English in China Today
at the Harbin Institute of Technology:
Volume I
English in China Today
at the Harbin Institute of Technology:
Volume I

Edited by

Martin Wolff and Tian Qiang
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword ...................................................................................................................................... viii

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... ix

From The Editors......................................................................................................................... xiv

Opinion ........................................................................................................................................... xix

Chapter One .................................................................................................................................. 1
College English Education and HIT: An Introduction
Li Xiaohong (李小红), Liu Xiaodan (刘晓丹) and Li Fei (李斐)

Chapter Two .............................................................................................................................. 13
Excessive Asynchrony and Priority Inversion in China’s English Education
Tian Qiang (田强) and Li Jiehong (李洁红)

Chapter Three ............................................................................................................................ 31
How to Overcome University Students’ Anxiety in English Class
Chang Mei (常梅)

Chapter Four .............................................................................................................................. 44
Research into Idiom Translation Strategy
Wang Xiangyu (王祥玉) and Wang Qianyu (王倩玉)

Chapter Five ............................................................................................................................... 63
Approach to Translation Errors: A Cultural Perspective
Zheng Shuming (郑淑明)

Chapter Six ................................................................................................................................. 75
The Role of Chinese Linguaculture in ELT in China
Song Li (宋莉)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Survey and Analysis of Non-English Major Undergraduates’ Vocabulary Learning Modes</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhao Longwu (赵龙武) and Li Huijie (李慧杰)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Dialogic Approach to Cultural Teaching in College English</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xu Liying (许丽莹)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>A Study based on Nonverbal Communication under Different Cultural Backgrounds</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meng Yu (孟宇)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>A Comparative Study of American and Chinese Teachers Discourse in College Oral English Class</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhou Hua (周华) and Cheng Cheng (成城)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Case Study on the Bi-focal Scheme of English Teaching for the Undergraduate-and-Master Integration Program</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ma Jun (马骏)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>The Advancement of LLS Theories and Researches in SLA</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Li Huijie (李慧杰)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen</td>
<td>Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition and the Implications in Graduate Oral English Teaching</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liu Xiujie (刘秀杰) and Yu Yunling (于云玲)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen</td>
<td>An Empirical Study of Bilingual Teaching at HIT</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Li Jiehong (李洁红) and Zhao Jiaying (赵嘉颖)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Fifteen .................................................................................................................. 211
The Effects of RTA on Non-English-Major Postgraduates’ Reading Proficiency
Chang Mei (常梅)

Chapter Sixteen .................................................................................................................. 230
Empirical Research in Vocabulary Instruction: Based on a Web Investigation of Autonomous Learning
Zhang Lingyan (张凌岩) and Chen Ying (陈莹)

Chapter Seventeen .............................................................................................................. 247
Developing Generic Power in EFL Reading
Chen Nan (陈楠)

Chapter Eighteen ............................................................................................................... 254
EFL: Critical Reading Ability—An Investigation of Science Students
Li Xiaohong (李小红), Sun Shengping (孙盛萍), Xu Lili (徐莉莉)

Chapter Nineteen .............................................................................................................. 271
An Exploration of Postgraduate English Audio-Visual-Oral Curriculum
Li Xue (李雪)

Chapter Twenty .................................................................................................................. 279
Development of Academic English Proficiency of Doctoral Candidates at HIT
Huang Furong (黄芙蓉) and Chang Qing (常青)

Contributors....................................................................................................................... 287
FOREWORD

English language and literature education for nearly four decades has been carving out an ever increasing role in China’s tertiary education system, and is contributing meaningfully to its wholesome development and growing significance throughout the world.

Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) is founded on the tried and true tradition of research and development both in the laboratory and the classroom that has sustained her on the ever-accelerating race course of future-oriented educational development. She is thus entitled to and responsible for a pivotal and probing role in the tertiary education system as a whole and in the sphere of English education in particular. Our dual goal, as qualified College English teachers in China, is to aid the holistic integration of English education throughout the social education component of Chinese tertiary education and to do so effectively without disrupting the status quo.

My esteemed English education colleagues have been active in and outside the classroom. While conscientiously discharging their teaching responsibilities at HIT, they tirelessly collect the tiny grains of wisdom retrieved from their classroom floors and keenly and insatiably glean insights, trends and practical application related to the education of young minds. They then carefully analyze, integrate and test these small seeds in their classroom prior to sharing them with the educational community at large.

I am grateful to and proud of my colleagues for their dedication and contributions to the production of this journal. My special gratitude extends to the editors, who with creativity, efficiency and diligence, have produced a journal of quality and far reaching impact.

Dr. Fu Li
Professor and Dean, School of Foreign Languages
Harbin Institute of Technology
INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Ivy League is an athletic conference comprising eight private institutions of higher education in the Northeastern United States. The conference name is also commonly used to refer to those eight schools as a group. The eight institutions are Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Princeton University, The University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University. The term Ivy League also has connotations of academic excellence, selectivity in admissions, and social elitism.

In the early 1930s, New York Herald Tribune reporter Stanley Woodward referred to these universities as the "Ivy League" for the first time. The "Ivy" part of Ivy League is a reference to the plants that climb all over many of the old campus buildings at each school. The term was inspired by a sarcastic comment from a sports writer assigned to cover a Columbia-Pennsylvania football game. When he received his assignment, he grumbled about "watching the ivy grow." Another reporter overheard the comment and dubbed the prestigious group of schools "the Ivy League."

China has recently named its Ivy League schools based solely on academic excellence, selectivity in admissions, and social elitism. The campus buildings are devoid of climbing ivy and they lack competitive sports teams. Although the Chinese Government does not approve of university ranking, there are many such services. At least one such ranking service has been rocked by scandal for selling positions on its list. Whether ethical or not, the C-9 universities have never appeared on any ranking as the top nine universities in China. This now fuels discussions about the criteria used for their selection.

Formation of China's Ivy League hailed 08:37, October 27, 2009
China's Ministry of Education voiced on Monday its support for the formation of C9, an academic conference comprising nine domestic prestigious universities and referred to as China's Ivy League by some experts.

Xu Mei, the ministry's spokeswoman, said the establishment of the conference is a "helpful attempt that is conducive to the country's construction of high-quality colleges, cultivation of top-notch innovative talents and enhanced cooperation and exchanges between Chinese universities and their foreign counterparts."

On October 12, nine institutions of higher learning including the elite Peking University and Tsinghua University signed cooperative agreements that featured flexible student exchange programs, deepened cooperation on the training of postgraduates, and establishment of a credit system that allows students to win credits through attending classes in member universities of C9.

Other universities are Zhejiang University, Harbin Institute of Technology, Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Nanjing University, University of Science and Technology of China, and Xi'an Jiaotong University.

The Ivy League, which comprises eight oldest and finest institutions of higher learning in the United States including Yale University and Harvard University, is known to the world for its academic excellence. Source: China Daily.

**Harbin Institute of Technology**

Photo: Martin Wolff
Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) was founded in 1920. From its beginning, HIT has received preferential support from the central government. In 1954, the Ministry of Higher Education designated, for the first time, six national key universities. HIT was the only one of the six outside of Beijing. In 1984, HIT again found its way onto the list of fifteen national key universities to receive special support. In 1996, HIT was among the first group of universities to be included in Project 211. This project targets a hundred institutions of higher education in China to receive preferential support for development in order to become world-class universities in the twenty-first century. In 1999, HIT was listed as one of the top nine key universities in China. This distinction provided HIT with the opportunity to develop into a highly-competitive first-rate university with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and the Heilongjiang Provincial Government.

After eighty-seven years, HIT has developed into a large and nationally renowned multi-disciplinary university with science, engineering and research as its core. We have established our own unique programs related to the field of astronautics that are unparalleled anywhere in China. We have broadened our established disciplinary programs by utilizing a cross-disciplinary curriculum and as such have formed a comparatively full disciplinary system that consists of key, emerging and supporting programs. HIT now has twenty-one schools/departments, including seventy-three undergraduate programs, a hundred and forty-seven masters' programs, eighty-one doctoral programs, eighteen post-doctoral research stations, eighteen national key disciplines, and thirty-two national & provincial (ministerial) key labs. The university employs 2,944 full-time teachers, among which 884 are professors, 1,102 are associate professors, including 22 academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. At present, there are 42,695 full-time students including 25,035 undergraduates, 11,794 master degree candidates and 4,387 doctoral degree candidates. We also added the Shenzhen Graduate School and Weihai Campus to the main campus in Harbin (including the Research Academy of Science and Technology and Research Academy of Industrial Technology), forming a pattern of “one university, three campuses.”

HIT is consistently on the forefront in making innovations in research. For years, HIT has continued to undertake large-scale and highly sophisticated national projects. HIT's ability for scientific research has always been among the strongest in all universities in China. In 2007, HIT funds for
scientific research reached 1.1 billion RMB. In the comprehensive ten-year evaluation of the 863 project, HIT scientific research programs ranked second among all universities in China.

HIT has been making great contributions to China's hi-tech research by creating many new inventions in scientific research fields such as China's first simulation computer, the first intelligent chess-playing computer, the first arc-welding robots, the first world advanced-level system radar, the first CMOS chip IC card with our own patent, the first giant computer-aided real-time 3-D image construction system, the first microcomputer-operated fiber twiner and the first large-scale tank-head forming machine. The famous “Shenzhou Series Spaceship Project” received massive assistance from HIT in the field of large-scale land-based space simulation equipment, returning cabin deformation and orthopraxy welding technology, three-axel simulation experimental platform and fault diagnosis. The micro-satellite “Testing Satellite No.1,” constructed mainly by HIT, was the first fully developed and launched satellite by a Chinese university. The technical advancements on the satellite meet international aerospace standards and mark a new chapter in the history of HIT and China's history of astronautics.

HIT students study humanities and social sciences along with basic engineering and science courses for a strong comprehensive base. They go on to learn scientific research methods and laboratory skills which enhance their creativity and innovative abilities. When our students graduate from HIT, they are equipped with strong theoretical knowledge and the ability for practical application.

HIT is famous for its original style of schooling: “Being strict in qualifications for graduates; making every endeavor in educating students.” Our graduates have been warmly welcomed by employers throughout China; more than 100,000 graduates have stepped into society and many have moved up to high-ranking managerial positions and work as specialists in the fields of science and technology, education, and economics. A number of graduates have assumed leadership positions in the CPC and governments at different levels, or become generals of the PLA, academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

HIT has remained an international university since its foundation. Courses at HIT used to be conducted exclusively in Russian and Japanese. After
the reforming and opening up to the outside world, HIT has gained greater weight internationally. So far, we have signed academic cooperation agreements with 126 institutions of higher education in 24 countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and Russia. Cooperation and exchanges are carried out between HIT and these universities though exchanging students, faculty and research staff, holding academic conference and cooperating in scientific research.

Today, all the faculty, students and staff of HIT, are dedicating, with full confidence, their concerted efforts to advance bravely towards the goal of building HIT into a well-known world-class university.

Source: http://en.hit.edu.cn/
The Chinese Government, Chinese teachers of English and Chinese school administrators all claim that China has a National EFL (English as a Foreign Language) program.

Chinese who go abroad to an English speaking country become fluent in English within four to six months.

Foreign students who come to China to learn Putonghua become fluent in Putonghua within four to six months.

Chinese students learn English in China for up to sixteen years and graduate functionally illiterate, unable to produce comprehensible oral or written English.

There are two main reasons for this National disgrace. First and foremost, there is no English Speaking Environment (ESE) anywhere in China, not even on the campus of China’s Ivy League (C-9) universities. This is akin to receiving sixteen years of swimming instruction on the river bank but never entering the river.

Second, China does not have a National EFL program. In reality, China’s National English program is ESP (English for a Special Purpose). Students in China learn all about English for test taking purposes. Middle school students study English for the National College Entrance examinations. University students study English to pass the National TEM or CET examinations. Nowhere in China is English learned or acquired for communicative purposes. English is taught just like any other subject.

Although “English Fever” is running rampant throughout China and is claimed to be “market driven,” the rush to institute English learning nationwide, with more than one million Chinese teachers of English who are themselves, for the most part, unable to produce comprehensible oral or written English or teach in the target language, has miserably failed to meet market needs. The goal of universities and colleges throughout China is to have students pass national English competency examinations such as
TEM 4, CET 4 and CET 6. Setting aside, for the moment, the fact that these national English competency examinations bear little or no relationship to comprehensible output, the pass rates have become the exclusive focus of administrative attention and false pride. This is in part due to demands of Chinese employers who are misinformed that passing CET 6 is the evidence of an accomplished English speaker.¹ Wang Shugua, President of Harbin Institute of Technology is quoted as saying: “I recognize CET as a good tool to promote English studies but I am against the practice of regarding a CET certificate as the prerequisite for graduation, which is totally misleading.” He tried to eliminate the requirement for a CET certificate in order to graduate from HIT, but gave up without success: "I had to reconsider the usefulness of CET certificates in job hunting for our graduates. Almost all employers want their recruits to have a CET certificate, so I had to push my students to pass the CET for their good, although it is against my will."²

The market need for graduates who can produce comprehensible English output has been completely ignored. Consequently, foreign employers, Joint Venture employers and Chinese companies doing business abroad are hiring university graduates from India because they are better able to produce comprehensible oral and written English, than their Chinese counterparts. Imagine more than five million Chinese university graduates, who have learned English for sixteen years, many of whom are being passed over for Chinese jobs in China. This is simply unacceptable! English is one of “the ten most popular disciplines that saw low rates of employment last year.”³ Chinese universities are under tremendous pressure to change curriculums to meet the needs of the job market. Instead, they are simply reducing enrollments in certain majors.⁴ Yang Weiguo, associate professor of Beijing based Renmin University, said that "One of the reasons for the difficulty in university graduates finding

³ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-06/27/content_6799171.htm Beijing-based survey company Mycos HR
employment is that they are unable to satisfy the needs of employers," and
that the universities needed to adjust their teaching methods and content
quickly to conform to social development and demand.5

While there is a need for specialist terminology, the greatest need of
international employers is to have employees who can communicate
successfully in English. Thus, communication and accommodation should
be emphasized in language instruction; the mastering of perfect
grammatical forms is an added bonus that can be reserved for later
refinement. Flexibility is just as important as the mastering of prescribed
forms, if not more so. In order to communicate across international
boundaries, students must learn to adjust to their interlocutor in order to
facilitate understanding. Moreover, because of the growing use of English
as a global lingua franca, students of the language need to be exposed to a
wide range of English accents in order to increase their abilities to
understand the people they are likely to encounter in an international
career. Furthermore, it is not only formal but informal language skills that
should be practiced at university; students should be made aware of the
different genres and registers in English, so that they can determine the
appropriate use of the language in the various situations in which they are
likely to find themselves. Finally, students should be taught skills that
allow them to mediate between languages and cultures. Thus an
intercultural approach is needed in language teaching, so that future
employees are “able to view different cultures from a perspective of
informed understanding” (Corbett 2003, 2). An approach that has the goal
of successful intercultural communication at its core will prepare students
for the relatively unpredictable needs of language use in corporate Europe.6

All Chinese university students are required to study English, both English
majors and non-English majors. In many instances, the English skills of
non-English majors are better than those of English majors. A small
minority of students have advanced English skills. However, these
students have either studied abroad or improved their English through self-
study. Stated in another way, these students have not allowed the Chinese
educational system to hold them back, to retard their development or
defeat their goal. They are from the same bolt of cloth as Li Na, the 2011
French Open Tennis Champion from China. She also went outside the

5 20% University Graduates Fail to Find Jobs in 2007 (Xinhua News Agency
October 1, 2008).
Number 1.
Chinese education system to hone her skills and become a World Champion.

From a purely educational viewpoint the solution is simple. Chinese students learning English require an English speaking environment, language immersion where western culture is not severed from English. Each Chinese university that requires all of its students to learn English needs to become a little English enclave, an English village where the students will acquire English 24/7.

Linguists agree that Language and Culture are inseparable but China is adept at separating them for English teaching purposes. From a purely political point of view, it is doubtful that the CCP would allow creation of 2,400 plus little foreign enclaves throughout China, or even one. “International forces are trying to Westernize and divide us by using ideology and culture,” Hu wrote in an article in Qiushi: “We need to realize this and be alert to this danger.”

China’s current English ESP is void of real English culture. Current language policy allows learning all about English but does not foster English for communication because that would cause too much western spiritual pollution of the Chinese students’ mind.

**China's vice president orders more thought control over students**  
Xi Jinping, the Chinese Vice-President, who is tipped to take over from President Hu Jintao later this year, has ordered universities to increase thought control over students and young lecturers.  
By Peter Simpson, Beijing

His call for more ideological indoctrination comes amid a ratcheting up of propaganda ahead of next autumn's keynote Communist Party congress, which is likely to see Mr Xi unveiled as China's next leader.

"University Communist Party organs must adopt firmer and stronger measures to maintain harmony and stability in universities," Mr Xi told Communist Party members at a meeting attended by the country's universities chiefs in Beijing.

"Daily management of the institutions should be stepped up to create a good atmosphere for the success of the Party's 18th congress," he added.

The Party's grip on universities is seen as crucial in cementing its ideology among the influential middle classes—and campuses have long been regarded as source for discontent.

---

In the past, aggrieved students have received public sympathy and support.

Mr Xi's directive comes as the ruling Communist Party tries to engineer a trouble-free leadership transition amid growing internal threats to its political control.

The increasing number of riots, demonstrations and strikes sparked by official corruption, land seizures, widespread pollution and labour disputes over low pay has deeply unnerved the secretive government.

The Arab Spring uprisings, which led to online calls for copycat revolts in China, have also rattled the leadership.

And the increasing influence and popularity of internet social media sites—especially among young Chinese—is also causing great anxiety.

In response to the myriad of threats, the government has issued national orders for officials to get a grip on ideology and push "socialist core values."

Mr Xi, the "princeling" son of Communist veteran Xi Zhongxun, also told university chiefs to closely monitor lecturers, especially those starting their academic careers.

"Young teachers have many interactions with students and cast significant [political and moral] influence on them," Mr Xi said.

"They also play a very important role in the spread of ideas," he added.

A paramount task for universities is to "instruct" the thoughts of young lecturers and recruit more of them as party members, Mr Xi said.

National newspapers were on Thursday also reporting instructions from senior leaders to intensify "propaganda work."

Li Changchun, a Standing Committee member of the Communist Party's Politburo, told propaganda officials to enhance "the ability of opinion guiding and international communication, and strive to create an objective and friendly international public opinion environment in favour of our country."  

So for now, China continues to teach knowledge of English just like any other subject, but not for its intended purpose, communication. Learn to swim on the riverbank.

8 Graduated with a degree in electrical engineering from the Harbin Institute of Technology in 1966.
Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result.

For more than the past thirty years, ESP (English for Special Purpose) has been taught in China to pass exams, College Entrance exam, TEM and CET. The entire English pedagogy and methodology, from primary school through college or university, is test driven. The text books are specifically written and the course teaching plans are designed to maximize test scores.

China annually produces more than five million college and university graduates who know more about English than most native speakers but who are functionally illiterate, unable to use that which they have studied for up to sixteen years. They are simply unable to produce comprehensible English.

The tests have been roundly criticized but the test authors mount a rousing defence. To quell the opposition and maintain the test royalty income, the test authors fine tune or tweak the tests from time to time. They staunchly maintain the efficacy of the tests even in the face of the reality that the tests inappropriately drive the curriculum and produce functional illiterates. They tinker with tune ups when a major overhaul is mandated.

China’s tertiary education system is like a factory assembly line, producing more than five million end products (graduates) each year. Most responsible factories have quality control personnel who inspect and weed out defective products. But China’s colleges and universities produce over five million defective Human Robots each year, i.e. functionally illiterate graduates. TEM and CET are the quality controls but they are flawed quality inspection tools that are incapable of discovering product defects.

“We have CET4/6 for non-English majors and TEM4/8 for English majors which are being regarded as a stepping-stone to get a decent job. Unfortunately CET4/6 or TEM4/8 doesn’t equal to accomplish English
successfully. Most of us have been learning English since we are 10 years old, but we still can’t surmount the obstacle of communicating with foreigners”—Shelley PG3 Harbin Institute of Technology.

A factory which produces flawed products cannot remain in business, yet China’s colleges and universities have continued to produce defective products for over thirty years.

Some efforts have been undertaken to eliminate the tests.

Wang Shugua, President of Harbin Institute of Technology is quoted as saying “I recognize CET as a good tool to promote English studies but I am against the practice of regarding a CET certificate as the prerequisite for graduation, which is totally misleading.” He tried to eliminate the requirement for a CET certificate in order to graduate from HIT, but gave up without success. “I had to reconsider the usefulness of CET certificates in job hunting for our graduates. Almost all employers want their recruits to have a CET certificate, so I had to push my students to pass the CET for their good, although it is against my will.”

Chinese graduates who go abroad for further study find their English so poor that they are required to take expensive and time consuming remedial English courses before being allowed to participate in the foreign school study.

Albert Einstein would call this insanity.

China must develop an English pedagogy, curriculum and methodology that develops graduates who can produce both oral and written comprehensible English output, with confidence.

Then a testing system should be developed that actually measures the efficacy of the curriculum instead of the current system where the curriculum measures the efficacy of the tests.

Producing functionally illiterate graduates is a National disgrace, a monumental waste of time and resources and does NOT contribute to a better off, harmonious society.

College English education at the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) falls, as it does in other key universities in China, into three major parts: the English major, the non-English major at the undergraduate level, and the non-English major at the graduate level. Each part has witnessed a distinctively different range of developmental stages in the past, is faced with a different range of issues at present, and will take a different range of similar approaches to the challenges of the future.

Part One

Yesterday

English education in HIT has a history of fifty-four years, covering a developmental process resembling the sign “√” standing for “right” or “correct.” The first nine years, before the so-called “revolution,” witnessed a minor climax of progress, but was ended only by an unexpectedly turbulent decade. The years since 1978 found a continuous ascent in terms of both the quantity and the quality of college English education.

1. Founding and stagnation

Foreign language education at HIT has followed a developmental course distinctively different from that of any other key university in China.
As the institute was initially established, administrated and mostly attended by Russians, for decades only Russian was taught, though Japanese briefly replaced it between the late 1930s and mid-1940s. Russian, or Japanese in that period, was not taught as a “foreign” language but as the “working” language, organically knitted into the subject courses.

In 1953, HIT experienced the first teachers of English—former military staff serving in the Korean War. HIT was one of two universities serving as a platform for the Sino-Soviet joint-venture at college level. Teaching of English began in 1957, and the deteriorating relationship between China and Russia eventually prompted the necessity of teaching English in schools and universities. Even so, English was still a minor foreign language in contrast to the prevailing Russian at HIT. An organization named The Second Teaching Section of Foreign Languages was formed three years later in 1960, solely targeting teachers of English and those who had come to HIT several years before but who worked in positions unrelated to English teaching. They were called together and became its founding staff.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the teaching of English enjoyed rapid development and experienced ever growing favour, and as a result the number of English teaching staff fell far behind the need and demand. To narrow this gap, a large portion of teaching staff who had been teaching Russian converted to English, due to a combination of external needs and personal willingness on behalf of some of the teachers. Although this phenomenon occurred in many other universities in China, it was not as seen as often as at HIT. The few who had majored in English consciously took up the responsibility of training the formerly experienced teachers of Russian, now diligent learners of “English-as-the-second-foreign-language.”

In 1964, when English teaching at HIT arrived at its first “peak,” there were about twenty teachers of English, and “teaching while learning” was a feature for many of the staff members.

Just one year before that, the institute had started to use the set of nationally standardized textbooks (before that, course textbooks had been informally compiled and locally printed by each individual teacher or groups of teachers responsible for the teaching of each course).
“Grammar and Translation” was the prevalent feature regarding the teaching method. Key words and grammatical points were explained (in Chinese) before each text was translated by the students, with the help from their teacher, into Chinese.

Collective wisdom provided an indispensable and a widely hailed part in the advance preparation of the teaching staff members for their new lessons.

In 1965, the teachers and students were called upon to play an active role in “the Education of Socialism,” and college life was fundamentally interrupted as a large segment of teachers and students were dispatched to the countryside.

With the unexpected “Cultural Revolution” in 1966, English teaching, together with the normal operation of daily college life, came to a sudden end.

In the years that followed, HIT experienced no real teaching or any other academic endeavours, let alone English teaching, although some rudimentary activities were conducted between 1972 and 1977 by the so-called Worker-Peasant-Soldier students who were primarily English-illiterate. HIT experienced stagnation, as did all of China. The only saving grace was that in those turbulent years, self-teaching and mutual academic aids never ceased among the teachers of foreign languages at HIT. After 1977, more teachers, who had formerly taught Russian, started to learn English and consequently became teachers of English to alleviate the severe national shortage of teachers of the language.

2. Years of recovery and arrival at maturation

The year 1978 saw a “brand-new” start in English teaching in HIT, as in most universities in China. At HIT, the teachers had to start again from scratch, just as twenty years before, teaching English from the ground level of the ABCs.

Yet, the improving political and economic situation in China provided smooth and rapid growth. By the early 1980s, English teaching throughout
China, including HIT, had returned to its prior level of 1965. By the late 1980s, it had been already earned the name of English Education, in terms of both its magnitude and its maturity (yet most people were still inclined to addressing it as English teaching).

In 1982 HIT developed a separate faculty for graduate education, and a corresponding teaching section was established specifically for English teaching for graduate students.

In 1985 HIT saw the first group of graduates majoring in English, and that diploma project lasted five college years. This program was successful in providing over 130 English majors badly needed as teaching staff, interpreters and in other posts requiring English competency. In 1988 HIT commenced enrolment of undergraduate English majors. This was commonly regarded as a landmark breakthrough of English as a major in an institute featuring science and technology—English majors had been found in universities with mixed science and arts curriculum and independent language universities.

In 1988 HIT was chosen by the National Education Commission as one of the few key universities to implement the Standardized Examination of College English for undergraduates. Students’ reports of performance in Band 4 and Band 6 met with growing recognition. For a few years, HIT was a proving ground for trial use of all the three most competent sets of textbooks, compiled by staff members from Shanghai Jiaotong University, Qinghua University and Fudan University, respectively.

Up to this point, English education at HIT had been equipped with every component a mature curriculum needs for English education in China. English education for non-English majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and English majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels, thus arrived at a form of maturity.

Part Two

Today

With the accumulated achievements of twenty years, English education at HIT has much to be proud of when objectively reviewing its history. But, as with almost all other peer universities, English education at HIT is
confronted with a whole range of concerns and challenges in the future.

1. Non-English majors at the undergraduate level, or College English

Teaching of non-English majors at the undergraduate level has always been the mainstream of college English education, having the longest history and engaging the largest number of faculty members. Currently there are about ninety faculty members, composing three teaching sections collaterally subordinate to the College English Department, and comprising over three fifths of all faculty members engaged in teaching English at HIT.

Faculty members in Section One and Section Two are engaged in the teaching of students in average classes. Courses fall into two main parts: integrated courses and expanding courses. The integrated courses, undertaken to train and improve the basic aspects of knowledge and skills, usually come in the form of reading and writing, listening and speaking. The expanding courses, undertaken to heighten the language skills and broaden the range of knowledge of the students who are at the top echelon of English learning, are more content-based, focusing on history, philosophy, religion, literature and other fundamental aspects of world culture as a whole.

Faculty members in Section Three are engaged in the teaching of students in advanced classes and students from the Honors School, who are more elite in nature and function. Courses usually start at advanced levels and are more content-based.

The teaching is assessed in a coordinated manner, including assessment from experts, assessment from the target students, performances of the target students in campus examinations and the Band 4 and Band 6 tests.

Like most peer key universities, faculty members who are teaching College English at the undergraduate level are faced with a series of concerns and challenges, some of which are both serious and demanding:

Improvements in English education at the primary and second levels have in turn accomplished much of the work which was formerly done at the
tertiary or college level. The “life space” has dwindled in many key universities whose freshmen have benefited more from those improvements and thus find less to learn in college. A related problem is that the “breakthrough” is neither in hand nor in sight, as any substantial change concerning teaching is to be made following a policy change from above, rather than preceding it.

The so-called “knowledge explosion” has contributed to extensive curriculum requirements that leave the students with little time to digest or reflect upon what has been learned in one class before rushing off to the next. This fundamentally degrades the quality of their English learning.

One of the side effects of advanced telecommunication and internet is the diversion of the students’ attention and interest. Learners of English are seldom found to concentrate, as their predecessors did two decades ago, on what they are supposed to be learning.

Essentially, the confusion and wavering of the policy-makers is largely responsible for many of the problems.

2. Non-English majors at the graduate level

In 1986 the Graduate English Department was originally named the Graduate English Office. In June 2006 when the School of Foreign Languages was established, it was renamed as it is now. The department, as one of the seven sections of the School of Foreign Languages, is mainly in charge of the graduate English teaching for the graduate science and engineering majors of the institute. The Graduate English Program covers English teaching at two levels: Master English teaching and Doctoral English teaching. In the curriculum development, it can be seen that the emphasis of teaching in master level is placed on the practical ability for coping with the students’ job search upon graduation and the basic skills in academic research. At the doctoral level the focus is on oral and written English for academic purposes. Therefore, the varied practical need and the emphasis on personalized learning have to be met in order to guarantee the effectiveness of teaching.

The English courses the department offers for the graduate science and engineering majors at HIT include several gradations, which are taught by
native English teachers and Chinese English teachers. They are provided with the opportunity of participating in visiting scholar programs or enrolling in degree programs at world-renowned foreign universities.

**Course development**

The goal of graduate English teaching is to develop the students’ ability in translation across Chinese and English, practical writing, and proficiency in academic exchanges. A master-doctor integrated course system is established including: Oral English Course for Practical Purpose (Master Level); Writing English Course for Practical Purpose (Master Level); Academic Presentation (Doctor level); and Academic Writing (Doctor level).

It is worth mentioning that the academic writing course is the individualized writing course for different disciplines such as material science, computer science and aeronautics science. It helps the students in the discourse level of academic writing.

**Teaching material development**

The teaching materials were developed to meet the needs of students, which later materialized into a series of textbooks.

Language and Science emphasizes English for a special purpose with practical writing and academic writing as its core.

Language and Culture centers on the oral aspect of language learning with the cross-cultural communicative ability development as its core.

English for Oral Academic Exchange develops students’ ability in attending international academic events such as conferences.

English for New Scientists helps to develop the academic writing ability including research paper writing.

**Assessment system**

Assessment is an essential aspect of teaching. The model of goal plus process evaluation is adopted in the system to fairly assess the students’
language learning and proficiency. The goal-oriented assessment refers to the tests the students take upon enrolment as graduates, which is the basis for gradation of English teaching. Process assessment refers to the records kept of each student which include attendance, class reports, participation in class, assignments, extracurricular activities and tests at the end of the English course.

Concerns at this level

Graduate English teaching has witnessed great improvement in the past decades through the growing investment in research projects and facility construction, the emphasis put on teaching and research and on standardizing the teaching process. However, the disadvantages and weakness are still keenly felt when compared to world class universities.

A high-level faculty team needs to be constructed. In recent years, great effort has been committed to faculty team building and teacher development. However, in the School of Foreign Languages, we are still in need of leading teacher-researchers with domestic and international influence. The activities of teaching-related research and publication in first class journals are still limited. In a sharply competitive environment, HIT meets with great difficulty in attracting talents with its comparatively marginal economic status and geographical location.

Courses need to be further optimized. In recent years, class research projects have been undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of English teaching. Hopefully, the research findings will help improve the content and the teaching method. However, more personalized and specialized teaching is still the objective we strive for.

An English speaking environment needs further improvement. The creation of a close-to life and authentic English speaking environment is still rather limited. For example, the simulated international conference for doctoral candidates has provided the students an opportunity to learn about research achievements in other disciplines. However, since the students are from different schools, real interaction in academic English is not conducted. More varied forms of extracurricular activities have yet to be found to enrich the English learning environment for the graduates.

HIT is an international university, which so far has signed academic
cooperation agreements with 126 institutions of higher education in 24 countries. To realize the goal of building HIT into a top-notch world university, the graduate English Department has the responsibility to improve the graduate students’ English level in both their academic learning and disciplinary research.

3. English majors at the undergraduate level

When English majors were established in technical institutes, those who supported the institutions must have realized the common problem with the traditional norms. The traditional “Salon” model of English majors suited to the elite norm of education, free from the concerns of employment, was divorced from the changed reality of life. Something had to be done to “join” the model of English majors with this changed reality. Their intention, with some idealistic tints, was an airtight combination of English proficiency with technological familiarity.

But that intention has, unfortunately, proved both unfeasible and invalid. The dimension denoted by the term “technology” goes far beyond the imagination of those founding fathers of English majors in technical institutes. English proficiency, going hand in hand with technological familiarity, is a sheer impossibility. Meanwhile, the problematic reality is not realized by the insensitive outsiders, especially the unknowing parents. Indulging themselves in the illusion over the major, they have helped aggravate the dilemma to an unprecedented severity by feeding their innocent children into an already indigestible queue, waiting at a narrow bottleneck of employment.

Structural defects and cognitive deviations, such as the prevalence of courses missing the needs of market and learners and the excessive devotion of faculty members to theoretical issues, have either added to the problems or delayed the solutions.

English majors at the graduate level

Unlike the distinctive division between the English major and the non-English major in teaching and academic life in most universities, such issues enjoy the collective and collaborative endeavours from both spheres at HIT. But like the cases in most other universities, three academic foci
have consumed nearly all the interests and efforts of the faculty members: linguistics, literature, and translation and interpreting. International and inter-campus academic endeavours have helped build up the quality and fame of the school, and to a certain extent resisted the excessive “tilt” of the institute towards technology.

The major problems at this level are ontological frailty and functional misplacement. As the endeavours in each area fail in locating a justified “position” on the basic cognitive level, their functional targets miss those of learners in life. Themes like language acquisition are not worth such massive attention and devotion as its basic conditions are absent from the daily life of practically all learners of English in China. Literature is no longer worth such academic endeavours as it is more closely related to the cultivation of the basic quality of the learners. Translation and interpretation are more practical than theoretical, and are based on a solid foundation of the mother tongue and culture, which is in reality weak to the point of disabling.

**Part Three**

**Tomorrow**

Any endeavour in forecasting the future of English education in China can be done only within the speculative spheres, since that system is still immature as a whole in terms of stability and regularity in its movement. Positioned in the Ivy League but not the ivory tower, HIT enjoys no privilege and is no exception. What is presented here for the future of English education at HIT, therefore, is nothing but ponderings based on the weigh-and-balance of the nature of modern education, English education in China in function, the prospect of HIT in development and a handful of other factors.

College English education as a whole in China will develop towards the direction of a better integration of cultural and language aspects, a more life-related layout of ability training, and a higher content-based flavoured syllabus and curriculum. HIT will then move ahead into the advanced rank.