English

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[20] Scholarship examples include government schemes such as EduSave Scholarships and Merit Bursaries as well as those from community organizations such as Mendaki, a self-help organization for Malay/Muslims ("Strong Unions," 2000; "Mendaki Offers," 2001).

[21] During the recession of 1998, unemployment peaked at 4.5%. By December, 1999, it had dropped to 3% (IMF, 2000). Figures from the first quarter of 2001 show that seasonally adjusted unemployment was at 2.4% as of March, and with the economic slowdown, unemployment was expected to rise again in some sectors (MTI, n.d, "Performance").

[22] The EduSave Scheme provides funding for Singaporean children as soon as they enter school. These funds can be used for various school fees, including fees at independent schools. The funds are also used for scholarships for those in the upper 10% and for grants to schools (MOE, 2000d).

[23] The Skills Development Fund was established in 1979 (K. Y. Lee, 1999) and has been expanded since then. As of April 1998, the SDF provided S$50 million for training with a matching grant from the government through MOM ("Skills Redevelopment Program" n. d.).

because "The use of English as our working language has helped us become a natural node in the global network of banking and commerce," (K. Y. Lee, 2000a) and, more specifically, because professional and vocational study beyond secondary school is done in English.

The makeup of the workforce has changed somewhat since 1990: a greater proportion of those aged 25-65 are working, while an increasing number of those over 65 are retiring; and a greater number of those 15-24 are continuing education rather than joining the labor force after secondary school (Singstat, 2000d). The overall percentage of males in the work force has declined slightly (77.5% in 1990 and 76.6% in 2000), the percentage of working females has increased (48.8% in 1990 and 50.2% in 2000). This has gone hand in hand with a move toward parity in education between males and females in the younger age groups: among adults in the 25-34 age-group, 82.2% of the males and 81.2% of the females have at least secondary education; among youth and young adults aged 15-24, 83.7% of males and 85.8% of females have at least secondary education. In the older age groups, 35 and above, females have less education at each 10-year age increment (see Figure 3.2, above) (Singstat, 2000c).[24]

The percentage of those who have secondary education or higher qualifications increased from 42% in the 1990 census to 57% in the 2000 census (see Table 3.5). The percentage of university graduates during the same period increased from 4.5% to 12%. Those with secondary or polytechnic qualifications increased from 11% to 21% (Singstat, 2000c). The increase in educational attainments is found across all ethnic groups.

Despite the advances, the government feels that the educational profile is not yet adequate.

> At present, one third of our current workforce is skilled, one third is semi-skilled, and one third is unskilled. So there is a mismatch between the workers who are available and the jobs that are being created. If we do not solve this mismatch, we will end up with a serious structural problem. New Industries will encounter skill shortages, while lower skilled workers will be displaced and unable to find jobs for long periods. We will have structural unemployment, and our social cohesion will be weakened. (H. L. Lee, 1999a)

In addition, census figures indicate that unemployment among those with little education (primary school) is almost double that of those who have post-secondary or higher qualifications (Singstat, 2000d).

[24] It is worth noting Haq and Haq's comment that "no society has ever liberated itself—economically, politically, or socially—without a sound base of educated women" (1998: 86, as found in Bruthiaux, 2000: 270).

Table 3.5 Educational qualifications by ethnic group

Educational Qualifications	Chinese		Malays		Indian		Others	
	1990	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*
No qualification	32.0	20.2	30.5	20.0	27.7	13.9	15.5	7.5
Primary	25.6	21.9	33.1	30.1	31.4	24.5	26.5	16.2
Secondary	25.7	23.2	30.0	32.1	27.8	26.4	33.9	25.2
Upper Secondary	7.6	15.0	4.9	12.9	7.7	15.6	12.2	19.9
Polytechnic	4.1	7.0	0.9	2.9	1.2	3.1	2.3	3.8
University	5.1	12.6	0.6	2.0	4.1	16.5	9.6	27.5

Percentage shown out of 100% for each ethnic group.
Source: Singstat (2000c).

Employment, Literacy, and Education

Different types of economies require not only greater literacy rates, but also different types of literacy (Brandt, 1999). In Singapore, literacy concerns have moved from issues of basic literacy to multilingual literacy (meaning literacy in English plus one other language) and, in the last ten years, to literacy in information technology (IT). Literacy in IT is stressed through training courses for adults (as part of the government initiative *Manpower 21*) and through school-based plans, especially the *IT Masterplan for Education* a "blueprint for the integration of information technology (IT) in education as a strategy to meet the challenges of the 21st century" (MOE, 1997a).

Explicitly connecting economic opportunity with education and IT literacy, George Yeo, Minister for MITA, said,

> It is crucial that the next generation is prepared for the IT world. Like many things in education, children learn best when they are young…. Many children who do not learn IT when they are young will be IT handicapped for the rest of their lives. Failure to educate them will result in society having to carry a heavy burden for the rest of their lives. (1999)

The learning of English continues to be crucial to economic and educational plans. According to the Minister of Education, Tony Tan, "Our young need to learn English to prepare them for the globalized, knowledge based world, and as a common language to communicate with each other across ethnic boundaries" (MOE, 2001d). This is true despite the relative success of Singapore's bilingual policy, success that can be seen in the high percentage of the population that is "English-knowing" (c.f. Kachru, 1983). In fact, since the 1960's there has been a significant language shift among Singaporeans away from heritage languages and toward English.[25]

[25] In this case, the term "heritage language" is used to denote languages which have traditionally been used by the family or are currently used in the home but are not designated as a Official Language and are not used for educational purposes. In this way, they are distinct from the

Language Planning in Singapore

There is no central language planning organization in Singapore. Language planning is generally initiated by government policy statements and carried out through educational planning. Education/language planning has involved status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning. The terms "status planning" and "corpus planning" are attributed to Kloss (1969), who distinguished between language planning related to the relative standing or status of a language and the planning of standards within a language (spelling, script, morphology, etc.). The former constitutes status planning; the latter, corpus planning. In Singapore, aspects of status planning are evident in the way the official languages, and especially English, have been prioritized in public policy. Specific types of language shift have been encouraged—toward English and the other official languages and away from heritage languages such as Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese (for the Chinese population), Javanese and Boyanese (for the Malays) As noted above, the language education situation for Indians is somewhat more complex with Tamil being the most commonly taught Indian language but other non-Tamil Indian languages being offered at the MOELC. In general, language maintenance in the form of learning and maintaining at least one MT has been prioritized while maintenance of other languages has been de-emphasized and even discouraged.

Aspects of corpus planning were evident in early educational policies which adopted exonormative standards for the official languages: British English, Mandarin, Malay and Higher Tamil.[26] More recently, indigenized varieties and the meaning of language standards in the local context have become controversial, leading to more government encouragement of standardization and use of "standard" varieties. Clyne (1997) points out that status planning and corpus planning impinge on each other and are often inseparable. This can be seen in Singapore where the status given to English and Mandarin, for example, corresponds with efforts to encourage "standard" varieties (i.e., those which mesh with exonormative standards) rather than indigenized varieties. This also overlaps with acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989)—efforts to "target the (potential or actual) users of the language...most often through the creation or improvement of opportunities or incentives to learn them" (King, 2001: 23). In Singapore, acquisition planning goes hand in hand with status and corpus planning through educational planning. Although there is no central agency for language planning, specific languages are promoted and policies are implemented through statements from Ministers which then become MOE

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designated "Mother Tongue" languages as discussed in the section on the development of the bilingual policy.

[26] Pakir notes that "Corpus planning in the education system has traditionally been believed to be beyond the control of Singapore" (1997: 58, footnote 3) and therefore exoglossic norms have been adopted; however, another interpretation is that the choice of exoglossic norms, their enforcement through school instruction, and their encouragement through public campaigns and media uses do constitute a type of corpus planning.

guidelines, and subsequently enacted through the national syllabus, textbooks and teacher training. "It can thus be seen that there is a direct relationship between the language planning process and education" (Pakir, 1994: 153).

Language Shift and Language Maintenance

Language use has been considered in the Singaporean census since 1957. In that census, mother tongue and home language were equated. Data showed 33 mother tongue groups in Singapore with a variety of Chinese languages and Indian languages in addition to Malay and English. As Lee Kuan Yew has said, "We were a tower of Babel, trying to find a common tongue" (1997).

The languages which were adopted as official languages in Singapore were not necessarily the dominant home languages for the population: only 18.6% of the population used English, Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil as their home language (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 36). Dominant languages in the Chinese community at that time were Hokkien (30%) and Cantonese (15.1%); these acted as lingua franca among the Chinese (S. C. Chua, 1962). For inter-ethnic communication, "Bazaar Malay" was frequently used, even in the early political campaign speeches (K. Y. Lee, 1998). Bokhorst-Heng reports that 32.5% of the Chinese and 88.3% of the Indians could speak Bazaar Malay in addition to 99.4% of the Malay population, a total of 48% of the population (1998: 38). English functioned in several capacities including lingua franca, official language, school language, working language, expression of national identity, international language (Tay, M. W. J., 1993, as found in Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 38). It was also a religious language, with Christianity strongly linked to English (Ling, 1989; Clammer, 1989). Within the Indian community, a variety of languages were used (as noted above) and even for those who had Tamil as their home language, high and low varieties existed (Saravanan, 1998). Languages of instruction included Mandarin, Malay and Tamil in the vernacular schools as well as English in the British-supported government schools, as discussed above. However other languages were also used; for example, the Teochew community ran schools which used Teochew as the medium of instruction (Li, Saravanan & Ng 1997: 371).

The selection of official languages as school languages, and the requirement that all students study English and Mother Tongue, has had a strong impact on language shift across all ethnic groups. Recent figures show that the Singaporean population has become increasing multilingual and multi-literate with increased use of English across all ethnic groups. Within the Chinese community, there is also a notable shift away from Chinese dialects and toward Mandarin. Significant language shift has been in evidence for at least 20 years (Kwan-Terry, 2000). For example, from 1980 to 1990, those speaking Mandarin at home more than doubled, from 10% to 24%. Chinese dialect speaking households declined, from 60% in 1980 to 38% in 1990 (Table 3.6). From 1980 to 1990, the proportion of resident households speaking

English at home increased from 12% to 21% (MITA, 2000e).[27] The Census of Population for 2000 shows that these trends continue.

Table 3.6 English as language most frequently used at home, by ethnic group

	1990	**2000**
Chinese	19%	24%
Malay	6.1%	7.9%
Indian	32%	36%

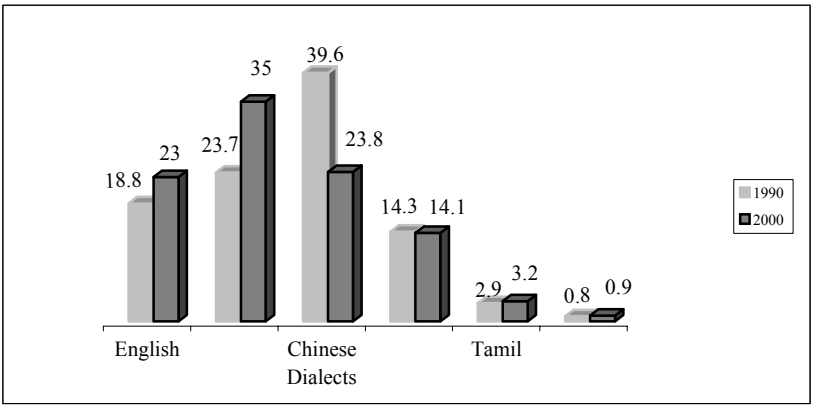
The year 2000 Census data on language shift and maintenance can be summarized as follows:

- The three main ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay and Indian) continue to use vernacular languages at home: 76% of ethnic Chinese spoke Mandarin or Chinese dialects at home; 92% of Malays spoke Malay; and, 43% of Indians spoke Tamil.
- Use of other Chinese languages (referred to as "dialects") has continued to decrease with 35% of Chinese families using Mandarin at home and 23.8% maintaining use of Chinese dialects (See Figure 3.5). The census summary also notes that 45% of the Chinese population speaks Mandarin (an increase from 30% in 1990) though this may not be the dominant home language.
- English is also used at home, especially among the young and the well-educated. Among the Chinese, 24% claim to speak English most frequently at home; among the Malays the figure is 7.9% and among Indians, 36%. This is an increase across all ethnic groups. Across the whole population, 23% claim to speak English at home.
- The proportion of the population which is bi- or multiliterate has increased: 45% of the population was literate in at least two languages in 1990, increasing to 56% in the 2000 census.

These figures, however, belie the complexity of language use in Singapore which is influenced by age, socio-economic status and religion as well as ethnic group, heritage language and social context. According to the 2000 census, use of English at home is increasing among young Chinese and Indians (see Table 3.7) while the largest use of English as a home language for Malays is in the 25-39 year age range (working adults). Chinese dialects are used mostly by the older generation (over 55) while Mandarin is the dominant language for Chinese below age 55 (Singstat, 2000b).

[27] Although these figures serve the purpose of demonstrating language shift, there are some problems in comparability since there were differences in the censuses in 1980 and 1990. For a discussion of these changes and possible impact on the figures, see Gupta (1994: 24-32). In addition, self-reported figures (such as these census data) may reflect perceived status difference (i.e., some respondents may report greater use of a higher status language). Despite these caveats, the census data are still useful for identifying trends in language shift and maintenance.

Figure 3.5 Language use at home, resident population age 5+



Source: Singstat (2000b).

Table 3.7 Home language by age and ethnic group

Ethnic Group/ Language	**5-14**		**15-24**		**25-39**		**40-54**		**55 & over**	
	1990	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1999*	*2000*
Chinese	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
English	23.3	35.8	19.9	21.5	24.6	25.2	16.1	25.1	5.3	9.9
Mandarin	57.6	59.6	28.5	59.8	30.4	46.5	24.8	43.9	6.1	17.8
Chinese dialects	18.9	4.3	51.5	18.4	44.8	28.0	58.8	30.7	87.7	71.8
Others	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.5
Malays	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
English	8.3	9.4	7.0	8.2	7.3	10.5	3.4	6.1	0.7	1.7
Malay	91.6	90.1	92.9	91.3	92.6	89.0	96.4	93.4	99.1	97.6
Others	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.6
Indians	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
English	39.6	43.6	37.0	37.9	36.3	35.5	25.7	35.5	13.4	20.5
Malay	18.4	12.9	15.1	14.7	14.5	9.6	13.7	12.5	9.4	9.2
Tamil	35.6	36.3	41.0	40.6	41.3	43.0	47.5	43.6	56.2	54.6
Others	6.3	7.2	6.9	6.7	8.0	11.9	13.0	8.4	21.1	15.7

Source: Singstat (2000b).

Use of English at home has also increased with higher education qualifications: 47% of Chinese, 38% of Malay and 43% of Tamil university graduates reported using English at home as compared with less than 10% of those who had not completed secondary school, across all ethnic groups. Socio-economic status, as assessed by size and type of dwelling, also correlates with

choice of home language: English is more likely to be used at home by those in higher socio-economic groups (as evidenced by living in private housing) across all ethnicities; Mandarin is used more by Chinese living in larger, public flats, while Chinese dialects are dominant among Chinese with smaller, public flats.

Clammer (1980) discusses the close connections between ethnicity, religion and language in Singapore. Muslims generally came from Malay, Indian or Arab ethnicities and tend to speak Malay. Arabic was known by very few. Among the Chinese, there is both linguistic and religious diversity. The most common religious affiliations among the Chinese are Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist. However, Chinese Christians tend to speak English as do Indian Christians and Malay Christians (who tend to be "Peranakan" or "Straits Chinese"—a classification for ethnic Chinese who had immigrated to Singapore over several generations via Malaya, frequently intermarrying and adopting many Malay customs). Language-religion-ethnic ties overlap with socio-economic status (Table3.8).

Table 3.8 Religion and socioeconomic status, 1980[28]

Religion	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class
Christian, Protestant	11.7%	77.7%	10.6%
Christian, Catholic	13.1%	81.4%	5.5%
Hindu	29.1%	70.9%	0
Muslim	60.8%	39%	0.2%
Buddhist & Chinese Religions	44.6%	55%	0.4%

Source: Adapted from Clammer (1980: 91).

Not surprisingly, the figures on socioeconomic status and religion also correspond with data on educational levels.

> A very clear pattern emerges from these figures: while Christianity and Hinduism are predominantly middle class religions, Islam and the Chinese religions tend to be heavily lower and lower middle class. In terms of education there is a heavy concentration of Christians and Hindus in the English stream, a heavy concentration of Muslims in the Malay stream, and a very heavy concentration of the Buddhists/Chinese religionists in the Chinese stream…The conclusion is obvious: there is a strong association of English education with upper middle class status and Christianity and Hinduism, of Chinese education with lower class status and Chinese religion, and of Malay medium education with lower class status and Islamic religion. (Clammer, 1980: 92)

[28] Clammer does not explain how socio-economic status was determined, only noting these figures and adding "If the figures are re-computed by income alone a similar distribution emerges" (1980: 91), indicating that factors other than income were used to establish the categories.

Census 2000 figures show that religious affiliation is relatively stable among the Malays (virtually all Muslims) and Indians (various religions); Buddhism is the dominant religion among the Chinese (54%) with Christianity overtaking Taoism as the second most popular religion among this ethnic group (Singstat, 2000e). The connection between religious affiliation, educational attainments, and home language choice continues to be true—those with higher educational attainments, especially among the Chinese, tend to be Christian and tend to speak English at home (Table 3.9).

Variables in who speaks which language(s) to whom under what circumstances are difficult to capture, especially in census figures, as are permutations of code-switching. However, Pakir (1993) illustrated the diverse verbal repertoire of Singaporean university students with a simple survey (*N*=62) (Table 3.10). This is in sharp contrast to the verbal repertoire that Platt and Weber described only ten years earlier (Table 3.11). The difference seems to substantiate Pakir's claim that "Whereas the older generation used to be bilingual in any two or more of the several language varieties, the younger generation of Singaporeans tend to be bilingual with English as their common tongue" (1993: 77).

Table 3.9 Religion, educational attainment and use of English at home

Religion	Total*	English Use at Home	University	Post-Secondary	Secondary	Below Secondary
Christianity	14.6	39.8	33.5	20.8	14.6	6.4
Buddhism	42.5	24.8	23.6	38.3	41.6	51.5
Islam	14.9	7.1	3.5	11.2	18.9	17.2
Hinduism	4.0	5.4	6.9	3.5	4.1	3.5

*Total reflects total percentage of population over age 15.
Source: Singstat (2000c).

Table 3.10 Typical verbal repertoire of a Singapore Chinese undergraduate, 1990

It usually includes	*It may include*
English	another Chinese dialect
Mandarin	a foreign language (Japanese, French)
the native Chinese "dialect"	Malay

Source: Pakir (1993: 75)

Notable work on language shift in Singapore has been done by Tay, M. W. J. (1983), a population overview using census data; Kwan-Terry (1991) on Chinese children's language at home and at schools; Saravanan (1998) on the Tamil community; and Abdullah and Ayyub (1998) on Malay. All of these studies indicate a continuing shift toward Mandarin (in the Chinese community) and English (across all ethnic groups) with multiple factors influencing the

change. A comprehensive study done within the Teochew community (one of the ethnic Chinese sub-groups) in the family domain will be described in some detail as an example of the type of multilingual complexity that is found in Singapore.

Table 3.11 Typical verbal repertoire of a Singaporean or Malaysian Chinese, 1980

It usually includes	***It may include***
the native Chinese dialect	English
the dominant Chinese dialect	Baba Malay
one or more additional Chinese dialects	Bahasa Malaysia/Malay
Bahasa Pasar	Mandarin

Source: Platt & Weber (1980: 139, as found in Pakir, 1993: 75).

Language Shift and Language Choice: A Teochew Community Example

Li et al. (1997) used observation and interview data to look at "dominant language" (i.e., most frequently used) and "preferred language." Their study examined language use in the family only among those who self-identified as Teochew. One of the researchers' first findings was that despite self-identification as Teochew, not all of the participants claimed the Teochew language as their mother tongue (defined as first language learned since birth in this study) or as the dominant home language. Out of 72 participants, 30 claimed Teochew as the dominant home language, 8 said Teochew and Mandarin while another 13 claimed Mandarin; Hokkien was used as the dominant home language by 8 participants, 5 used Mandarin and English, and 8 used English. Data from that study also showed different patterns of use for age, education, socioeconomic status, religion, and interlocutor. Domains other than the family and use of code-switching were not covered. Some of the complexity in language shift, and language choice, can be seen in the findings:

- The majority of the children spoke Mandarin and English with their peers while parents mainly used Mandarin with their children and a mix of Mandarin with other languages among their peers.
- The older generation (51 and above) used their mother tongue as their dominant language at home. Many of the others who used Teochew at home claimed that they would like to use a language of wider communication (such as Mandarin or English), but they needed Teochew to communicate with older family members. (See Table 3.12 for information on language choice patterns across different generations.)

Table 3.12 Patterns of home language use

Speaker	**Interlocutor**					
	Grandparents		*Parents*		*Children*	
	Language Spoken	% of users	Language Spoken	% of users	Language Spoken	% of users
Grandparents (2 speakers)	T	100	T	100	T	100
Parents (26 speakers)	T	100	T	46	TM	31
			TM	6	T	26
			TME	8	M	19
			H	8	TME	8
			E	8	ME	8
			M	4	E	8
Children (44 speakers)	T	85	TM	27	TME	26
	H	6	T	23	ME	23
	ME	6	M	16	E	21
	TM	3	ME	11	T	9
			H	7	TE	7
			HM	7	HM	7
			E	7	HME	5
			TME	2	HE	2

T=Teochew; H=Hokkien; M=Mandarin; E=English
Source: Li et al. (1997: 374).

- In general, those with higher levels of education used Teochew less at home than those with lower levels of education. Even more striking were the figures on language preferences which showed that the majority of those with primary school education or lower preferred Teochew but less than half of those with secondary education did, and none of those at tertiary levels of education preferred Teochew.
- With reference to socioeconomic status, as estimated by annual income, those in the upper income group (over S$4,000 per month) used English as the dominant family language; in the middle income group (S$2,001-S$4,000 per month) a mix of English, Mandarin and Teochew was found with English the least used among these three while Mandarin and Teochew were used about equally); in the lower income group (less than S$2,000 per month) Teochew was the dominant language. These findings correspond with those of the census for the population as a whole and with other research which has shown that higher socio-economic families tend to bring up their children with English (e.g., Gupta, 1994).
- The data on religion and language corresponded with the earlier findings of Clammer (1980) for Singaporeans as a whole (see discussion above). Figures in Li et al. (1997) were given for families, rather than individuals: the four Christian families (out of 17 total) used English as their dominant home language; the eleven who affiliated themselves with traditional

Chinese religions used Teochew (7) or Mandarin (4); the two "Free Thinkers" used Teochew (1) and English (1).

As noted above, these shifts are attributed to the impact of the educational system and, specifically, of school languages as well as to economic conditions, especially employment opportunities. For example, Saravanan stated that English-educated Tamils will sometimes question others with "*tamiR soru poTuma?*" ("Will Tamil feed you?" or "Can you make a living out of Tamil?") (1998: 161). Thus, perceived educational and economic benefits have impacted choices of home language. Home language use, in turn, has contributed to greater language shift.

The school/home connection in Singaporean patterns of language shift is shown in Kwan-Terry's (1991) survey of language use by Chinese children. Although the data are from 1982 and the discussion above shows that patterns of language use have continued to change in the intervening 20 years, it is clear that the beginnings of these patterns were evident even then. In her study, Chinese was the most common language used at home, especially with grandparents.[29] With siblings, Chinese was used in 51.8% of cases and both Chinese and English were used in 34.4% of cases. English was used exclusively in only 4.2% of cases. With parents the picture is more complex showing differences in language use between child-father and child-mother interactions as follows: 74.9% of the cases used Chinese between father and child, 27.2% used Chinese and English, 7.9% used English only; 74.7% used Chinese between mother and child, 19.8% used both Chinese and English, and 5.4% used English only. It is noteworthy that children used the Chinese + English combination most, with their siblings and with their parents. This was also found in the school setting where the Chinese + English combination dominated, especially as children moved up the grades from the first year of school to the third (see Table 3.13). However, at home parents used English even more with their children than the children did with siblings, and fathers (who tended to be more educated in this period) were more inclined to use English with their children than mothers were. Kwan-Terry attributes this to the parents' desire for the children to learn English. Language use by parents had an effect on the children's language at home and school. If the parents used English with each other, the children tended to use English with siblings and with peers on the school playground, likewise for Chinese (although some children used different languages with different siblings and about one-third used both Chinese and English with siblings). According to Kwan-Terry's data, a combination of both Chinese and English was the most common way of communicating on the school playground.

The type of family intervention found in Kwan-Terry's study exemplifies what Pakir calls *invisible language planning*—"when individuals interfere *non-deliberately* with planned changes to the systems of a language code or to

[29] Kwan-Terry refers to "Chinese" throughout without distinguishing between home use of dialects except in one section which notes a shift to Mandarin (1991: 29).

speaking or to both" (1997: 62). In this case, non-deliberately means that parents or other individuals do not intend to interfere with the system; however, the switch to English at home has often been a very deliberate choice on the part of the parents, usually with the intention of helping the children to do better in school and/or to prepare them for future employment. Of parents surveyed, 90.9% rated the learning of English as very important for their children and gave both education and employment as reasons for its importance (Kwan-Terry, 1991) (Table 3.14).

Table 3.13 Language used in peer interactions, 1982

Level	Chinese %	Chinese + English %	English %	Total N
Primary 1	42.6	54.7	2.7	148
Primary 2	29.7	64.4	5.9	101
Primary 3	22.7	73.1	4.2	119
Total (no.)	120	233	15	368

Source: Kwan-Terry (1991: 15).

Table 3.14 The importance of English, parents' reasons

Education	Employment	Acceptability/Respectability	Others
44.4%	51.3%	25.6%	1.7%

Percentages add up to more than 100% because some parents gave more than one reason.
Source: Kwan-Terry (1991: 20).

Cooper points out that "language planning activities move upwards as well as downwards. Microlevel, face-to-face interactional circles can both implement decisions initiated from above and initiate language planning which snowballs to the societal or governmental level" (1989: 38). In Singapore, social interaction and personal/family goals have impacted language shift and language maintenance across all ethnic groups in a bottom-up fashion, in addition to the deliberate, top-down, language planning and policy moves of the government. While the government established English-medium schools and the bilingual policy, parents' decisions to move children to English-medium schools even before they became the standard and to speak English at home has influenced the rapid shift to English. Most parents recognize that "the English language holds the key to a better future for their children. Parents, not governments, are ultimately responsible for linguistic assimilation in Singapore" (Pakir, 1997: 61).

Campaigning for Language Change

School authorities are not always pleased at the intervention of parents in English language learning. There is concern that when parents who are not completely proficient in English use the language to communicate with children

at home the result is a sub-standard variety of English. This concern is echoed in the media (e.g., Chen, 2001). Throughout the late 90's, there has been much public discussion of the standard of English in Singapore along with outcry over the use of "Singlish"—a colloquial form of Singapore English. One governmental reaction to this has been the initiation of the *Speak Good English Movement* (SGEM)—a clear effort at corpus planning. Begun in 1999, the purpose of SGEM is to "expand the use of standard English and discourage the use of Singlish" (Ng, 1999: A1). SGEM has been carried out through public policy speeches, media campaigns, and school-based activities. Most notably, a popular comedic TV character known for liberal use of Singapore English (locally known as "Singlish") was "re-educated" through BEST classes—courses in basic English for adults—after government officials began to refer to the show and the character as negative examples for Singaporean youth. The emphasis of SGEM is on learning a standard variety of English that will be understood internationally for the sake of business and economy. Lee Yock Suan, Minister for Information and the Arts, stressed this in a speech to teachers at a special colloquium on "The Teaching and Use of Standard English":

> It is clearly very important for Singaporeans to have a high standard of general competence in English of a standard form which foreigners can readily comprehend. Singapore is an international business hub which thrives on our growing network of international links. Our ability to communicate well and effectively in English is a key advantage. (2000)

Public reaction was initially mixed with some contending that Singlish, rather than English, was the language of inter-ethnic communication in Singapore ("Some use Singlish," Sept. 17, 1999) and that Singlish was connected with Singaporean identity as much as with communication ("Let's speak up for Singlish," Nov., 16, 1998), while others support the government program ("Speak English," April 6, 2001). Newspaper editorials and commentaries as well as government speeches continue to discourage use of a colloquial Singapore variety of English in favor of a more exonormative standard—preferably British. The MOE also promotes "standard English" with standard vocabulary and grammar. Use of "standard English" is consistently presented as a way to help Singaporean children prepare for the future: "MOE's call to tone down Singlish should be seen in the context of providing a conducive environment for the young to learn English, rather than as a draconian attempt to stub out a lively idiolect" (M. H. Chua, 1999a). A plan for more explicit grammar teaching in the revised primary EL syllabus came out almost concurrently with the call for improved standards in daily Singaporean English.

Some linguists discuss the varieties of English used in Singapore as Singapore Standard English and Singapore Colloquial English (e.g., Gupta, 1998; Ho & Alsagoff, 1998; Pakir, 1998). They consider how the varieties should be analyzed, what the crucial differences are, and how changes come about. However, there is little, if any, discussion of "Singapore Standard English" at the policy level. Government officials (including the MOE),

continue to stress that the reason for learning English is for inter-ethnic and international communication. In this view, English is learned for practical reasons of education and trade, thus the need for exonormative standards. Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong expressed this view of English at the launch of SGEM 2001:

> Will we then write our own school and university textbooks in Singlish? Will Singlish help you to write a business proposal? Will MNCs [multi-national corporations], banks or even local companies prefer to hire you if you speak Singlish instead of Standard English? (2001)

A similar government effort is the continuing *Speak Mandarin Campaign* (SMC). This effort was launched in 1979 and has since become an annual event. There is an element of corpus planning in this campaign, as in SGEM discussed above, but the essence of this particular language campaign is to encourage a shift to Mandarin and away from other Chinese languages (known as "dialects" in Singapore). For SMC, the government enlisted not only the help of the MOE, schools and teachers, but also of parents who were encouraged to switch to Mandarin in their home language use.[30] Rather than referring to economic values to legitimate the shift, government efforts initially focused on social and cultural values.

> Parents want their children to be successful. They also want their children to retain traditional Chinese values in filial piety, loyalty, benevolence, and love. Through Mandarin, their children can emotionally identify themselves as part of an ancient civilization whose continuity was because it was founded on a tried and tested value system. (K. Y. Lee, 1984)

The use of cultural values to support instruction of Mandarin, Malay and Tamil has been consistent throughout the development of modern Singapore.

> Why is it of any consequence to us whether our children learn our mother tongue and culture? Ours is an open society. Technological changes have revolutionized and will continue to revolutionize the way we work, live and play. Like it or not, we are subject to many influences in this age of Information Technology and mass media. Amidst these influences, there should be a moral, cultural and spiritual anchor for our children. Therefore in schools we teach the mother tongue because we believe that knowledge of our mother tongue enables us to preserve our roots and cultural identity. We also encourage our people to actively preserve their heritage for we believe that our racial, religious and language diversity is an asset which provides an anchor, and adds color and vibrancy to our lives. (C. H. Teo, 1999a)

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[30] In additional to elements of corpus planning, SMC is also inspired by efforts at status and acquisition planning, thus highlighting how the three impinge on each other.

However,

> Children must learn English so that they will have a window to the knowledge, technology and expertise of the modern world. They must know their mother tongues to enable them to know what makes us what we are. (T. K. Y. Tan, 1986)

Just as standards are an issue in English, the standard of spoken Mandarin is a topic of public discussion (thus the corpus planning component mentioned above). Soon after establishing the SGEM, PM Goh made a call for improved Mandarin. Calling the local variety "Chap Chye Mandarin," after a Chinese mixed vegetable dish, he stated, "This is Singlish's counterpart" ("Don't slip," 1999). References to a standard of use that could be understood in China and Taiwan were included with implied connections between the future economic benefits of an internationally comprehensible Mandarin.

Other current issues in Mandarin instruction include encouraging higher levels of Chinese language (CL) studies in schools, increasing the number of SAP schools, reviewing the cultural content of the CL syllabus, setting appropriate standards for CL and finding ways to help those students who do well in school but have difficulty with Mandarin (Lee, H. L. 1999b). This has resulted in revision to the CL syllabus. More students are being encouraged to take Higher Chinese from upper primary onwards, more students are being encouraged to study Chinese literature, textbooks are being rewritten to include stronger cultural content without increasing the linguistic difficulty, and a second syllabus (the "B" syllabus) is being introduced at secondary and junior college level for students who are weak in CL but have strong academic records otherwise (MOE, 1999a; 1999b).

The latter most strongly affects those who enter CL classes because they are designed as ethnically Chinese, and therefore take Chinese as their MT, but do not speak Mandarin at home. In a Ministerial Statement to the Parliament, Lee Hsien Loong said,

> We must recognize the large difference which the home language makes to learning CL. A CL syllabus may present no problem to a child who speaks Chinese at home. Chinese is probably his master language. His CL lessons reinforce and formalize words, phrases and grammar which he already knows. But the same syllabus can be extremely challenging for a child who speaks English at home, uses Chinese only occasionally outside class, and for whom far from being a master language, Chinese is a totally new language which has to be learnt from scratch. (1999b)

In some cases, family intervention has contributed to the maintenance of so-called "dialects." This is particularly true of Cantonese. According to L. Teo, (2001) though Teochew and Hokkien speakers are shifting to Mandarin as their home language, 36% of the Cantonese population still speak mainly this dialect

at home (as compared with 32% who use Mandarin). This may be due to the fact that many of them are recent immigrants (22%), that there are more older people in this ethnic sub-group, and that mass media in Cantonese are readily available. Overall, it is not surprising that the "push" factors of government policies have fostered language shift toward the official languages, and especially toward English and Mandarin, while the "pull" factors of family and cultural heritage have helped to maintain some heritage languages. The desire to maintain the traditional heritage while providing children with the necessary tools for economic success runs through the public discourse on language planning and use in Singapore and in other countries.[31]

Many Chinese Singaporeans do not seem to feel a cultural loss with the loss of their dialect. For example, in the Li et al. (1997) study described above, some participants of Teochew heritage identified themselves as Teochew even if they no longer used that language as the dominant home language. A small survey of ten teenagers by the dominant English language daily, *The Straits Times*, found that only three could speak their heritage language and "Most had quite an indifferent attitude towards the gradual phasing out of dialects in Singapore" (Hong, June 2, 2001). As one teenagers said, dialects are "not very important because they have no practical value." This is in keeping with government policies which view the value of languages in terms of economic utility and imbues only the official MT languages with the ability to transmit cultural values.

However, recent public discussion has shown some individual desire to maintain and even revitalize dialects. Interviews and letters to the editor of *The Straits Times* included these comments:

> To me, knowing my own dialect is very important. It is an important part of my cultural identity, and I believe we can preserve the dialect if we try, by speaking it when we can. (Jeslin Yeo, June, 2001)

> Yes, I agree that dialects are important. They hold the key to our past. We are not simply Chinese. We are Hokkiens, Teochews, Hainanese, Kheks and Cantonese with roots in some specific region of China and with long and rich histories which we need to discover and honour. (Lorna Khoo, June, 2001)

> While I agree that language evolves and changes, it is not "inevitable" that dialects should be phased out of Singaporean society because it [sic] does not help globalisation. It is sad that in modern Singapore, everything has to have a practical purpose if it is to be retained. (Fon-Myn Leow & Marina Jacinta, June, 2001)

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[31] See Hornberger (in press) for a discussion of efforts in language maintenance and revitalization in several other countries.

The Malay and Indian communities are also involved in efforts to maintain their MTs and to encourage study at higher levels. As noted in the census figures above, Malay is still commonly used in Malay homes and there are fewer issues with dialects. Although Singaporeans have used several different Malay languages historically, these have given way to Malay over the past 40 years (Abdullah & Ayyub, 1997) even without a campaign similar to the Speak Mandarin Campaign. This may be due to the previous use of Bazaar Malay as a *lingua franca*, the emphasis on study of Malay immediately after Independence, the extensive use of Malay in the Muslim community, and/or the use of Malay as the MT in schools during that time. Although not the dominant community in Singapore, the Malay community has always been the most homogenous. This, no doubt, has had an impact on the maintenance of Malay. However, like CL, there is a drive to encourage more students to take Higher Malay (at secondary) and Malay Language and Literature (at university). For those who have difficulties with Malay studies, a "B" syllabus will be adopted, as with CL (MOE, 2000d).

A *Tamil Language Movement* (TLM) was inaugurated to foster the use of Tamil in the Indian community (Jayakumar, 1999) and, subsequently the MOE announced new measures to enhance Tamil learning (MOE, 2000e). Predictably, TLM uses policy speeches and a public awareness campaign to heighten interest. The educational measures are similar to those proposed for Mandarin and Malay: examine current teaching materials, establish a "B" syllabus for those who are having exceptional difficulty and encourage the top students to pursue Higher Tamil. The similarity of these measures is in keeping with the idea that all language streams should be treated equally. Despite the similarity of the measures to improve Tamil learning, the issues are somewhat different from either Mandarin or Malay. Due to the cultural, historic, religious, and education background of individuals in the Indian community, some Indians have switched to English as their home language and others have switched to Malay. In addition, Tamil is but one of the Indian languages used in Singapore. Over time, the government has agreed to establish instruction in "Non-Tamil Indian Languages" as well as in Tamil. These include Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. Interestingly, at the launch for the TLM, unlike the launch for the SMC 20 years earlier, the issue was not presented as one of choosing Tamil over other Indian languages. Instead, the push was for the maintenance of Tamil among Tamil-speaking families and, especially, Tamil-speaking youth. For the youths who do grow up speaking Tamil, there is still an educational issue in TL classes of High and Low variety such that those who speak the colloquial (or "Low") variety at home are not necessarily aided in their school learning of the High variety (see Saravanan, 1998). One attempt to address this issue has been increased attention to pre-school education for Indian children (T. K. Y. Tan, 1997).

These public campaigns and educational initiatives seemed to be designed to counter-balance the push toward English and to maintain an English-knowing bilingualism that is true to the vision of English as a working language

and MT as a carrier for cultural values and ethnic heritage.[32] The campaigns could not be successful without the willing participation of family members. In this way, government policy has, to some extent, both fed into and co-opted the high value which the various ethnic groups in Singapore place on education, economic success, and maintenance of cultural heritage.

Although past arguments for the bilingual policy equated English with economic success and MT with cultural heritage, some recent arguments for MT—especially Mandarin—refer to international communication and future employment. At the 1993 SMC Launch, PM Goh Chok Tong referred to the economic value of learning Mandarin given the opening market in China (Promote Mandarin Council, n.d.). The economic value of knowing two languages (English plus an Asian language) has also been used to encourage those who grow up in English-speaking homes to develop proficiency in one of the other Official Languages. As Rear Admiral Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, said in a speech to the Eurasian community during an educational award ceremony, [33]

> I would like to take this opportunity to urge parents to encourage their children to improve their proficiency in a second language…. First, there is a social advantage in knowing and speaking Chinese, Malay or Tamil in multicultural Singapore. To be able to communicate only in English limits one's horizons…. There is also an added economic advantage which you will want your children to benefit from. The economic growth taking place in South Asia, South-East Asia and China offers many opportunities…. There is also a cultural advantage in knowing the heritage of one's own community. (1997b)

This raises the question of the extent to which English or MT is a true benefit in employment and economic development. This will be discussed in the next section.

Educational Expenditure and Economic Returns

The largest portion of the national budget is usually given over to Social Development which includes education, health and public housing (among other sub-categories). For 2001, the budget allocation given to Social Development was 43.4%; education was allotted 22.38% of the national budget (MOF, 2001a). This was an 8.3% increase for education over the previous year.[34] Key expenditures in the education budget include:

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[32] Gopinathan (personal communication, Sept. 20, 2001) noted that efforts to establish and maintain this balance provided the opportunity for a sort of "linguistic peace": government insistence on instruction in English and MT, with equal time for all MTs, reduced the prospects for using language as a political and social point of contention.

[33] Eurasians are usually considered to be those of mixed Malay and Portuguese descent.

[34] National security, including military and police expenses, was the second largest expense (36.6%) and the third largest category was economic development (15%) (MOF, 2001a).

- S$2.7 billion to subsidize the operations of primary schools, secondary schools, pre-university centers and junior colleges;
- S$160 million to subsidize the operations of Institutes of Technical Education;
- S$550 million to subsidize the operations of the polytechnics;
- S$900 million to subsidize the operations of the universities;
- S$1.1 billion to develop educational infrastructure, such as the upgrading, rebuilding and construction of schools, and the acquisition of computer facilities and teaching equipment.

This did not include expenses for continuing education which are included in the budget under the category of "Economic Development" (once again highlighting the explicit connection made by government between education, employment and the economy). In that category, funds were budgeted in two categories:

- S$30 million to fund the continuous upgrade of skills and knowledge of the workforce under the Manpower Development Assistance Scheme and other initiatives;
- S$500 million contribution to the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund.

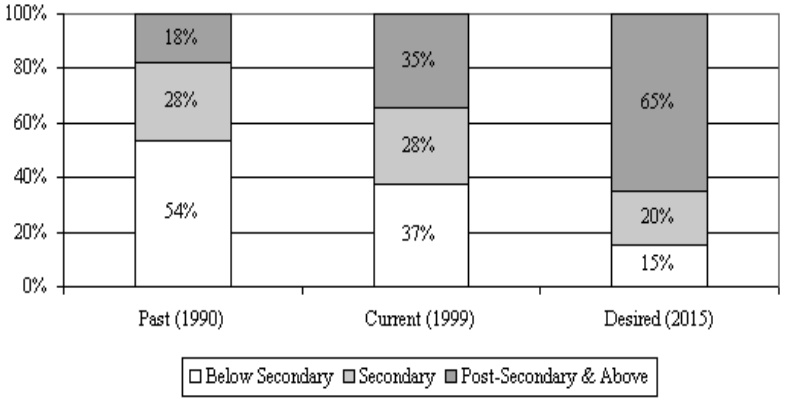
Overall, a substantial part of the budget is given to education of some type. There is an expectation that there will be a return on this educational investment in the form of human capital development. Specifically, the government hopes to increase the percentage of the population that has post- secondary education.

Although the percentage of the population with post-secondary education has increased since 1990 (Figure 3.6), a higher proportion is desired—from the current 35% to 65% for the future. A continuing fear is that the population is not sufficiently prepared for a Knowledge-Based economy:

> In order for Singapore to succeed in our next phase of economic development, we will require a different type of workforce—one that is able to acquire, apply and create knowledge in flexible and innovative ways to generate greater value. Based on the jobs that Singapore expects to create in 10 to 15 years, we require a workforce where 65 percent have at least post-secondary education. However, as of 1999, only 35 percent of our workforce have post-secondary education or higher. There is thus a risk of workers being structurally displaced if they do not upgrade or learn new skills. (MOF, 2001a)

Due to the indirect effect of language education on the economy, it is not easy to determine the extent to which English might contribute to economic development. The question of how to evaluate expenditures on language education is taken up by Grin (1995, 1996), who proposes a sub-discipline of economics

Figure 3.6 Shortfall in educated workers



Source: MOF (2001b)

called "economics of language." Grin notes that there is a supposition that language processes are influenced by economic processes (for example, encouraging language shift based on economic motivations as is done in Singapore) and that economic processes may also be influenced by language processes, but these influences have not been rigorously tested. Certainly the latter is assumed by policy makers in Singapore as shown in statements such as the following:

> In the aftermath of World War II, the region became more nationalistic. They switched to their native languages as their national language and the medium of instruction in schools. Singapore decided to keep English as its working language. That decision has enabled us to be an international education hub in the age of the Internet. The use of English as our working language has helped us become a natural node in the global network of banking and commerce. (K. Y. Lee, 2001a)

The type of economic analysis proposed by Grin and Vaillancourt (1997) is beyond the scope of this paper; however, one simple marker of economic and educational connections is language qualifications and employability as exemplified by employment advertisements. A review of job advertisements in Singapore's dominant English language daily, *The Straits Times*, showed that only 63 advertisements out of 675 openings (.09%) specified any language skills.

[35] Almost half of these (31) required skills in at least two languages—usually English and Mandarin (22). An additional six stated "English and Chinese" which most likely indicates Mandarin. The other advertisements which specified language abilities mentioned Cantonese or other South East Asian languages. Only one mentioned a European language (French) other than English. English skills could, of course, be assumed for all the notices by virtue of placing the advertisements in an English daily. Beyond that, the specification of advanced education, diplomas, certificates and degrees would imply that English proficiency was expected.

The leading Chinese daily, on the other hand, listed far fewer job advertisements: only 172 were found.[36] Of these, sixteen stated that English was required, and eleven stated that Mandarin was needed. Seven others implied that English proficiency was expected based on educational qualifications; however, the educational qualifications included "Diploma" or "Certificate" rather than degrees of higher education (with one exception). The most noticeable difference in the job advertisements was in the types of jobs advertised: almost no professional positions were advertised in the Chinese daily. One advertised position was for an Assistant Editor, another for a "designer." Other advertisements were for jobs such as "clerk," "waiter" and "warehouse assistant." Again, the assumption seems to be that those who are more educated know English, and they will look for jobs in the domain of English users.

The Domain of English Users

Kwan-Terry describes the language situation in Singapore as one of "island speech communities interacting with each other" (2000: 85). As a result of language shift and of increasing bilingualism, these island speech communities have realigned. Previously there were islands of Chinese-educated and English-education. However, with the increase of English-medium education, "islands" are being re-formed around political and social affiliations. This is evident to some extent in discussions of the needs and values of "Heartlanders," those who live in government financed flats, and those of "Cosmopolitans," those who live in higher priced condominium estates (e.g., "You can call her," Jan. 19, 2001). It is also clear in discussions of whether or not English will overtake Mandarin and other MTs in the future and in the assumptions about how much English is used and where. For example, in response to the 2000 Census figures showing an increase in home use of English, a survey of language use was conducted by *The Straits Times*. A columnist wrote:

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[35] Based on an analysis of *The Straits Times*, Saturday, June 16, 2001 (Silver, 2001). *The Straits Times* has a regular "Recruit" section on Saturdays; this is the largest section for job advertisements during the week.

[36] Data from *Lian He Zao Bao*, the largest Chinese daily in Singapore, on Saturday, August 18, 2001 (Silver, 2001). Unlike the English daily, there was no section specifically for job advertisements in the Chinese newspaper.

> ...58 percent of Chinese primary school students and 66 per cent of Chinese secondary school students used Mandarin with classmates. About two in three used Mandarin at home. Teachers and those in touch with young Singaporeans said there was nothing surprising about the result as it tallied with what they were hearing all around them in school and in public. Surely ST [Straits Times] knows that our young are speaking Mandarin? And yet, another group of readers found the results surprising, even incredible.... In a way, the different—but equally strongly held—responses to the survey finding show that Singapore society remains divided by language. (M. H. Chua, 1999b)

Li et al.'s (1997) study of the Teochew community, described above, has shown that home language use is more complex than simply "which language is used at home?" It is likely that this is equally true of work domains: English is thought to hold sway but the assumption has not been tested. The amount of Mandarin, Tamil and Malay used on the job is unknown. It is likely that there is also a role for Chinese dialects (especially Hokkien) in some types of jobs (such as manufacturing and construction). The specific role of English is still ambiguous in both work and home environments in Singapore, ambiguous in terms of who uses which language with whom in which situations, in terms of standards of use, and in terms of connections between language planning, education policy, economic development and national identity. Tensions between developing a nation with an international economic perspective but grounded in Asian traditions persist along with basic issues of sustaining development and societal multilingualism. Current initiatives that attempt to deal with these issues include *Thinking Schools, Learning Nation* and the *IT Masterplan for Education*—initiatives for re-focusing education and for building up technological know-how; the *School of Life-Long Learning* initiative—a continuing education initiative that connects educational and economic goals; as well as *Singapore 21* and *Industry 21*—government initiatives to build up a national consciousness for the 21st century and to attract businesses to Singapore for future economic development. The first three have the most direct links with EL education and will be explained below.

Current Initiatives

Thinking Schools, Learning Nation

Launched in 1997, the *Thinking Schools, Learning Nation* (TSLN) initiative is "the Government's effort to improve our education system fundamentally, to mould Singaporeans who are ready for the future" (H. L. Lee, 1997a). The intention is to educate Singaporeans for a knowledge-based economy by preparing them not only with the knowledge which exists now but also by helping them deal with acquiring future knowledge. "*Thinking Schools* ensure that we equip students with skills and knowledge and values and instincts to face future challenges, while *Learning Nation* aims to promote a culture of

continual learning beyond the school environment" ("Preparing our Education System," Nov., 1999). H. L. Lee (1997a) notes three areas that deserve special focus as part of the *TSLN* vision: teachers, infrastructure and technology. With reference to teachers, he speaks of improving the career path to encourage more people of higher caliber to go into teaching and to retrain these people in the teaching profession. This means changes to the pay and promotion structure as well as changes in the teacher training system at NIE. Infrastructure and technology are closely linked, with plans to build more schools and improve facilities through a program known as PRIME (see Appendix C for description). This is closely connected to the *IT Masterplan for Education*, described below.

As with past initiatives and policies, such as the Bilingual Education Policy, *TSLN* is supported by arguments for future economic development and national cohesion. It is assumed that future economic development will be brought about by preparing today's students for the types of employment which will be valued in the future. The current economic vision espoused by MTI emphasizes development of human and intellectual capital through education "starting at school and continuing throughout working life" (MTI, 2000). Educational equality leading to equal opportunity in future employment is seen as essential to national cohesion and social stability.

Several other initiatives and programs have been introduced under the umbrella of *TSLN*. These included National Education, the implementation of the *IT Masterplan for Education* (*IT Masterplan*), a thorough curriculum review along with content-reduction, and legislation for compulsory education.

Introducing the scheme for National Education (NE), PM Goh Chok Tong said,

> National Education must be a vital component of our education process. We will revise the contents of Social Studies, Civic and Moral Education and History to emphasize nation-building. But National Education goes beyond book knowledge. It is an exercise to develop instincts that become part of the psyche of every child. It must engender a shared sense of nationhood, an understanding of how our past is relevant to our present and future. It must appeal to both heart and mind. (1996)

The initiative was launched on May 17, 1997. Schools were encouraged to implement NE across the curriculum. Some courses were designated as being key: Social Studies and Civics and Moral Education (CME) at the primary level; History, Geography and CME at secondary level; and General Paper and CME at Junior Colleges (H. L. Lee, 1997b). Languages and Literature (English and MT) were also noted as courses into which NE could be infused. In addition to including NE in coursework, schools were encouraged to commemorate key events (such as Racial Harmony Day) and to develop their own NE programs (MOE, 1999c). As noted above, Civics and Moral Education were originally carried out as part of MT instruction in keeping with the objective that MT would maintain a sense of heritage and connection to ethnic

culture. However, at the secondary level this was later changed to an English-medium subject as students had difficulty with the complex language when studying in the medium of MT. Social Studies (primary) and History and Geography (secondary) are taught in English.

The *Masterplan for IT in Education* (*IT Masterplan*) was launched on April 28, 1997. At the launch, the Minister for Education, Teo Chee Hean, said, "Singaporeans must learn to think beyond the bounds of their physical surroundings.... They must be comfortable with new technologies and be able to exploit these new technologies to venture beyond their current boundaries and open up new frontiers of knowledge" (1997c). It has already been noted that changes in the economy, and especially in technology, require different types of literacy. Based on this premise, the IT Masterplan aims to make all graduates IT literate. It includes plans to increase the number of computers in each school, increase the amount of curriculum time that makes use of computers and computerized resources, improve the school infrastructure for greater (and better) use of technology, and training teachers to use IT in education (MOE, 1997a, 1997b). According to this plan, IT is not to be taught and learned as a separate subject, but infused throughout the curriculum. Concurrently, thinking skills (including critical and creative thinking) are to be infused across all levels of instruction to encourage students to "be creative problem-solvers, rather than just know vast amounts of knowledge that are passively received" (Preparing our Education System, Nov., 1999). The combined push for greater IT literacy and for more opportunities to address thinking skills in education is part of current educational reform internationally (Luke, 2001) with various local repercussions.

The desire to infuse IT and thinking skills throughout the curriculum led to the question of instructional time: how could teachers address all of the syllabus content as well as infusing new information and skills? A curriculum review was done in order to assess ways that school curricula might need to be updated and changed to accommodate the goals of TSLN. The review was begun in 1996 by an appointed External Review Team. The team was asked to focus their discussion on future needs, especially the following:

- the extent to which the existing curriculum developed skills that were relevant to the 21st century,
- the appropriate emphasis between teaching of content and skills,
- recommendations for a curriculum which would be appropriate to the needs of the future (MOE, 1998a).

Among the recommendations accepted by the MOE were a) content reduction of 10-30%, b) use of project work across the curriculum, c) greater autonomy in textbook selection, d) changes to types of assessment which would

encourage more thinking and e) single session schools for both primary and secondary (MOE, 1998a, 2000f). [37]

Content reduction was seen to be especially important at the secondary level; at the primary level, there was less concern about the quantity of content and more concern about use of drilling and rote learning in order to complete the scheme of work.

New syllabuses were already in preparation, for use staring in 2001. However, as interim measures, manuals for content reduction were issued in 1999 and relevant changes to assessment were implemented (MOE, 1998b, 1998c). Changes in the content for language instruction serve as an example. In Chinese, there was some reduction of the character list to be learned. In Malay, there was reduction in the number of grammar items and proverbs to be taught—especially for Higher Malay; and in Tamil, the number of language items, poems and proverbs were reduced across the board (Primary 1-6, Tamil Language and Higher Tamil). However, in terms of English language instruction, at least at the primary level, there was no impact from content reduction as there was no change in the content to be taught. With reference to the lack of change, the Curriculum Planning & Development Division (CPDD) stated, "No reduction is recommended as EL is a skills-based subject. The same skills are taught in a spiral approach with increasing difficulty and sophistication from one year level to the next" (1998: 1). The new syllabus, *English Language Syllabus 2001*, presents a new model of language learning and includes a new emphasis on teaching through text types; it attempts to incorporate the *TSLN* vision.

English Language Syllabus 2001

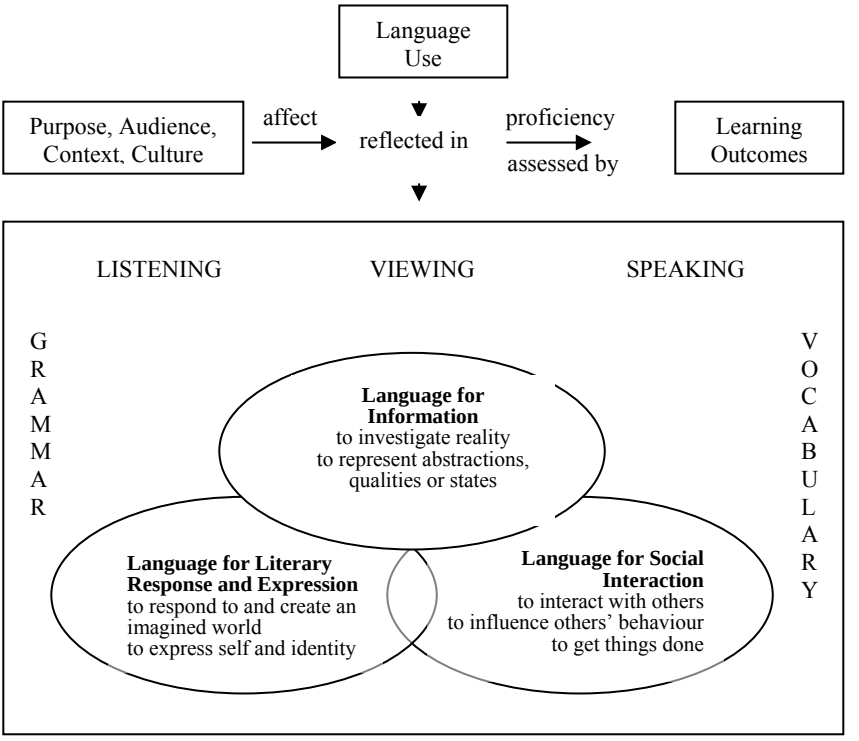
The new English language syllabus (CPDD, 2001) uses text types as an organizational framework rather than thematic units, as the 1991 syllabus did. The syllabus maintains the concept of integrated language instruction, meaning "integrated skills teaching" in the Singapore context; however, instead of using themes for integration, it focuses on language use in three main areas: language use for information, language use for social interaction, and language for literary response and expression (Figure 3.7). The introduction to the new syllabus notes that

> [English] has become the medium by which most Singaporeans gain access to information and knowledge from around the world. The ability to speak and write English effectively, therefore, has become an essential skill in the workplace, and a mastery of English is vital to Singapore's pupils. (CPDD, 2001: 2)

[37] Although the committee's work was done earlier and the response was published in 1998, the public report was released with a 2000 copyright date.

The changes in the syllabus are an attempt to update the view of EL teaching and learning in a way that "takes into consideration the emerging local and global trends of economic globalisation and developments in information, communications and scientific technology" (Ang, 2000: 8). This is done through the emphasis on areas of language use.

Figure 3.7 Language use model for EL Syllabus 2000



Source: CPDD (2001: 6)

The main aim of the syllabus is for students to learn to communicate effectively in English through listening to, reading, and viewing a range of texts; speaking, writing and making presentation to suit different audiences and purposes; thinking through, interpreting, and evaluating a range of texts; and, interacting effectively with people (MOE Briefing, 2000g). Grammar is more explicitly included than in the past syllabuses, largely at the request of teachers who felt unsure about how to integrate grammar in the previous theme-based approach. The syllabus moves from primary through secondary to emphasize the progression of skill development in EL. Literacy development is "the heart" of the instructional program with the stated goal that "All pupils will be able to read and write in English when they leave school" (CPDD, 2001: 7). At the primary level, literacy focuses on moving from the beginning reading stage to

independent reading; at secondary, the emphasis shifts to higher levels of literacy with materials other than textbooks and critical reading of texts. There is a call for "global literacy" which moves beyond "local literacy": local literacy allows communication within a local community, but global literacy facilitates communication in a wider world (C. H. Teo, 2000b). It is clear that this links to discussions of standard for EL instruction, as discussed above. The new EL syllabus responds to *TSLN* through outcomes that address thinking skills, text types that go beyond textbooks and into media resources, and, at the secondary level, uses of non-print and electronic sources.

Along with *TSLN* and the new syllabuses, the MOE has proposed that education become less efficiency-driven and more "ability-driven." This complements the drive for a knowledge-based economy (as shown in Figure 3.4). The proposal for ability-driven education was introduced on October 8, 1999 by the MOE. It had two main components:

- Identification and Development of Individual Talents and Ability. We will aim to help every Singaporean excel according to the combination of talents and abilities he possesses;
- Harnessing of Talents and Abilities. We will inculcate in our young national values and social instincts so that they will be committed to the nation and actively contribute their talents for the good of the society. (C. H. Teo, 1999b)

The overall goal of ability-driven education is to encourage customization of learning for different abilities and skills: "we aim for an education system that provides students of all abilities with an education that maximises their potential" (MOE, 2001c). The new "B" syllabuses for MT, discussed above, were introduced as part of this initiative. These complimented the earlier establishment of a Learning Support Programme for students in Primary One and Two who had difficulty with English.[38] More extracurricular activities were introduced and awards for schools excelling in various areas were given as "Value-Added Awards" (MOE, 2000h). Ability-driven education was seen as being complimentary to other educational initiatives such as increased school autonomy, revised systems of school appraisal, and greater professionalism in teaching. The proposal for ability-driven education was also connected to discussions of streaming, which continues to be controversial ("It helped," April 18, 2000). Within ability-driven education, streaming is being described as part of *mass customisation*: "By customising learning to different needs and abilities, we aim for an education system that provides students of all abilities with an education that maximises their potential" (MOE, 2001c). This is seen as a practical response to the need to provide an equal opportunity for basic education.

[38] The Learning Support Programme was begun in 1992 (L. H. Lim, 1995). It serves approximately 20% of Primary One students and 10% of Primary Two students (Making a real impact, 2001).

School of Life-Long Learning

Although it does not come under the rubric of *TSLN*, the *School of Life-Long Learning* (SLLL) initiative builds on similar ideas. According to MOM, "Schools develop the young into thinking individuals, foster creativity and inculcate in them learning habits to prepare them for the challenges of the knowledge economy. The life-long learning system provides in-employment learning throughout a person's working life" (MOM, n.d. "Lifelong learning"). A variety of courses are offered for workers (retrenched and those who are still working) under the auspices of NTUC, an association of 66 trade unions. The education and economic (workforce) connection is clear at this level of planning: courses are provided and promoted in areas of the economy that need workers or are expected to need workers in the future.

The role of English language learning and use is implied, if not directly stated, in these training courses. Most courses offered by NTUC state that English is a prerequisite (NTUC Online, 2001) with only a few courses offered in Mandarin or Malay. The statement that English is a prerequisite shows that English is a necessary basic skill which allows entry into the training programs; it can also be construed to indicate that not all prospective workers have sufficient English skills—at least not in the age, education and socio-economic bracket that *SLLL* attempts to attract. At the basic skills level, some courses are explicitly targeted toward basic English instruction. This is not surprising given that those who are older and less educated are the least likely to know English.

An overview of the current educational system can be found in Appendix C. It is based on the "New Educational System" already described. The final section of this report will turn to a discussion of continuing issues in EL education with reference to research on language learning that might be applicable and suggestions for research that would be useful in the Singapore context, given the influences described above.

Continuing Issues

Development of the workforce, language shift, status relationships between languages (especially English and Mandarin), standards of language use, and implementation of the bilingual policy for students in different streams of education continue to be issues in Singapore. The vision of *TSLN* is seen as a way of connecting education to economic goals. The philosophy of ability-driven education is intended to mesh with the new knowledge-based economy; however, to fully enact ability-driven education will require changes in mindset as well as in programs.

With reference to language learning in schools, areas of concern include the *type* of language instruction at lower and higher levels. For student in the lower ability streams (EM3 at primary and N(T) at secondary), courses emphasize basic, functional language and oral skills. It seems reasonable to ask if this is sufficient for either their immediate academic or future employment needs given the push toward a knowledge-based economy. It may be that these

students need different approaches to language learning and literacy, approaches which will bolster their language ability over their lifetimes (and would be more in keeping with the concepts behind *TSLN* and *SLLL*). Some students might benefit from strengthening their MT literacy skills, followed by instruction designed to help them develop strategies that would carry over to EL, or from greater integration between their EL and MT classes. Currently there are no opportunities for English and MT teachers to work together to build up literacy and academic skills. Investigations into language and literacy skills in MT and how these connect with language and literacy in EL within the Singapore context should be undertaken.

Timing is also a concern. Recent research in Canadian bilingual programs has suggested that *massed* learning (concentrated periods of intensive language study) may be more beneficial than *distributed* learning (shorter periods of study each day, continued throughout the academic year). Collins, Halter, Lightbown and Spada (1999) found that Primary Six French-speaking students who had five months of intensive English followed by five months of intensive content study, had superior gains in English with no loss of content learning at the end of the academic year. The role of language learning aptitude in these results was not clear; however, students at different language proficiency levels (as measured by a pre-test) benefited from the *massed-plus* program which had five months of intensive English exposure at either the beginning or end of the school year as well as exposure to English in more casual domains at school (e.g., the cafeteria and playground). The researchers point out that different types of learning activities can be done in massed or distributed programs:

> Although the instructional approach within the ESL classes was very similar, students in the massed and massed-plus programs used English for most of the day, every day. This allowed for certain kinds of language use in sustained learning activities that would have been harder to implement in the shorter periods of ESL instruction in the distributed classes. (1999: 673)

The issue of timing and type of activities with opportunities for sustained learning is connected to issues of content-based language teaching (CBLT). In theory, with English as the medium of instruction for content subjects in Singaporean schools, there should be opportunities for sustained language learning. Again referring to research in Canadian immersion (while noting that the Canadian system and context are different from Singapore's), students who have been involved in bilingual education with immersion via content-based teaching have largely been successful at both academic learning and language acquisition (e.g., Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1987). However, productive skills in the second language seem to lag behind receptive skills even at higher levels of proficiency (e.g., Kowal & Swain, 1997). Investigation of instructional activities found that grammar tended to be taught in separate lessons which were divorced from the context which required use of the grammatical form (Swain & Carroll, 1987, as cited in Kowal & Swain, 1997). Recent research on

CBLT in other contexts (ESL and EFL, intensive language institutes and schools) has shown that it is not always easy to mesh instruction which focuses on language with instruction of content (see Pica, 2000, for a review). This does not mean that CBLT is not effective in developing second language skills, but rather that we can not assume that using English as the medium of instruction will foster high levels of English which meet the "international standard" desired. Training teachers to take advantage of language learning in content courses may be necessary. It is not possible to come to firm conclusions on these topics based on the current research, especially given the different contextual features of language and education in Singapore; however, these are areas that are worthy of further investigation.

Finally, issues of language and identity cannot be ignored. Establishing an "internationally acceptable" proficiency with reference to exonormative standards may not be successful, as Singaporeans identify themselves as multilingual English speakers. Ideology and identity are crucial parts of language learning and language use. Greater knowledge of English cannot be built up without also inculcating a sense of identity as an "English-language user." Accepting that different types of English are appropriate for different areas of use is essential. Even a child in Primary Four can understand that the type of language used on the playground is not the same type of language used in the classroom (or the future boardroom). Therefore, it may be necessary to adopt a form of Singapore Standard English that takes into account both identity and economy.

Conclusion

The assumption that English is a part of globalization seems to be well-founded, and the accompanying assumption that English is needed for international trade is almost universally accepted. As a part of human resource development, education clearly pays off. However the exact role of language learning in human resource development is less clear. Questions persist about the types of English that are necessary and how this can be measured with reference to economic development.

Singapore has come a long way in its economic and educational development. Continually re-assessing needs and goals and working toward implementation of those needs and goals have so far been successful. The enactment of universal bilingual education has been difficult but fruitful for Singapore's citizens. Although a plaintive note is sometimes raised—such as the teenager's comment that "It is sad that in modern Singapore, everything has to have a practical purpose if it is to be retained"—the current policy push is toward more process-oriented learning. Calls for the infusion of thinking skills, greater IT literacy, and teaching languages with an awareness of language use are all in keeping with educational movements internationally.

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Appendix A: Influential Education Reports

1956 *The All-Party Report* . All-Party Committee on Chinese Education.

1959 *The Tasks Ahead: PAP's Five Year Plan.* People's Action Party.

1979 *Report on the Ministry of Education, 1978* [*Goh Report*]. Education Study Team (chaired by K. S. Goh). Singapore: Singapore National Printers.

1979 *Report on Moral Education* [Ong Report]. Moral Education Committee. Singapore: Singapore National Printers.

1987 *Towards Excellence in Schools: A Report to the Minister for Education* [*School Excellence Report*]. Republic of Singapore.

1991 *Improving Primary School Education.* Review Committee (chaired by J. S. K. Yip). Ministry of Education.

1997 *IT Masterplan for Education.* Ministry of Education. Available at: http://www1.moe.edu.sg

2000 *Report of the Committee on Compulsory Education in Singapore* [*Compulsory Education Report*]. Committee on Compulsory Education (chaired by A. Wong). Available at: http://www1.moe.edu.sg

Appendix B: Useful Websites

Economic Development Board	http://www.sedb.com/edbcorp/flashed.html
IT Masterplan (MOE)	http://www1.moe.edu.sg/iteducation/masterplan/summary0.htm#one
Manpower 21	http://www.gov.sg/mom/m21/index.htm
Ministry of Education	http://www1.moe.edu.sg
Ministry of Education Language Centre	http://www1.moe.edu.sg/moelc/courses.htm
Ministry of Information and the Arts	http://www.mita.gov.sg
Ministry of Manpower	http://www.gov.sg/mom
Ministry of Trade and Industry	http://www.mti.gov.sg
Nanyang Technological University	http://www.ntu.edu.sg
National Institute of Education	http://www.nie.edu.sg
National Institute of Education	http://www.nie.edu.sg
National University of Singapore	http://www.nus.edu.sg
Singapore 21 (Perspectives)	http://www.gov.sg/feedback/archives/perspective/perspectiv_0299.html
Singapore Country Profile—public information about Singapore provided by MITA	http://www.sg/flavour/profile/default.htm
Singapore Government Home page	app.internet.gov.sg/scripts/sgip/main1.asp
Singapore Management University	http://www.smu.edu.sg/about_smu/index.htm
Singapore Press Releases (Sprinter)	http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/
Singstat	http://www.singstat.gov.sg
Skill Redevelopment Program	http://www.gov.sg/mom/gen/annual98/mom_ar38.html

Appendix C: Description of the Current Singapore Educational System

The current *Desired Outcomes of Education* provided by the MOE (2001b) highlight the role of citizenship and aspects of moral, social and aesthetic development from primary through tertiary. For primary students, examples of desired outcomes include:

- take pride in their work
- have cultivated healthy habits
- be able to distinguish right from wrong
- love Singapore

For secondary students, *Desired Outcomes* include, for example,

- believe in their ability
- be able to work in teams and value every contribution

Post-secondary and tertiary outcomes include:

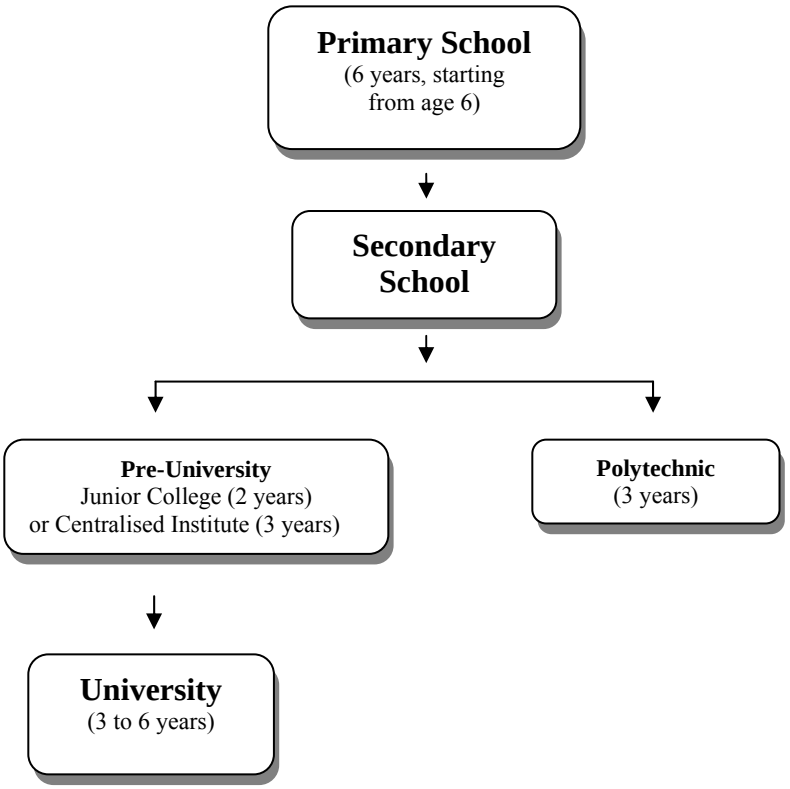
- be able to seek, process and apply knowledge
- be innovative—have a spirit of continual improvement, a lifelong habit of learning and an enterprising spirit in undertakings
- know and believe in Singapore as well as
- believe in our principles of multi-racialism and meritocracy, appreciate the national constraints but see the opportunities
- be willing to strive, take pride in work, value working with others
- think global, but be rooted to Singapore.

The emphasis on love of nation and recognition of responsibility to the nation and community are pervasive in the public discourse on education. Education is seen as a way of shaping and maintaining the national identity, maintaining ethnic affiliations and preparing individuals to participate in the workforce of the future.

Specific knowledge, or skill, outcomes are given in the different course syllabuses prepared by the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) of the MOE. This division is charged with conceptualizing, designing, reviewing and revising curriculums and syllabuses as well as developing materials and monitoring implementation of curriculums throughout Singapore's educational system (MOE, 1996).

The educational system includes general education at primary and secondary levels (ages approximately 6-11 and 12-15 respectively). There are several different avenues of post-secondary education including technical institutes, polytechnics and junior colleges. Typically, technical institutes and institutes of technology lead directly to joining the work force. Education in polytechnics can lead to university education or joining the work force directly upon graduation. Junior colleges and Centralized Institutes are intended to be pre-university programs (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 Overview of the Singapore educational system



Source: MITA (n.d.)

Primary education is divided into two stages: the Foundation Stage and the Orientation Stage. In the Foundation stage, there is a common curriculum which emphasizes English, Mother Tongue and Mathematics. Other courses offered at this stage include History, Arts & Crafts, Moral Education among others. At the end of the Foundation Stage, children are "streamed" for the Orientation Stage. Streaming is based on the end of year exam for Primary Four and includes coverage of English, Mother Tongue and Mathematics. Typically the Foundation stage is covered in four years (Primary One-Primary Four) and the Orientation Stage is covered in two years (Primary five-Primary Six). However, students with lower test scores on the streaming exam enter a slower steam and complete the Orientation Stage in three years instead of two. (More information on streaming is given below.) Secondary education is commonly completed in four years but may last five years, again depending on whether the students is placed in the Special, Express, or Normal stream.

New terminology for level of language study was adopted with the 1991 Syllabuses: those who studied in the Special stream were said to study English

and MT "at first language level"; in the Normal stream, English was studied at "first language level" and MT was studied at "second language level." Thus, "first language" in the educational context of Singapore means the first language in school, not the first language in the home. As schools moved toward English as the medium of instruction, English became the "first language" and the vernacular or MT became the "second language" (i.e. first and second school languages). [39, 40]

This terminology was in use earlier, as PM Lee Kuan Yew's response to *The Education Study Team Report* in 1979 makes it clear that the vernacular language was considered to be the "second language": he referred to Chinese learning Mandarin as a "second language" and Malays learning Malay as a "second language" throughout. It is possible to speculate that this terminology came about precisely because the language of the home often was not the school language as noted by the Education Study Team:

> It has not occurred to many Singaporeans how unnatural the present school system is. Most school children are taught in two languages—English and Mandarin. 85% of them do not speak either of these languages at home. (1979: 1-1)

The third level of education in Singapore may be either pre-university study at a junior college or centralised institute or technical school. Entrance to pre-university programs depends heavily on the results of "O" level examinations. The "O" level exam is part of the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education exam system. These exams are offered annually at the Normal (N), Ordinary (O), and Advanced (A) levels. Students must pass the "A" level exams to enter one of the Singaporean universities. The exams are jointly conducted by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the MOE (MOE, 2001c) and are an integral part of the educational assessment system.

Centralised institutes and junior colleges are designed to prepare students for university education. Students in junior colleges study for two years; those in centralised institutes study for three. Entrance exam results for the two centralised institutes are somewhat lower than those for junior colleges (personal communication, MOE Customer Service, April 10, 2001; personal communication, Jurong Institute, April 10, 2001). Another option is the system of polytechnics. Students in the four polytechnics study in a variety of technical diploma programs which prepare them for work in their specializations. Polytechnic graduates can go on to university study as well if they pass the "A" level examinations. Those students who do not have the required test results, or

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[39] An example history of a school that changed from Chinese-medium to English medium can be found at the Ngee Ann Primary School Website, under "Welcome" (http://schools.moe. edu.sg/tkps/ngee_ann. htm).

[40] In casual conversation, "Mother Tongue" is often used to imply the language used at home. However, in the context of schooling and language planning, "Mother Tongue" means the ethnic language studied at school and may, or may not, be the same as the language used at home, as discussed earlier in this paper.

the inclination, to go on for pre-university training can receive technical training at Institutes of Technical Education.

Numbers and Categories

As of 2000, there were 197 primary schools, 159 secondary schools, and four full schools. Full schools include both primary and secondary (MOE, 2001e). There is one international school (primary) located in Hong Kong. New schools are being built in Singapore, and other schools being refurbished, under a program known as PRIME, **P**rogramme for **R**ebuilding and **IM**proving **E**xisting Schools, to accommodate population shifts and a trend toward single session schools (MITA, 1999).

Currently, there are fifteen junior colleges, two centralised institutes and numerous Institutes of Technical Education (MOE, 2000b, 2001e). In addition there are 35 technical/commercial training institutes (MITA, 2000f). There are three universities; two of these are national universities (National University of Singapore [NUS] and Nanyang Technological University [NTU]) and one is private (Singapore Management University [SMU]). The latter is the newest university, established in 2000, and is in the unique position of being a private university which receives government funds and has permission to grant its own degrees (SMU Welcome, n.d.). The government may consider opening a fourth university that is more focused on applied fields and emphasizes teaching over research for the faculty (Davie, 2001b).

Numerous other private institutions for training in specialized areas exist. There are also various international schools at both primary and secondary levels. These schools are not part of the national educational system and will not be discussed in this report.

Within primary, secondary, full schools and junior colleges, there are different classifications by structure, funding and relative autonomy. *Government schools*, also known as "neighborhood schools" are fully-funded schools at both primary and secondary levels. *Government-aided schools* are not fully government-funded but are heavily subsidized. Typically these schools were started by cultural or religious groups and have strong traditions of their own. Government and government-aided schools follow the national curriculum. At the secondary level, a sub-set of government and government-aided secondary schools are classified as *Autonomous schools*. These schools "are given additional funds and more leeway to execute their mission of providing quality education" (MOE, 2001f). This number is currently being expanded from 18 to 30 or 40 (MOE, 2000i). Also at the secondary level are *Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools* which provide higher level Chinese language courses as well as higher level English courses. Finally, there are also eight *Independent schools* at the secondary level. These schools establish their own fees, select their own teachers and administrators and set their own curriculum. They are accredited by the Singaporean government and prepare students for national examinations. Although they have more flexibility in

curricular planning, they follow national education policies such as bilingual education and the teaching of Moral Education (MOE, 2001f).

The categories of Government, Government-Aided and Independent are exclusive. However, within Government and Government-aided, schools can be Autonomous, SAP or both. For example, Dunman High is a Government, Autonomous, SAP school. Nan Hua Secondary is Government and SAP but not Autonomous. CHIJ Secondary is Government-aided and Autonomous but not SAP. It is also possible for an Autonomous school to be an SAP school, for example, Chinese High.[41]

One other category of schools that should be mentioned is that of Special Education schools (SPED). These schools cater to students with special needs and disabilities of all types. Students who are successful on the PSLE can continue in mainstream schools or special secondary schools depending on their needs (MOE, 2001g). The curriculums of the SPEDs are established according to the special needs of their students; therefore, these schools will not be addressed further here. To the extent that they follow the national curriculum, the rest of the discussion in this report also applies to the SPED schools.

The Current Role of NIE

The National Institute of Education (NIE) (formerly Institute of Education) unified with Nanyang Technological University in 1991 (NIE, History, n.d.). The primary purpose of the NIE is teacher training for all primary, secondary, and junior college teachers in Singapore. As such all pre-service and in-service training is done through the NIE in collaboration with the MOE and the schools. NIE is also responsible for educational research and for higher education degrees (Master's and Doctoral levels.)

The Current Role of the Ministry of Education

As can be seen from the description above, Singapore uses a national, centralized school system. The MOE is responsible for formulating and implementing school policy throughout Singaporean schools. Government and Government-aided schools are under the administrative control of the MOE. Private schools which are part of the national education system (at primary, secondary, and pre-university levels) are also supervised by the MOE. The Institute of Technical Education, four polytechnics, and two national universities are statutory bodies of the MOE: they follow the overall policy of the MOE but are responsible to their own governing boards (MOE, 2000a).

[41] Information about individual schools can be found via links on the MOE website (www1.moe.edu.sg).