

## **A Brief Introduction to English Language Education in China**

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**Abstract:** Chinese language has been used for thousands of years in the "central country", but English is now the international language in the world. Strictly speaking, the nationwide English language education started slowly a little more than one hundred year ago (1903) in the late Qing Dynasty with the issue of "His Majesty's Teaching Standards for Primary and Secondary Institutions", which first figured in the syllabus of schools in 1902. And then it experienced roughly the periods of the Republic of China, the Peoples'Republic of China before the Culture Revolution, and after, and later came to its fastest period of development, the late twenty and early twenty 1st century, in which Chinese people are crazy about English. In my presentation, I will give a brief introduction to the history of English learning and teaching basically according to my personal experience on them. When these periods of English educational development in China are analyzed from the perspective of levels, methodologies and social phenomena, it is possible to help find out what really happened before, what is happening now and what might be happening in the future with English teaching and learning in China.

**Key Words: English; Education; China**

### **I. Introduction**

This presentation aims to give a general idea of the English language education in China from the beginning to the nowadays. We will first look back on the history of English language education's development in China. Secondly, we will have a look at the English education at different levels of educational systems including elementary and secondary school, high school and college. Thirdly we will give some introduction to the social English education which concerns the representative tests and the most famous social English training school known as "Xin Dong Fang" .Lastly we will talk about some representative textbooks in different stages of the English education development in China, such as Xu Guozhang English, Follow Me, New Concept English, Family Album USA and Crazy English.

## II. History

I would like to divide the history of English language education into three stages: before 1949, 1949 to the Culture Revolution (1966-1976) and the recent 30 years. Thus we can get a general idea of the development of English language education in China.

### 1. Before 1949

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In 1862, the Jing Shi Tong Wen Guan (the Imperial Translators' College) was founded and English Department was the first to start there. In 1903, after the Authorized School Regulation promulgated by China's Qing government in 1902, English as a required course began to be taught in schools.

In 1913, the Nanjing Provisional Government issued the Middle School Curriculum Standard and English became a compulsory course for secondary school.

### 2. From 1949 to 1976

1949 was a crucial date in the history of China - the founding of the People's Republic of China. Education had now to serve the proletarian purpose. All textbooks became vehicles for governpropaganda, loaded with messages of service to the people and the motherland. For the well-known reason, the place of English was taken in school syllabuses by Russian. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a minor revolution in education took place in China, as the need to open up to the international scene became more urgent. The importance of English was accepted and a significant step was taken in 1962 when English became part of the entrance examination for colleges and universities.

By the Cultural Revolution in 1966, during which English was again banned from schools, all formal foreign language education seemed to stop.

### 3. After the Culture Revolution to the Recent Years

In 1978 the Ministry of Education held an important conference on foreign language teaching. English was then given gradually prominence again in schools, the same importance as Chinese language and Mathematics.

English language education flourished in recent years after the year of 1978, and it can be simply illustrated by the "Four Great Inventions" of English training in 1990s: 1) Crazy English: an unique method of learning English by speaking and shouting loudly

2) Wenquxing: an electronic dictionary popular in the 1990s including words check,

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pronunciation, model tests and so on.

3) Repeater: A tape recorder-like machine by which the user can follow and repeat the original listening material and check again his own voice.

4) New Oriental: The most famous and successful English school aiming at English testing training

### III. English Education at Different Levels

China's English education system can be divided into the school education system and social education system, including three stages of school education: elementary and secondary school, high school, college.

1. Elementary and Secondary

2. High Education

3. College English

4. Social English

### IV. Tests for Work and Study abroad

1. TOEIC

2. IELTS and TOEFL

3. Xingdongfang (The New Oriental)

### V. Popular English Books in Different Times

1. Xu Guozhang English: A very popular English textbook in the 1980s and 1990s in the mainland of China By Xu Guozhang, a famous English linguist,.

2. Follow Me: A series of [television programmes](#) produced by the [BBC](#) in the late 1970s, which drew the attention of one hundred million of Chinese audience.

3. New Concept English: By [L. G. Alexander](#), a very successful [English language](#) textbook which is still popular now in China.

4. Family Album USA: A English textbook with [television](#) episodes on the example of [American](#) everyday life

5. Crazy English: A non-traditional method of learning English in mainland China conceived by Li Yang, whose famous quote is " To shout out loud, you learn."

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#### Biodata

Graduated from the English Department of Shandong Teachers' University in 1988, Mr. Wang Defeng began to work as a teacher of basic English knowledge in Qingdao University, and then went to University of Central Florida , USA to have further studies. After teaching Chinese language in France for one term and finishing his post-graduate courses of Chinese in Peking University in recent years, he tends to be a teacher of English and Chinese, and now he works in the Confucius Institute of Daebul University of Korea.