



**UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA**

**FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS**

**PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO EN LINGÜÍSTICA, LITERATURA Y TRADUCCIÓN**

**TESIS DOCTORAL**

***COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN CHINA'S EFL AND ESL SETTINGS***

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**MÁLAGA, 2019**

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HACEN CONSTAR

Que D. Guanghai Hou ha realizado bajo nuestra dirección y tutorización respectivamente, en el Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana, de la Universidad de Málaga, la Tesis Doctoral titulada

### **“Cooperative Learning in China’s EFL and ESL settings”**

Revisado el presente trabajo, estimamos que reúne los requisitos establecidos según la legislación vigente. Por lo tanto, autorizamos la presentación y defensa pública de esta Tesis Doctoral para optar al grado de Doctor en la Universidad de Málaga.

Y para que conste, lo firmamos en Málaga a 21 de noviembre de 2018



Fdo. Francisco Pineda Castillo



Fdo. Antonio Moreno Ortiz

## **RESUMEN DE TESIS DOCTORAL**

**TÍTULO:** Cooperative learning in China's EFL and ESL settings (Aprendizaje cooperativo en escenarios de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera y como segunda lengua en China)

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# RESUMEN DE LA TESIS EN ESPAÑOL

El auge experimentado por la lengua y la cultura inglesas desde la mitad del siglo XX, coincidiendo entre otros factores con la creación de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y el establecimiento de su sede central en Nueva York, se ha visto y ajado en la cultura y en la educación en China.

Este trabajo de investigación se ha propuesto como objetivo general el estudio de los orígenes, implantación y evolución de la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en China desde una perspectiva histórica para desembocar en el objetivo principal de este trabajo: el estudio de la implementación del aprendizaje cooperativo de la lengua inglesa en la enseñanza universitaria en China.

Para alcanzar los objetivos propuestos, este trabajo se divide en seis capítulos, además de la introducción, en la que el lector podrá leer la estructura general de esta tesis, los objetivos, las diferentes secciones del trabajo, la justificación y motivación que han propiciado el inicio de este trabajo de investigación.

La tesis, pues, está compuesta por los siguientes apartados:

1. Introducción
2. Estado de la cuestión
3. Metodología de investigación e hipótesis
4. Recogida de datos, descripción y resultados
5. Conclusión
6. Referencias bibliográficas

## **1. Introducción**

En este breve capítulo introductorio se presentan de forma sucinta los objetivos de este trabajo de investigación, a saber, el estudio de la implementación de métodos instructivos de enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en China; más concretamente, el modelo de aprendizaje cooperativo en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en la universidad.

Con el cambio de la simple persecución de un modelo de desarrollo de escala a un modelo de eficiencia y calidad, tendremos la oportunidad de oír importantes voces chinas en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, especialmente en lo concerniente a los enfoques instructivos.

La investigación en enfoques instructivos sobre lenguas extranjeras ha generado un enorme interés por educadores, investigadores, enseñantes, y gestores y autoridades educativas a nivel mundial. Como se ha podido comprobar en las páginas de la tesis, este interés ha sido especialmente significativo en China, con un gran número de enfoques instructivos desarrollados en las últimas décadas.

Es claramente reseñable que algunas clases de inglés a nivel universitario eran demasiado pasivas, en las que el profesor era el eje central de las mismas. Esta observación me llevó a considerar que la causa fundamental es la inapropiada aplicación de los enfoques instructivos y empecé a poner el énfasis en la exploración de enfoques instructivos activos, en los que el alumno fuera el centro del proceso de aprendizaje, y el profesor se convirtiera en un facilitador y guía de ese proceso.

Famosos educadores (Adams y Hamm, 1994; Slavin, 1991; Johnson y Johnson 1991; Gillies y Boyle, 2009) que han estudiado el aprendizaje cooperativo coinciden en que se trata de una práctica pedagógica bien documentada que fomenta los logros académicos y la socialización.

Con el desarrollo de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación las pedagogías instructivas han experimentado una tremenda evolución, lo que ha llevado aparejado un incremento considerable de estudios empíricos y exploratorios sobre aprendizaje cooperativo.

## **2. Estado de la cuestión**

En este capítulo hago una revisión de las contribuciones más destacadas sobre enfoques instructivos de la adquisición y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en los distintos niveles educativos, desde primaria a universidad, pasando por la enseñanza secundaria y la formación profesional. Por los motivos mencionados más arriba, se presta especial atención a la adquisición y el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa aplicando una metodología de aprendizaje cooperativo.

En primer lugar se analizan las bases teóricas del aprendizaje cooperativo. Algunos autores (Cohen, 1994; Slavin, 1995; Gillies, 2016) defienden la importancia de que el aprendizaje cooperativo se pueda poner en práctica en todos los niveles educativos, desde primaria a

universidad, pasando por secundaria y formación profesional. Asimismo, muchos especialistas coinciden en que el aprendizaje cooperativo fomenta la cohesión social, ayuda a motivar a los grupos, gracias a la recompensa que supone su propia actuación como grupo, los resultados son mejores, el trabajo es más eficaz y efectivo en cantidad y calidad (Gilles y Adrian, 2003) comparado con el trabajo individualizado.

Comparado con el trabajo competitivo, el trabajo cooperativo fomenta la camaradería, el reconocimiento del otro, la amistad y mejora la sensación de superación de metas. También se han llevado a cabo estudios que demuestran que el trabajo cooperativo mejora la disciplina del grupo. Otros autores han señalado que los procesos cognitivos alcanzan sus mayores cotas dentro del grupo. En esta línea, el trabajo cooperativo fomenta la socialización del alumnado. Como colofón, también hay estudios que concluyen que el aprendizaje cooperativo mejora la actitud de los estudiantes hacia el proceso de aprendizaje.

En segundo lugar se hace un estudio comparativo entre el aprendizaje cooperativo y el aprendizaje colaborativo a causa de la confusión e identificación entre uno y otro tipo de aprendizaje. Mientras para algunos autores el aprendizaje cooperativo consiste en una serie de técnicas aplicadas en el aula, el aprendizaje colaborativo se caracteriza por actividades encaminadas a construir conocimiento dentro de un contexto social determinado. Según Oxford (2001), el aprendizaje cooperativo puede y fomenta la interdependencia del estudiante como vía para su desarrollo cognitivo y social, el aprendizaje colaborativo se centra en el proceso de aculturación del estudiante en una comunidad educativa.

En tercer lugar se hace un análisis del aprendizaje cooperativo en cuanto a su tratamiento como enfoque, modelo o estrategia. Este apartado es crucial porque supone el punto de partida de una de las hipótesis de trabajo: el cambio de enfoque a estrategia puede convertir el aprendizaje cooperativo en el verdadero motor de la adquisición de lenguas extranjeras en China con resultados aceptables.

En cuarto lugar, se desafían algunos de los principios que han caracterizado la educación en China: ¿qué debe prevalecer la cooperación o la competición? Indiscutiblemente, desde este trabajo se defiende la cooperación como estrategia vertebradora del proceso de aprendizaje.

Por último, se hace una revisión de los enfoques instructivos en adquisición y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Se hace una revisión de los métodos más destacados de la historia en el

aprendizaje de lenguas, desde el método tradicional hasta los enfoques más comunicativos, para desembocar en el aprendizaje cooperativo. Se analizan los siguientes métodos: el Método Tradicional; el Método Directo; el Método Audiolingüe, La Respuesta Física Total; Sugestopedia; Aprendizaje de lenguas en comunidad; Enseñanza basada en Tareas; Enseñanza Basada en contenidos; Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua Extranjera; El Enfoque Comunicativo; El Enfoque Integrado de Lenguaje y Pensamiento Crítico Intercultural; el Enfoque Orientado a la Producción.

### **3. Metodología de investigación e hipótesis**

Este capítulo persigue un doble objetivo. Por un lado, se sientan las bases del tipo de metodología, eminentemente cuantitativa, que se implementara para la recogida de datos (ver sección 4) así como una metodología cualitativa para la interpretación de los resultados obtenidos (ver sección 5 más abajo).

Por otro lado, se plantean una serie de preguntas de investigación, que delimitan y conforman la hipótesis de trabajo: la transformación del aprendizaje cooperativo de un enfoque, y por tanto más teórico, a una estrategia, más práctico, real y creativo, podría ser la clave para que el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en China alcance niveles óptimos, comparables a Occidente.

En este capítulo se describe la metodología empleada para describir cómo se implementan los enfoques instructivos en la adquisición del inglés en China. Además de la metodología, se establece el propósito de la investigación, la selección de la muestra, un análisis crítico del discurso y un análisis de contenidos, las preguntas de investigación y, por último, la hipótesis.

De los cuatro métodos de investigación, a saber, censo, encuestas, experimentación, y observación, en este trabajo se han llevado a cabo diferentes encuestas y experimentos y observación.

Las encuestas se realizaron aleatoriamente en la fase de diseño de este trabajo de investigación. Se diseñaron diferentes cuestionarios centrados en medir la impresión general que los enfoques instructivos tienen en los estudiantes de adquisición y aprendizaje.

Se realizó una encuesta en educación infantil, una en primaria, una en secundaria, y una en universidad. Se llevaron a cabo en internet con la ayuda de profesores de inglés de estos centros.

También se realizó un experimento para explorar la relación causa-efecto del impacto del aprendizaje cooperativo en los mencionados grupos. En relación a la observación, se pudo obtener una imagen intuitiva de la aplicación de los enfoques instructivos en entornos de enseñanza aprendizaje. No obstante, los estudios de observación no fueron aleatorios, y los resultados no deberían ser generalizables y extrapolables.

La selección de las muestras cubre la historia de la Política y Planificación en Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras (FLEPP por sus siglas en inglés), dividiéndola en tres etapas: la primera antes de 1949, la segunda desde la creación de la República Popular China; y la tercera desde la reforma y apertura de China.

En relación a las preguntas de investigación, a continuación se detallan:

1. ¿Cree usted que hay algún enfoque instructivo que pueda aplicarse en todos los contextos de adquisición y aprendizaje?
2. ¿Cómo se definirá el aprendizaje cooperativo en la nueva era? ¿Se trata de un enfoque, un modelo o una estrategia?
3. ¿Existen similitudes y diferencias entre los contextos educativos europeos y chino?
4. La comparativa y contraste de enfoques instructivos en contextos de enseñanza y aprendizaje.
5. Los enfoques instructivos aplicados en contextos de enseñanza y aprendizaje en China.
6. ¿Qué relación de causalidad existe entre los enfoques instructivos y la evolución de la política y planificación en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras?
7. ¿Cuáles son las voces de los académicos, investigadores y enseñantes de China?
8. ¿Por qué se describe el aprendizaje cooperativo como una estrategia en los entornos de enseñanza-aprendizaje en China?

En lo que se refiere a la hipótesis, este trabajo de investigación intentará justificar que el aprendizaje cooperativo, al igual que otras metodologías, al transformarse de un enfoque a un

método, pueden facilitar la adquisición y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera en China.

#### **4. Recogida de datos, descripción y resultados**

Hay diferentes métodos para la recopilación de los datos, según se trate de si son datos primarios o secundarios, o de si se trata de datos cuantitativos o cualitativos. En este trabajo los métodos incluyen cuestionarios, entrevistas, observación, y datos secundarios, tales como experiencia personal, documentos oficiales y no oficiales, datos sobre investigaciones previas, etc.

La recogida de datos ha sido mayoritariamente cualitativa. Por ejemplo, se han llevado a cabo entrevistas cara a cara, debates en grupo y en pareja, observación y documentos. Se estudió la formación en adquisición y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en una universidad y en diferentes centros de enseñanza secundaria y bachillerato

En lo que respecta a la recogida de datos cuantitativos se obtuvieron de escuelas experimentales y de la universidad por medio de cuestionarios pasados tanto a profesores como a alumnos. A modo de ejemplo, a continuación se presenta un modelo de cuestionario sobre enfoques instructivos en adquisición y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en China.

Pregunta 1: Sexo:  hombre  mujer  confidencial

Pregunta 2: ¿Dónde estudias?

Primaria

Secundaria

Bachillerato

Formación profesional

Universidad politécnica

Universidad

Pregunta 3: ¿Cuál es tu mayor nivel de estudios obtenido?

Ninguno  Graduado  Master  Doctorado

Pregunta 4: ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando inglés?

menos de un año  de uno a cinco años

de seis a 10 años  más de 10 años

Pregunta 5: ¿Qué enfoque(s) de adquisición y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera conoces?

Método Tradicional

Enfoque Comunicativo

Método directo

Aprendizaje basado en Tareas

Método Audiolingüe

Enfoque Cognitivo

Enfoque Cognitivo

Aprendizaje Cooperativo

Método situacional o Audiovisual

No sabe/no contesta

Respuesta Física Total

Enfoque Integrado de Lengua y Pensamiento Crítico Intercultural

Pregunta 6: ¿Han empleado alguna vez tus profesores alguno de los enfoques mencionados en la pregunta 5?

Pregunta 7: ¿Ha presentado tu profesor de inglés alguna vez el enfoque que estaba aplicando contigo?

Pregunta 8: ¿Te ha impresionado algún enfoque de manera especial?

Pregunta 9: ¿Has oído alguna vez hablar del Aprendizaje Cooperativo?

Pregunta 10: ¿Has oído alguna vez hablar sobre aprendizaje cooperativo y aprendizaje en grupo?

Sí  No  No estoy seguro

Pregunta 11: ¿Has oído alguna vez hablar del Marco Común de Referencia de las Lenguas Extranjeras (MCR)?

Sí     No     No estoy seguro

Pregunta 12: ¿Has oído alguna vez hablar de los Estándares de aptitud en lengua inglesa de China?

Sí     No     No estoy seguro

Seguidamente se diseñó un cuestionario muy similar para profesores (ver capítulo 4 de la tesis doctoral).

Por último se analizaron los resultados de los cuestionarios. Mayoritariamente, los resultados obtenidos vinieron a confirmar las hipótesis de este trabajo de investigación: por un lado existe un gran desconocimiento en cuanto a los conceptos de enfoque, método y estrategia y, por otro, que la evolución de enfoque a modelo en el aprendizaje cooperativo ayudaría a mejorar la enseñanza del inglés en China.

Gracias a este trabajo de investigación, hemos alcanzado un mayor conocimiento de la aplicación de los métodos instructivos y del desarrollo de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en China. La historia de la política y planificación en adquisición y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en China es bastante reciente.

El aprendizaje cooperativo, ya sea enfoque o estrategia, puede facilitar la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, como demuestra la evolución de la política y planificación mencionada arriba. Desde las primeras escuelas-misión, pasando por la revolución de 1949, y siguiendo con la reforma y apertura de 1978, la planificación educativa ha evolucionado a gran velocidad.

## **5. Conclusiones**

En este estudio creemos haber demostrado que el aprendizaje cooperativo tiende a ser claramente una estrategia en lugar de un enfoque instructivo, lo que, indudablemente, facilitará la adquisición y aprendizaje del inglés en el sistema educativo chino,

independientemente de la evolución que experimente la planificación y las políticas educativas.

La localización de enfoques instructivos merece especial interés dado que no todo enfoque instructivo puede aplicarse en cualquier contexto educativo. Existe un cierto consenso en que la mayoría de enfoques instructivos aplicados en toda actividad de adquisición y aprendizaje están determinados por los objetivos, enseñantes, alumnado, y situaciones contextuales determinadas. La localización de enfoques instructivos en contextos de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés ha experimentado un tremendo auge desde principios de este siglo. Es bien sabido que los elementos clave en el aprendizaje cooperativo son los objetivos, las funciones de profesores y alumnos, la formación y competencia del profesorado, y los contextos sociales específicos, a los que hay que prestarles una mayor atención.

Basándose en las funciones lingüísticas, un curso de lengua extranjera puede centrarse en las cuatro destrezas (expresión escrita, expresión oral, comprensión escrita, y comprensión oral) además de la competencia traductora.

Si tomamos la comprensión escrita por ejemplo, se trata del *input* fundamental en los cursos de idiomas en todos los niveles del sistema educativo chino. Como consecuencia, a los estudiantes se les demanda que practiquen la comprensión oral de forma intensiva para ayudarles a conocer conversaciones, charlas, debates, tanto auténticos como simulados.

Respecto a la función de los profesores y los alumnos nos encontramos con la tradición china. Aquellos que querían aprender, tenían que buscar un maestro: una persona que propagase la doctrina, impartiera conocimiento, y resolviera dudas. Esta relación profesor-alumno ha permanecido invariable hasta el cambio de siglo. El profesor se ha convertido en un facilitador, más que un instructor. Y los estudiantes han empezado a cambiar su papel de aprendices pasivos para convertirse en el centro del proceso de aprendizaje. Como consecuencia de esta nueva tendencia, un sector del profesorado de lenguas extranjeras ha empezado a interesarse por el aprendizaje cooperativo.

En tercer lugar, se ha generado en China la urgente necesidad de profesorado cualificado y formado en aprendizaje cooperativo. Como se puede comprobar en el apartado de recogida de datos, la aplicación efectiva de esta nueva aproximación, se ha visto afectada por la falta de profesionales cualificados. En este estudio proponemos la urgente necesidad de que se incluya el aprendizaje cooperativo en los cursos de formación de profesorado.

Por último, todo enfoque instructivo necesita situarse dentro de un determinado contexto social, que es la base para su supervivencia con las reformas educativas. En China, el aprendizaje cooperativo resulta ser una estrategia útil a la hora de atenuar la presión psicológica, lo que facilitaría la interacción entre profesores y alumnos de diferentes grupos étnicos.

En las últimas décadas los académicos e investigadores chinos han hecho una enorme contribución a los enfoques instructivos, tanto en la teoría como en la práctica. Por ejemplo, El Enfoque Orientado a la Producción (POA) de Wen Oiufang como el Enfoque Integrado de Lenguaje y el Pensamiento Crítico Integrado (LICTIA) de Sun Youzhong son aplicados extensamente en China y son objeto de estudio e investigación en toda China. Como resultado, estos profesores y sus universidades han organizado un gran número de congresos y seminarios nacionales e internacionales sobre sus propios enfoques. Redundando en este auge, la Universidad de Estudios Extranjeros de Beijing ha creado un fondo para promover trabajos de investigación sobre el POA para investigadores europeos.

Indudablemente, este trabajo de investigación presenta limitaciones. Este trabajo podría mejorarse por medio de un estudio horizontal donde se compararan diferentes enfoques instructivos desde un punto de vista diacrónico.

En el sistema educativo chino, se echa en falta un volumen sobre los enfoques instructivos. Desde este trabajo, recomendamos encarecidamente que los enfoques instructivos se conviertan en una parte importante en la formación del profesorado de adquisición y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras.

## **6. Referencias bibliográficas**

En las 27 páginas y más de 160 referencias bibliográficas se recogen obras y autores de muy diversos ámbitos, desde la política educativa, las metodologías de enseñanza en general y del aprendizaje cooperativo en particular, las culturas occidentales y la cultura china, la historia de las dinastías y cómo cada una de ellas afrontó la implantación de la educación y la influencia exterior.

La lectura y estudio de las obras me han permitido, en primer lugar, profundizar en el conocimiento del sistema educativo chino en los diferentes niveles educativos. En segundo lugar, he podido detectar cuáles eran las deficiencias del sistema educativo de la República

Popular China en los diferentes niveles de enseñanza. En tercer lugar, he podido comparar nuestro sistema con los sistemas imperantes en occidente: sus ventajas y desventajas, sus fortalezas y sus debilidades. Por último, este recorrido me ha dado la oportunidad de elaborar propuestas de futuro aplicables al sistema educativo chino, sin perder en ningún momento la perspectiva de la milenaria cultura china y su tremenda complejidad.

A continuación se incluye una selección de las referencias más significativas utilizadas en esta tesis.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express sincere thanks to Dr. Francisco Pineda Castillo, who has been my director for these years for enthusiastically sharing his immense expertise in linguistics and modern foreign language education. The educational and research foundation provided by my director was complemented with the support of my tutor Dr. Antonio Jesús Moreno Ortiz. My dissertation research also benefited greatly from the interactions with professors and peer students, on the campus, in the laboratory, offices, academic saloon and lectures.

I would also like to express faithful thanks Dr. Rosario Arias, Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in “Linguistics, Literature and Translation” in this university. She and other coordinators always gave us instant feedback and generous support in this doctoral programme.

I would like to thank Dr. Juan Antonio Perles Roches, who was the first good friend I met in the University of Málaga. He gave me valuable suggestions on my studies and offered me this good opportunity to start my Ph.D. career in the city of sunshine, sands and arts. He shared his research and working experiences with me, which encouraged me to push forward my further study.

I would also express sincere thanks to Professor Robyn M. Gillies, a well-known professor in the School of Education at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. She has worked extensively in schools to help instructors establish cooperative learning pedagogical practices in their classrooms and acted as a member of the editorial board for the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education and editor of the Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling. She gave me valuable guidance and suggestions on my

PhD research during my academic visit to the University of Queensland as my international internship and even in my dissertation work. Her good scholarly image and modesty impressed me very much in my study, career and life.

I would also like to thank Mr. Juan Carlos Izquierdo, director of Registration Centre for Higher education in Spain (equivalent to “Centro de Matriculación para Estudios Superiores en España” in Spanish language). He strongly suggested me in my further study at the University of Málaga while my first visit to this beautiful city in March 2013. It was him who brought me to Málaga, Spain, and to the European world eventually. With our efforts, the University of Málaga has established a good partnership with Southwest University of Science and Technology where I have been working in China.

Dr. Rita Rodriguez, a well-known expert in the Psychology Department of San Francisco State University, USA, had given me valuable suggestions and generous support with the revision of my dissertation however busy she had been with her teaching and research.

I would also like to thank Southwest University of Science and Technology and China Scholarship Committee. Without their funds for overseas education support plan, I would have never started on this path and completed my research.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my family members who have cheered me on despite the geographic distance, and most of all I want to thank my wife and my lovely daughter and my parents from start to finish.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Researches on the efficacy of instructional approaches to foreign language education have been of great interest to educators, researchers, instructors and foreign language education planning and policy makers throughout the world. Cooperative learning is one of the well-researched and popular instructional approaches among them.

Various educational researchers have presented different definitions of cooperative learning. Slavin (1991) defined cooperative learning as the methods by which students work together to help one another learn. In this simple definition, much emphasis is placed upon group work, the interaction among group members and shared learning goals. Adams and Hamm (1994) defined cooperative learning as one of the most popular forms of active pedagogy employed in academic institutions throughout the world. Their definition of cooperative learning was based mainly on the idea that students learned through interaction in social contexts. This definition placed an emphasis on social contexts in this active pedagogy. Gillies and Boyle (2009) defined cooperative learning as a well-documented pedagogical practice that promotes academic achievement and socialization and stated that cooperative learning is sometimes referred to as collaborative learning.

No matter which of the aforementioned definitions one employs in classroom contexts, instructors might struggle with implementation. For this reason, Johnson & Johnson (1991) defined cooperative learning with particular emphasis placed on specific behaviours in language learning settings. These behaviours were speaking, listening, writing, reflections, and the utilizations of social skills for peer cooperation, which contributed to the development of individual cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

Instructional pedagogies develop as modern information technology evolves. A large number of exploratory and empirical studies on cooperative learning were conducted as newly-emerging technologies placed an important role in classroom settings.

This dissertation reviewed and analysed important contributions to the evolution of cooperative learning made by researchers, educators and foreign language instructors. It also presented the history of English language education in modern China as well as foreign language education policies and planning in China since the world-known “reform”. This research aimed to assist other researchers, instructors, and planning and policy makers in foreign language education, to view the importance and efficacy of placing emphasis on instructional approaches - especially the cooperative learning approaches.

This dissertation began by reviewing research works of significant instructional pedagogies in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) context and then moved to the focus on cooperative learning, one of the most popular instructional approaches in the development of EFL and ESL classroom settings in China.

An overview of EFL and ESL developments in foreign language education policies in the new era in China was presented (including examples of language proficiency scales, tests and assessments).

Additionally, a review of significant and new issues related to approaches in EFL and ESL were reviewed including Communicative Approaches, Cooperative Learning, Production-Oriented Approaches, Language and the Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach, to facilitate pre-service and in-service EFL and ESL programmes for instructors to improve their instructional pedagogies. Moreover, it gave foreign language planning and policy-makers suggestions on how to conduct foreign language teaching and learning in China.

This research also reviewed research-based practice used by Chinese educators of foreign language, such as *China's Standards of English Ability* and pedagogical approaches within EFL and ESL classroom contexts, to draw more attention to the needs and concerns of foreign language educators while also reviewing China's foreign language education systems within the framework of reform in the new era.

It focused on the state of the art in research-based practice that would assist readers in understanding the current approaches employed by educators within the cooperative learning approach. The origins, principles, and core elements of cooperative learning were reviewed along with reflections and new implementations by scholars.

This dissertation consisted of six parts, including the framework of the research, the state of the art, the research hypothesis, the methods, the theoretical framework and the evolutions of cooperative learning, and its effects on China's EFL and ESL reforms.

This first part was the introduction, which contained background and the outlines of this research. The second part was the state of the art that reviews the contributions in cooperative learning and other instructional approaches by educators, researchers and instructors. The third part focused on the methodology used in this research and suggested the hypothesis that cooperative learning evolved from an approach to a strategy and that this transformation would facilitate EFL and ESL teaching and learning in China's educational system. With the shift from simple pursuit of scale development to the efficiency and quality, strong voices of China in foreign language education, especially of the instructional approaches were noticed by foreign scholars. This fourth part is about data collection and descriptions, including research findings for questions in the sample surveys, questionnaires and observational studies. The fifth part was about the results and interpretation of the findings, including the evolution of policy and planning and organizations of consultation and

guidance in foreign language education, imbalanced development of general and non-general language education in China, foreign language education policy and planning , the “Going globally” and the “Belt and road” initiative, and China’s standards of English Language Ability. The last part was on the conclusion, suggestions and limitation of this research.

In traditional inactive EFL and ESL classrooms, the inappropriate application of instructional approaches leads to the individual show of the language instructors. It is necessary for EFL and ESL instructors to consider profoundly why this phenomenon took place frequently in such language teaching and learning settings.

## 2. STATE OF THE ART

### 2.1 Theoretical basis of cooperative learning

According to Gillies(2016), the new definition of cooperative learning was as follows:

*Cooperative learning is widely recognized as a pedagogical practice that promotes socialization and learning among students from pre-school through to tertiary level and across different subject domains. It involves students working together to achieve common goals or complete group tasks—goals and tasks that they would be unable to complete by themselves.*

Gillies (2016) documented the popularity of this effective instructional approach that covers all levels in educational systems, and its main advantages in diverse social contexts (e.g., facilitating the interaction among the students from different ethnic groups). Social learning experience was one of the shared goals in this approach. It indicated that cooperative learning is also task-based and goal-orientated.

In another article, Gillies (2001) defined cooperative learning as follow:

*Cooperative learning is an instructional method in which students work in small groups to learn academic material. . .it is one of the most extensively studied and widely used classroom innovations.*

Gillies' definition addressed cooperative learning as a classroom innovation that describes motivational, social, and cognitive dimensions underlying learning processes, which are the theoretical basis of the approach. Gillies defined the four major theoretical perspectives of cooperative learning and achievement as below:

#### A. Motivational Dimensions

*The motivational dimensions of cooperative learning emphasize the reward and/or goal structure of the learning environment (Slavin, 1995). In order to achieve personal goals, each student must attend not only to his or her own efforts but to those of other group members as well. Cooperative incentive structures (e.g. group rewards based on the learning of all group members) encourage students to engage in behaviours that help the group achieve its goals. These behaviours include maintaining self-motivation, giving or withholding praise, sanctioning, assisting, and encouraging others.*

This dimension placed much emphasis on the rewards to individuals and the group. In the cooperative learning approach, students are divided into small groups. Each of the group members plays their own role. Whatever their roles are, individuals and the group itself will be rewarded when the shared goals are achieved. Gillies believed that cooperative learning is beneficial to student achievement because of the interactions and mutual support among them. Gillies was critical of the motivational systems existing in traditional classroom settings where some students expected the failure of others in achieving their own goals since they hoped to succeed due to a competitive grading system.

#### B. Social Cohesion Dimension

*According to Cohen (1994), "if the task is challenging and interesting, and if students are sufficiently prepared for skills in group process, students will experience the process of group work itself as highly rewarding ... never grade or evaluate students on their individual contributions to the group or product."*

In the social cohesion theory, much attention was paid to the group effects/product rather than individual work. It was hypothesized that cooperative learning would facilitate social cohesion among students and students would achieve as a result of the reward system.

#### C. Cognitive Dimension

*Piagetian and Vygotskian theorists have recommended increased use of cooperative activities in schools. ... Still, it seems likely that the cognitive processes described by these developmental theorists underlie the effectiveness of cooperative learning in any form; motivation to help or encourage others is likely to increase the quantity or quality of peer interactions, which in turn leads to cognitive growth according to this perspective.*

The cognitive perspective of cooperative learning, emphasized that it was the effectiveness of the motivational interaction in classroom settings, during the mental processing of information to be learned, rather than the material itself that promoted effective learning.

#### D. Cognitive Elaboration Dimension

*Research in cognitive psychology has long held that that if information is to be retained and integrated into memory, the learner must engage in some sort of cognitive restructuring or elaboration of the material. It is also widely accepted that one of the more effective means of elaboration is explaining the material to another... students who gained the most from cooperative activities were those who gave elaborated explanations to others. This contention is also supported in empirical work concerning peer tutoring, and cooperative scripts.*

From this dimension, cooperative learning was one of the most efficient ways to support cognitive restructuring or elaboration of the learning material since students are required and encouraged to explain the material to peers.

Robert E. Slavin (1980) defined cooperative learning as follow:

*Cooperative learning is an old idea in education, which has experienced substantial revival in educational research and practice in the past few years. This term refers to classroom techniques in which students work on learning*

*activities in small groups and receive rewards or recognition based on their group's performance.*

In this definition, Slavin emphasized that cooperative learning meant group-learning techniques with its own characteristics and orientation. It suggested cooperative learning was not an abstract but concrete thing.

Scholars contributed a lot to cooperative learning approaches. Gilles and Adrian (2003) acknowledged the work of social theorists such as Allport, Watson, Shaw, and Mead. These researchers began to establish cooperative learning theory, prior to World War II, after research findings revealed that group work was more effective and efficient in quantity, quality, and overall productivity when compared to working independently. For example, the researchers May and Doob (1937) found that people who cooperate and work together to achieve shared goals, were more successful in attaining outcomes, than those who strived independently to complete the same goals. These findings led educators to placing more emphasis on cooperative learning (versus individual learning).

Compared with competitive classroom settings, cooperative social interaction would reduce aggression among group members and facilitate friendliness and concern among group members. The effects of cooperation and competition on peer relationships in the educational settings have been topics of great importance since then.

Slavin and Cooper (1999) argued that cooperative learning would improve intergroup relations among diverse groups of students as diverse and destructive conflicts and violence occurred more and more often in schools. They believed that the diversity of the students' backgrounds was one of the major factors leading to campus violence.

Similarly, Slavin (1979) and Wiegel, Wisner and Cook (1975) found that cooperative classroom interventions had been shown to increase friendships between students of different cultural and racial backgrounds compared with traditional, competitive classrooms. It was

proved that this kind of learning experience helped students realize that they needed to seek common ground/interests, and dissolved differences, thereby reducing the opportunity for conflict and violence across the lifespan of the individual.

Cooperative learning would promote mutual understanding and identification of socio-culture background as students are encouraged to introduce themselves to others, including their family backgrounds, customs, etiquette, festivals, etc. For example, students and community members described the suspect in the 2018 Parkland, Florida high school shooting as a troubled teenager. It was reported that he threatened and harassed other students with some nasty pictures with guns in social media. Cruz had been expelled from the school for “disciplinary reasons”. The Parkland city mayor said his instructors had tried to help Cruz make connections at school but they failed. It was inferred how Cruz was treated in classroom settings because he had been ever called as a “weird” and a “loner” by peers. Cruz was not a born criminal but life circumstances, like the death of both parents very early, left him more vulnerable. A sense of social-emotional connection to school, which could be gained through the cooperative learning, was called “belongingness” by educational researchers. The factor of school belongingness had been found by numerous researchers to be a very important factor linked to school and life success including mental health (Blum, 2005; Ma, 2003; & Rodriguez Referenced in Benner, Wang, Shen, Boyle, et. al., 2018).

Cooperative learning classroom settings, along with other systems of support that would promote school belongingness and connection, would have the potential to protect against such extreme cases as the Parkland shooting.

Chi (2008) provided a framework to differentiate the terms of “active, constructive and interaction”. Working within the conceptual framework of ICAP (Interactive, Constructive, Active, and Passive) Chi hypothesized as follows:

*Interactive activities are most likely to be better than constructive activities, which in turn might be better than active activities, which are better than being passive.*

Chi believed interactive activities were the best among interactive, constructive, active and passive ones. To some extent, cooperative learning is widely used because most instructors and students like an interactive environment within classroom contexts. The ICAP framework focuses on observable, overt learning activities and instructors can implement within their classrooms to increase student engagement and deep learning. With interactive activities being the most desirable of the four, Chi characterized the various ways in which classroom activities span the passive to interactive continuum. Pitterson et al (2016) clarified that the ICAP framework described cognitive processing as being at its highest when students would engage in meaningful dialogue about the topic with their peers and/or instructor.

Chi et al (2014) predicted that learning within foreign language teaching environments would be facilitated provided students became more engaged with learning activities through their changing attitudes towards learning –“from passive to active to constructive to interactive”.

Despite the extensive research work in this area, however, no studies explicitly explored the effects of cooperation and competition on the structure of peer groups. Existing research work focused on simple socio-metric indices of popularity or friendliness between individual students, and it was unclear about how cooperative and competitive experiences affected naturally-existing peer structures in in EFL and ESL classroom settings within China’s educational system.

## **2.2 Cooperative learning Vs collaborative learning**

The researcher Oxford (1997) distinguished cooperative learning from collaborative learning. Oxford defined cooperative learning as a set of techniques applied in classroom contexts and collaborative learning as the learning activities for construction of knowledge within a social context. In this view, cooperative learning would cultivate learners' interdependence as a route to cognitive and social development; however, collaborative learning focused on acculturation of individuals into a learning community. Oxford's definitions could not differentiate the two terms very clearly and/or there might be overlap between the two concepts.

Elizabeth et al (2014) emphasized the definition by Smith (1996) as "...the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's' learning" though many researchers had presented their own definitions of the cooperative learning approach.

This definition focused on the basic structure of this instructional approach and the effects on students' academic achievement. In the same article, Elizabeth et al (2014) stressed that collaborative learning was used as a general expression for group learning and also provide a definition offered by Smith and McGregor (1992) as "Collaborative learning is an 'umbrella' term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and instructors together." In this sense, collaborative learning was viewed as a much broader term than cooperative learning.

In summary, more scholars tend to believe that cooperative learning refers to the techniques or strategies utilized and collaborative learning is referred to as a broader term as McGregor has stressed (1992). Therefore, cooperative learning is used as the instructional

approach throughout this research as it is based on the connotations of techniques and strategies for EFL and ESL instructors to use in classroom settings.

### **2.3 Cooperative learning: an approach, model or strategy?**

Various educators and instructors addressed cooperative learning differently such as “approach”, “model”, or “strategy”.

An approach is usually a way or means of reaching something. A model is defined as a schematic description or representation of something, especially a system or phenomenon that accounts for its properties and used to study its characteristics. And a strategy is defined as a plan of action resulting from strategy or intended to accomplish a specific goal.

Some researchers (Rehana, 1998; Neistadt et al, 1999; Nolinske et al, 1999; Zain et al,2009; Sabrina et al, 2004; Anne et al, 2006; Montasser et al, 2014) tended to address cooperative learning as an approach. And some researchers (Jack,1996; Huff,1997; Edward & Mark, 2000; Ali et al, 2007; Joan et al, 2009; Amir et al, 2012; Zeng & Zhang, 2012; Nugraha, 2016; Marleny & Aloysius, 2017) addressed it as “a model”. But other scholars (Glendon & Ulrich,1992; Kellie & Deborah, 1992; Melinda et al, 1997; Esma et al,2000; Meeuwsen et al, 2005; Nahid et al, 2014) addressed it as “a strategy”.

Cooperative learning had been an instructional approach of great interest to practitioners of communicative language teaching for a long period of time since it offers a body of widely tested classroom procedures and activities such as through controlled activities such as memorization of dialogues and drills, and toward the use of pair work activities, role plays, group work activities and project work, for implementing group-based activities in the language classroom (Richards, 2006). Richards combined the cooperative learning with

communicative language teaching and emphasized some important traits of cooperative learning, such as controlled group-based structure and role-plays by students.

Johnson & Johnson (1991) stated that cooperative learning is an educational cooperative process in which such abilities as speaking, listening, writing, and reflection take place. In this process, students are asked to use their social skills and to cooperate with peers, which, in the long run, contribute to the development of their cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

In this definition, they emphasized specific competences in speaking, listening, and writing. Most of all, it placed much emphasis on the reflections and social skills needed for communication.

Adams and Hamm (1994) stated that cooperative learning has become one of the most popular forms of active pedagogy employed in academic institutions throughout the world and it is based mainly upon the idea that students learn through social contexts. They placed much emphasis on students' attitudes towards learning and the importance of social communication skills.

Some instructors in instructional approaches might be still confused about the terms of cooperative learning, collaborative learning and interaction. It is very essential to distinguish among the three distinctive strands of communication in the foreign or second language (L2) classroom (Oxford,1997).

Sari (2016) stated that interaction is the broadest of the three terms and refers to personal communication, which is facilitated by an understanding of four elements as language tasks, willingness to communicate, style differences, and group dynamics.

Collaborative learning enjoyed a “social constructivist” philosophical base, in which learning was a means of the construction of knowledge within a social context; therefore it

encourages acculturation of individuals into a learning community. In other words, interaction and group communication would facilitate the mutual understanding of diverse cultures.

According to Oxford (1997), cooperative learning referred to a particular set of classroom techniques that fostered learners' interdependence as a route to cognitive and social development. This definition combined the techniques and students' cognitive and social competences together very skilfully; however, it did not cover the core elements of this approach.

Gillies & Adrian (2003) defined collaborative learning as follow:

...well recognised as a pedagogical practice that promotes socialisation and learning among students from kindergarten to the university level and beyond. Children, adolescents, and adults learn from each other in a vast array of formal and informal settings in schools and the wider community with the expansion of their social contacts, e.g. in nuclear families, among colleagues, etc.

This was the only article that indicated that collaborative learning could be used in all educational contexts, from kindergarten through to higher education, and within social contexts to facilitate social development and academic achievement.

The research hypothesized that cooperative learning would be viewed as a strategy instead of an approach in China's EFL and ESL settings in China's educational system, as educators, researchers and instructors shift their focus to the nature of foreign language education. Therefore, the term of "strategy" was used very often in the following chapters and even in the review of other approaches such as Grammar-translation Approach, Direct method, Audio-lingual Approach, Total Physical Response (TPR), Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL), Task-based Language Teaching, Content-based Teaching (CBT),

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Communicative Language Approach (CLA), Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA), and Production-oriented Approach (POA).

## **2.4 Cooperation and competition: which is the primary in classroom settings?**

Cooperation and competition are like twin brothers or as two sides of a coin-mutually reinforcing and neutralizing each other. Cooperative learning would be more encouraged in classroom settings while students learn a foreign language. Cooperative learning therefore plays a dominant role while fostering social accountability and group cooperation in this “win-win” strategy. A student demonstrates social accountability if they play their own role in group learning from a micro perspective.

The “Belt and Road” initiative issued by the Chinese government in 2013 offers another type of example. This initiative focuses on policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds. This initiative is widely referred to as the “China Programme for World Issues”. The initiative can also be viewed as China’s social accountability from a macro perspective. Students will tend to contribute more if they are involved in cooperative learning strategy in their learning process now.

The win-win cooperation is the guideline and general solution to any dispute in the world issues. It helps to foster this kind awareness of cooperative spirit if the approach is widely used in EFL and ESL classroom settings.

People live in a competitive world. Students are also involved in all kinds of competitive activities such as marks, ranking, rewards, scholarships and even work opportunities. A certain competition would motivate individual accountabilities, personal interests and one’s

potentials. However, we solve disputes usually through seeking the common ground while putting aside differences. The abilities mainly attained from cooperative learning and group processes, will be the basis of domestic and international competitiveness in dealing with various tasks, like regional, national or international cooperation.

The present research focuses on the impact of cooperative learning strategies and argues that more emphasis should be placed in this area within classroom settings though it is recognized that some students would benefit from “healthy competition” as well. The first argument for cooperative learning comes from the position that through disagreement, consensus would be reached. For example, a group of students would achieve shared goals on an assignment even though they are from different backgrounds and hold different opinions towards a certain issue at the start of group-work. Cooperative learning would facilitate mutual understanding through sincere communication and interaction.

Secondly, cooperative learning would facilitate social accountability in a group even when students compete with classmates in other groups. There can be no consensus without cooperation in this kind of classroom setting.

Finally, competition can lead to the promotion of motivation to achieve and to “win”. Of course, “winning” is an important theme in modern society. Cooperative learning, has the potential to promote motivation and self-accountability which can have positive benefits for the future of students (achievement and motivation).

## **2.5 Instructional approaches**

Usually, an instructional pedagogy of teaching and learning consists of four components—core philosophy, basic approach, specific approach and teaching means. Core philosophy is the soul of any pedagogy. Goals are achieved with a certain approach, either

basic or specific. A certain instructional approach is often employed in some classroom setting, consciously or unconsciously.

### **2.5.1 Instructional approaches in EFL and ESL settings**

A large number of instructional approaches have been employed in EFL and ESL settings including: Grammar-Translation Approach, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Approach, Total Physical Response (TPR), Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL), Task-based Language Teaching, Content-based Teaching, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Communicative Language Approach (CLA), Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA), and Production-Oriented Approach (POA).

The Grammar-Translation and Audio-lingual approaches of language teaching prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s (Wu, 2010). These more passive, grammar-translation approaches, also termed “classical” or “traditional” methods, were employed in ESL or EFL contexts. They originated from the study of Latin and Greek. In this approach, students are taught grammatical rules first and then apply these rules by translating between the mother tongue and the target language.

The Direct Method, also called the Natural Method, originated in Germany and France around 1900. In the EFL or ESL classroom settings, the instructors teach their students directly only in the target language instead of translation between both languages. This approach is very popular in international schools. The Direct Method places a great deal of emphasis on oral skills. That is why students from the international schools are generally reported to have a good command of oral skills, and to have a native-like pronunciation compared to students from public schools.

In his talk entitled “On the Mortality of Language Learning Methods” Decoo (2001) outlined the style of teaching used in foreign language instruction called the Audio-lingual method, “Army Method”, or “New Key” method. This behaviorist-based theory highlights the “traits” of living things, especially of human beings. Contrary to the Grammar-translation method, the Audio-lingual method encourages the teaching and learning of a foreign language in the target language directly. This method emphasizes repeated drill and practice with a certain grammatical structure.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) method explained by James J. Asher (2012), is a coordination of language and physical-movement-based approach, in which the students act with their whole body following the commands of their instructor(s) via the target language only. It is an interactive yet passive approach because the students mechanically learn the structures and basic communication skills of the language itself. It is generally viewed as a good approach for beginners (e.g. adolescents) when they begin to learn a foreign language. This approach is also widely used in kindergartens and pre-schools because it has reported success with this age group.

Suggestopedia (also known as Desuggestopedia) is one of the methods that can be used by EFL and ESL instructors to cultivate students’ motivation, to increase students’ memorizing ability and to improve their listening and speaking capacity (Zaid, 2014:7). It was developed by Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator. Interestingly, its name is derived from a mixture of the two words “suggestion” and “pedagogy”. Lozanov developed this approach based on his early-1960s study of suggestion, also known as “suggestology”. Suggestology now places a great deal of emphasis on “desuggestive learning”. So it is also called *Desuggestopedia*. Lozanov believed that the human brain could process great quantities of material if simply given the right condition for learning, among which are a state of

relaxation and giving over of control to the instructor; and its essence is to enhance one's self-awareness, inspire one's potential and expand one's memory and other capabilities according to Zaid (2014).

Community Language Learning (CLL) is an approach developed by Charles Arthur Curran in the early 1970s, in which more emphasis is placed upon group work or developing a community of learning, especially the relationship between the instructor and students. In this work-based "counseling approach" are the rolls of "counselor" or "paraphraser" and "client" or "collaborator" (Richards, 1986). In this approach, instructors and students play the roles respectively a shift away from that of traditional instructor-centred approaches. No specific textbooks or syllabus are needed and following the interaction between the instructor and student(s) is encouraged. Students would determine topics for meaningful discussion. In this approach, instructors need to spend more energy and time in a supportive role. Students in the approach are required to master the sound system, assign important meanings to individual lexical units and construct a basic grammar of a foreign language, which is similar to the Natural Approach (i.e. that speaking usually comes naturally after the basic comprehension of something). Community Language Learning is important in light of the rapid development of internet technology. A large number of online, CLL courses have risen based on the social network services in foreign language learning, such as "English, Baby", HJ English, MOOC (massive open online courses), and so on.

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), also called Task-based Instruction (TBI), is often regarded as a branch of communicative language learning, which focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful "tasks" using the target language (Richards et al, 2001). The tasks include activities in real situations, such as appointing or visiting a doctor, claiming lost items at airports, conducting an interview, or calling a taxi

service. This approach would facilitate the fluency and confidence of the students while learning a foreign language in the target language.

Brinton, Snow, & Wesche (1989) indicate that Content-based Instruction (CBI) is an important approach in language education designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language. In the past, especially when other approaches like the audio-lingual and Grammar-translation prevailed, the “content” usually referred to vocabulary or sound patterns. But now, it tends to refer to the use of subject matter as a vehicle for second or foreign language teaching and learning (linguistic immersion).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a bilingual educational approach when a L2 (a second language or foreign language) is used in the teaching of non-language subjects in the European context. Hurajová (2015) defines CLIL as an educational approach that involves learning and teaching curricular subjects through the medium of a foreign language, typically to students learning at primary, secondary or even tertiary level in some form of mainstream education. It aims for students to reach proficiency in both the subject and language. It has been a topical issue in European education contexts for quite a few years and is continually moving into mainstream education in Europe. Different from the goals and contexts of other approaches, CLIL aims for students to reach proficiency in both the content subject and foreign language (Hurajová, 2015).

The Council of the European Union promoted CLIL through the issuance of Council resolutions, including 21 November 2008, and as a European strategy encouraging multilingualism. In this 2008 resolution, the past efforts (e.g. Council Resolution of 14 February 2002) of the Council to promote linguistic diversity and language learning is highlighted, stressing that the knowledge of language(s) is one of the basic skills each citizen needs in order to take part effectively in [European] society and therefore facilitates both

integration into society and social cohesion. The 2008 resolution also highlighted the conclusions of the European Council meeting in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002, which called for further action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching two foreign languages to all from a very early age. Other important progress has included Decision No.1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 December 2006 concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008); the Council conclusions of 19 May 2006 on the European Indicator of Language Competence, which reaffirmed that foreign language skills, as well as helping to foster mutual understanding between peoples, are a prerequisite for a mobile workforce and contribute to the competitiveness of the European Union economy; the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010, which emphasize the cultural dimension of multilingualism and in particular its role in access to culture and its contribution to creativity; the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences, which acknowledge the role of language learning and translation in the acquisition of intercultural competences; the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on multilingualism, which, *inter alia*, invite the Commission to draw up proposals by the end of 2008 for a comprehensive policy framework on multilingualism.

Hurajová (2015) reviewed the implementation of CLIL in the European context noting that it has been an emphasized, European-oriented instructional approach created by David Marsh, of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, in 1994. The approach enjoys unique advantages and wide adaptabilities in Europe. It is based on the methodological principles of language immersion, a technique used in bilingual language education in which two languages (L1 being the native and L2 being the second language) are used for instruction in a variety of subjects including math, science, social studies, etc. CLIL is very widely used in Europe with its multicultural and multilingual population of more than 443 billion in 27

member nations after the Brexit (following an advisory referendum held in June 2016, 52% of votes were cast in favour of leaving the EU). On the one hand, the goal of this approach is to help students to reach proficiency in both the subject matter and the foreign language. On the other hand, mobility and immigration are the biggest barriers in the multilingual and multicultural contexts and in European development. In Finland, CLIL is provided in English, Finnish, French, German, Russian, Sami and Swedish. According to Marsh et al. (2007), Finland and the Netherlands are the countries offering the highest number of programs taught in English as a second or foreign language in Europe. CLIL develops very well because of the highly autonomous educational systems in Finland. An educational assessment showed that the integrated language and content education started as a content-oriented approach in the first half of the twentieth century in Germany (Wolff, 2007) even though Germany was officially described as a monolingual nation. CLIL has begun to be encouraged in Hungaria since laws in 1985 were developed that schools would carry out educational activities in other languages (e.g. German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian) than the mother tongue. In the CLIL classroom setting(s), a specific language syllabus is needed with the culture of the target language countries and three subjects. CLIL in Austria is known under the term “Englisch als Arbeitssprache” meaning “the use of English (or any other FL) in teaching situations ranging from short projects to bilingual education throughout the whole school year”. However, CLIL seems to be not widely or well developed in Austria because of financial and human resource limitations. One of the goals of CLIL in Austria is seen as helping those who want to study or work abroad. In the Czech Republic, bilingual education is realized either through the project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic as specified in the National Plan for Target Language Teaching approved in 2005, on the one hand or fully or partially also in other schools where the bilingual education of Ministry of Education is tolerated, on the other hand. Schools are allowed to provide

instruction through a target language in several selected subjects. Although these schools are called “bilingual” in the Czech Republic, in European educational context, this approach is called CLIL which aims to shift from a certain level of foreign language knowledge to a higher, intermediate level of foreign language knowledge (Hurajová, 2015).

Other approaches to be reviewed are the Communicative Approach, Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA), and the Production-oriented Approach (POA).

Some English Language Learners (ELLs) might recall a well-known English language program, “FOLLOW ME” and its famous host/actor Francis Matthews who passed away on 14 June 2014. This program offered a classic presentation of the Communicative Language Approach (CLA) or Communicate Approach, which introduced formally the term “interaction” into foreign language teaching and learning. An “Interaction” is not only considered as the means or way but also as the ultimate goal of one’s foreign language learning. The Communicative Language Approach is an approach to foreign or second language teaching and learning which emphasizes that the goal of the language learning is communicative competence. The approach, which is believed in many countries to be a successful method to foster communicative competence, has been more widely talked about and practiced in college English teaching and learning since this approach was first introduced in China in the 1980s. Huang (2007) has also pointed out some inevitable difficulties and barriers that this approach has met such as an unfavourable teaching and learning environment and an inconsistent testing system under the reform throughout China (Huang, 2007).

Communicative Language Teaching brought new teaching approaches in EFL and ESL classrooms to China early in the twenty-first century. As a result, in China, EFL and ESL instructors began to reflect on their teaching role and focus more on cultivating the

communicative competences of students (versus grammatical rules or other skills like speaking, reading, listening, writing and translation). In this approach, instructors shift their role from an instructor or “leading actor/ess” to a facilitator, which is the basis of cooperative learning approach. In the cooperative learning approach, it is believed that student-centred classroom activities would motivate students to achieve their individual and group goals. We can paraphrase this as the ultimate goal of communicative language teaching as language teaching for communication.

When discussing “communicative competences”, it is important to reference the work of Dell Hathaway Hymes, a linguist, sociolinguist, anthropologist, and folklorist who established disciplinary foundations for the comparative, ethnographic study of language use. Hymes (2003) coined the linguistic term and defined communicative competence as follow:

*... communicative competence as a linguistic term refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.*

This definition covered not only the basic linguistic competences but also language abilities in their social contacts. Grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like is the basic learning goal for a foreign language learner. However, instruction to develop social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately is also needed to in the learning of a foreign language because the latter is a very challenging task requiring instructional support.

Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) facilitated the wide application of the communicative language teaching in foreign language education in the past two decades.

Higgins (1983) has addressed Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) as Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), British, or Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI)/Computer-Aided Language Instruction (CALI). Levy (1997) defined it as the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning. In this instructional method, multimedia, in the form of pictures, texts, video, or sound, can make the content and process of the language education more vivid and dynamic than that of the traditional classroom. In computer-assisted instruction, instructors usually design watching, listening and speaking as major components of the class. Thus, with the assistant of computer and internet technology, a large amount of information can be input and output in communicative language teaching. Computer Assisted Instruction consists of distance education (off campus) and internet-based language teaching on campus. The latter has become one of the popular methods in EFL and ESL contexts in China's educational system. It is very popular especially as the focus of education has moved from elite education to mass education. Internet-based teaching is not limited to time and space, which offers options for students to learn anytime and anywhere.

Mainstream instructional approaches have also been developed and implemented by well-known Chinese scholars and some are reviewed here including LICTIA. The Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA), was developed by Professor Sun Youzhong (2011), Professor of English and vice-president of the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Sun (2011) strongly suggested that the critical thinking competence be highlighted by English language learners in cross-cultural settings in the new educational reform. In LICTIA, foreign language and content were integrated; while, competences in language, critical thinking, cross-culture awareness and the humanities are also equally emphasized. Critical thinking needed to be considered explicitly in this approach. For example, at Harvard University one of the ultimate goals of student was encouraged to rejoice in discovery and in critical thought and there was a spirit of questioning (Sun, 2015).

In LICTIA, EFL and ESL instructors and students were encouraged to be inquisitive, rational, factual, prudent, able to judge, be sensitive to inquiry, and persistent in the pursuit of truth. Moreover, the competences in elaboration, analysis, evaluation, reasoning and interpretation of evidence, concepts, methods, standards, backgrounds, etc. were also needed. In this approach, intercultural contexts were seriously taken into account.

Evolving from an “output-driven hypothesis” (Wen: 2007; 2008) and “output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis” (2014), the Production-oriented Approach (POA) was introduced by Wen (2015) in the post-method era (Prabhu, 1990; Allwright, 1991; Freeman, 1991,1996; Richards, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2012; Qi & Zhang, 2017). In this theoretical system, Wen (2015) argued that POA consists of three parts, i.e., teaching philosophy, the hypothesis and the instructor-as-intermediary process. This approach served mainly the curriculum reform of the competences and skills for English language majors and college English teaching and learning. Foreign language learners at intermediate and advanced levels were both the teaching objects in this approach.

“Learning-Centred Principle”, “Learning-using Integrated Principle” and “Whole-person Education Principle” were highlighted in this approach. The “Learning-Centred” principle is a subversive expression compared to the principles of “instructor-centred” and “student-centred”. It was the returning of the essence or nature of education that learning is more important than anything else in educational activities.

“Learning-using Integrated Principle” hypothesized that all activities in language teaching and learning were firmly connected to the using or that there was no boundary between learning and using (the two are integrated). This hypothesis challenged the principles of “textbook-centred”, “text-as-the-top”, and the “separation of learning and use” existing in traditional classroom activities.

The “Whole-person Education Principle” emphasized both the instrumentality and liberal educational (equivalent to “liberal education” or “culture”) (Cai, 2017) goals were achieved in foreign language teaching and learning.

Most scholars, educators, instructors and even planning and policy makers at different levels in educational bodies held the consensus that foreign language teaching possessed the properties of both *renwen* (Chinese Pinyin, equivalent to “liberal education” or “culture”) and instrumentality, embodied implemented respectively in different courses, as evidenced in English programs at primary, secondary and higher educational levels (Cai, 2017). Cai stated there was no instrumentality in liberal education in foreign language teaching and learning and hypothesized that both are just the basic properties of a language.

## **2.6 The evolution of foreign language education policy and planning in China**

### **2.6.1 The early mission schools in China**

National foreign language education policies had a dynamic evolutionary history in China’s reform. Foreign language education policies are inevitable components of national fundamental policies.

China’s foreign language education dated back to the late Qing Dynasty when Yan Fu (1904) published a book entitled *English Grammar (Explained in Chinese)*. Of course, this is a very short history compared with that of other nations. Foreign language teaching was originated in mission schools by Protestant missionaries who came to China in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ding, 2008). During the “Self-strengthening Movement” by the Westernized part of the feudal landlord class, there had to be the means to overcome/take over and language had an important role. During this process, foreign language learning was a basic means of control.

Robert Morrison set up an Anglo-Chinese College in 1818 in Macau; Wanstall and Samuel Robbins Brown co-established the Morrison School on November 4, 1839, in Macau. English was taught as a subject in the schooling system. It was understood that, at that moment in time, English teaching was to meet the needs of missionary work and train translators or interpreters for the fertilization of foreign cultures and their pillaging purpose in the trades with Chinese citizens. The authority or leadership did not express their support or opposition to foreign language teaching clearly in Old China. Foreign language teaching and learning developed on its own at that time, and represents the origins of foreign language education in China.

In Chinese mission schools at that time, instructors taught Chinese students the Chinese classics, Christian Scripture, and English (Ding, 2008). We also know that *The Bible* was used as an English text. Chinese children were taught Western language and culture, and Christian values via stories from *The Bible* in a manner that presumed the superiority of Western, Christian culture and values. The mission schools viewed this as a means to promote Christianity and parents did not reject this kind of education on the whole. It was well known (Ding, 2008) that the mission schools helped foster some elites in China (e.g., business translators, diplomats, English instructors and social talents) though it was not the original mission of these schools.

The teaching methods in the mission schools were to develop an individual's nature freely and fully. Interestingly, the schools educated the students according to their natural abilities, very similar to the Confucius philosophy in Ancient China. The students were divided into different age groups and classes and were taught different courses. The students would learn various subjects including history, philosophy, astronomy, geography, arithmetic, etc. (Ding, 2008). The above-mentioned Grammar-translated approach even prevailed in

Europe in a very long period of time. To a certain extent, the Grammar-translation approach was used maliciously for a religious purpose at that time. Students were required to learn and compare the languages and cultures of the mother tongue and the target language all the time in this approach and were influenced and even changed (consciously and unconsciously). Regardless of the religious purposes, Ding (2008) concluded that these mission schools succeeded in English teaching.

The feudal system existed in China from BC 221 to 1911. In this long history, men were viewed as superior to women. Strictly speaking, most females were not allowed to attend school at that time. It was the same in the early mission schools in China.

In this period, there was even no foreign language education policy and planning (FLEPP for short) made by authorities.

Li (2015) divided the evolution of FLEPP into three stages based upon significant historical events during different times as follows: FLEPP before 1949, FLEPP since the founding of PR China, and FLEPP since the Reform and Opening up in China.

## **2.6.2 Foreign language education policy and planning**

### **2.6.2.1 FLEPP before 1949 (from late Qing Dynasty to 1949)**

#### **2.6.2.1.1 Opium wars and Tong Wen Guan**

In FLEPP before 1949, it was very necessary to recall the importance of the Opium Wars (Opium War I [also called First Anglo-Chinese War] from 1840 to 1842) and Opium War II [also called Anglo-French expedition to China] from 1856 to 1860), which marked the beginning of modern Chinese history. During the wars, some officials suggested the government cultivate foreign language translators so that they would communicate more

efficiently with western invaders, especially in treaty negotiation. At that time, the mission schools had formed their own educational system. Western religion, foreign language and culture, and Chinese classics were taught as the main subjects. Some foreign language schools, such as Beijing Tong Wen Guan (1862), Shanghai Tong Wen Guan (1863), Guangzhou Tong Wen Guan (1863), etc., were set up by the Qing government. The students were taught English, French, Japanese, Russian, German primarily and other scientific subjects.

Eight-year Teaching Syllabus of Beijing Tong Wen Guan (1872)	
Year	Teaching Contents
The 1st year	Reading and writing of words and easy texts
The 2nd year	Grammar, note-translation
The 3rd year	The geography and history of the world, selected translation
The 4th year	Mathematical enlightenment and algebra, translation of official documents
The 5th year	Study the phenomena of nature, geometry, flat triangle, triangle arc, translation
The 6th year	Machine, differential integral, nautical measurement, translation
The 7th year	Chemistry, astronomy, computation-checking, law of nations, translation
The 8th year	Astronomy, surveying and mapping, geography, inscriptions on gold, Governing strategies, translation

Note: it takes only five years for the older students to finish the curriculum if they covered subjects except for the foreign language(s); data selected from *Compilations for Chinese Educational History in Modern Times: During the period of Westernization Movement* (Gao, 2007).

In *the Sino-Britain Treaty of Tientsin* in 1858, there was a mandatory provision that these British documents would be written in English only and the English version would be

the standard if there were some differences or disputes between both versions. In 1861, Prince Yi Xin noticed that foreign nations hired Chinese instructors to teach them Chinese language and culture and he therefore suggested that the government cultivate talent in foreign languages and cultures so that they would know foreign nations as well. More students tended to learn English language versus other foreign languages such as French, Russian and German.

#### **2.6.2.1.2 Pioneers in the reforms**

Two important figures in reform are Zizhen Gong (1792-1841), and Wei Yuan (1794-1857).

Miscellanies of the Year 1839

(written by Zizhen Gong, translated by Yuanchong Xu)

From wind and thunder comes a nation's vital force,

What a great pity not to hear a neighing horse!

I urge the Lord of Heaven to brace up again,

And send down talents of all kinds to Central Plain.

As a great thinker, writer and pioneer of reform, Gong complained and strongly urged the government to cultivate talent instead of Pedants and the group of the old adherents of the corrupt and decayed Qing Dynasty.

As a well-known follower of Enlightenment, a politician, and writer, Wei Yuan was one of the first in the history of China to advocate, “. . .to learn the advanced military technology

from the foreigners and use it to fight against the invasion of them” in his *Hai Kwoh Tu Chi* (2011).

#### **2.6.2.1.3 Hundred Days’ Reform and the educational system**

Zheng (1892) suggested that traditional Chinese values and modern western ideology could both be applied in the schools. However, the educational system of this time period placed more emphasis on modern western ideology, which was also the basis of the educational philosophy at that moment. The schools at that time began to change previous conservative feudal ideas of education. The Hundred Days’ Reform (also called Wu Xu Reform), refers to the Reform movement led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in 1898, which started on June 11 and failed on September 21, 1898. They advocated learning from the western nations, promoting science and culture, reforming the policies in politics and educational systems, and developing agriculture, industry, business, etc.

#### **2.6.2.1.4 Imperial examination system in late Qing Dynasty**

The imperial examination system, through which officials were selected, had a history of about 1,300 years in China from the Sui Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. In this system, the examinees could recommend themselves, which changed the hereditary system of nobility. Examinees were required to present an eight-part essay (a stereotyped writing), with a set structure of Opening, Amplification, Preliminary exposition, Initial argument, Central argument, Latter argument, Final argument and Conclusion. The examinees were confined to conventional ideology in all aspects of the essay/ideas from structure to content. The abolition of imperial examination system and the establishment of new schools promoted the introduction of new ideas and approaches in English teaching and learning. Eventually, English teaching was given space in the traditional Chinese educational system.

#### **2.6.2.1.5 The “Ren-yin” and “Kui-mao” educational systems**

The “Ren-yin” (1902) and “Kui-mao” (1904) educational systems issued by the Qing government were the first in the modern history of China. On August 1902, Baixi Zhang, the minister in education, drafted the *Authorized School Regulations* for the “Ren-yin” educational system, which offered strict requirements for entrance/admission, length of schooling, curriculum provisions, coherence of teaching at different levels, etc. Zhang Baixi was envied by the old guard in the Manchu-led government. Moreover, his system suffered as a result of his lack of experience/education and theoretical support. Thus, the “Ren-yin” system soon failed.

On January 13, 1904, the Qing government issued the School Regulations drafted and presented by Zhang Zhidong, Zhang Baixi and Rong Qing, which marked the beginning of the “Kui-mao” educational system. It was the first national educational system in China. Zhang Zhidong was the main representative of this first political school that advocated the westernization movement, impacting modern science and technology comprehensively and systematically in China. He was also the founder of the well-known Nanjing and Wuhan Universities in China. The credo, “Chinese learning for the foundation, western learning for practical use” was a guide in this system, which was influenced by Japan. It had strong feudal characteristics that placed emphasis on Confucian studies.

#### **2.6.2.1.6 English teaching in both educational systems**

In the “Ren-Yin” system, the students were required to learn English as the main foreign language and could choose to learn either French or Japanese when they entered secondary school (middle school).

In the “Kui-Mao” system within secondary education, the academic hours of foreign language study ranked the second, just less than Confucius studies.

Learning English as a compulsory foreign language in schools and universities, was formally adopted by the Department of Education of the Qing Dynasty in 1910. English-language books on practical subjects were used in classes. Students could take “second-round” exams in English. The academic requirement hours of English language instruction were reduced gradually when there were, over time, more and more people of a good command of the English language. Thus, there can be seen strong links between foreign language teaching and learning and social, societal development.

#### **2.6.2.1.7 English teaching in higher education in late Qing Dynasty**

In Peiyang University, English was taught as a general language and a compulsory course. Drawing from the models of the length of schooling at Harvard and Yale Universities, this university required the students to complete their undergraduate studies in four years. The university provided thirty courses covering engineering, electricity, mining, machine mechanics, and law. The first and the second groups of top-tier students were required to submit English essay/writing and translation work. In Nanyang College, English was taught as the main approach to any subject, which meant that most courses were taught in English.

The above examples highlight changes from a closed nationalism-centred education system to open education with an aim of world, cultural exchange. However, old conceptions and the strength of the feudal system did try and test the educational system very seriously at that time. In summary, English language education was carried out for a certain purpose, either as a subject or as an approach to learning other subjects.

### 2.6.2.2 FLEPP since the founding of PR China

Generally speaking, foreign language education policies and planning (abbreviated as FLEPP) were usually affected by the economic, social, political and diplomatic policies of a country. The Chinese government is of no exception especially since the establishment of “New China” in 1949. For example, the Chinese government set up the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language in 1952 and renamed it as the State Language Affairs Commission in 1977. However, both did not touch upon foreign language education, which was in the charge of a sub-division of the Ministry of Education or the State Education Commission. The Chinese government did not issue any foreign language education policies and planning until *the Seven-year Planning in Foreign Language Education* led by State Council of PRC in 1964. This effort was, however, thwarted by the “Cultural Revolution” that was a socio-political movement that took place in China from 1966 until 1976.

The Chinese government was isolated diplomatically by the West very shortly after the founding of New China. At that point, there was a trend for learning Russian over other foreign languages. “Learning from Russia” became the basic state policy. Russian began to prevail among all foreign languages in China. Colleges of Russian language emerged quickly and profusely in 1950 (e.g. Beijing Russian College, Shanghai Russian College, Harbin Russian College, Shenyang Russian College, Southwest Russian College, Northeast Russian College, Xinjiang Dihua Russian College, etc.). In 1951, thirty-four universities offered Russian language and culture courses (e.g., Tsinghua University, Peking University, and Renmin University of China). Moreover, there were many other schools providing various Russian language-training programs. Further, the Ministry of Education issued *the Decision on the adjustment and setting of the departments of education, English, Sports, Politics, and so on* in 1953. Accordingly, departments of English in universities, except East China Normal

University, disappeared. The Ministry of Education even cancelled the foreign language education programs in secondary schools (middle and junior high). This extreme tendency led to a shortage of English language skills and talent in China. In the mid-1950s, there was an increase in the demand of foreign language instructors and translators due to the deterioration of diplomatic relations between China and the Soviet Union and the strengthening of relations with the countries in the west, Asia, Africa and Latin-America regions. English teaching and learning became a primary educational focus again. Meanwhile, teaching and learning of Spanish and Arabic also developed because of the new diplomatic relations with Cuba and some Arabic speaking countries. More foreign languages were taught after the previous Premier Zhou Enlai paid official visits to fourteen countries in Asia and Africa. As China's first national guideline, the Seven-year Planning Framework in Foreign Language Education issued in 1964, adopted "English as the first foreign language". As such, educational institutions had to adjust the focus and percentage of time foreign languages were taught in the curriculum. More students were encouraged to learn English. And a certain number of students were encouraged to learn other languages such as French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese and German, and some to study less popular languages. Meanwhile, Russian language courses were reduced based on the social-political demand.

### **2.6.2.3 FLEPP since the reform and opening up in China**

Foreign language education developed very rapidly when China's reform and opening up in 1978. A national conference on foreign language education was sponsored by the State Council in August of 1978 in Beijing. The members attending proposed to speed up the cultivation of foreign language talent at that time. In March of 1979, the decision was required to be carried out in all educational institutions and this act promoted foreign language education greatly. In a notice by the Ministry of Education of that time, it declared

that the mission was mainly English education. Meanwhile, other popular and general foreign languages like Japanese, French, German, Russian, etc. could not be ignored. And *The Suggestions on foreign language education in primary, junior and senior middle schools*, issued by the Ministry of Education in 1982, pointed out that foreign language education in middle schools should focus on English and that Russian could also be taught. Japanese language could also be taught in some schools with qualified instructors. There were eleven foreign language colleges throughout China until the mid 1960s.

The central government began to conduct strategic and long-term policies and planning of foreign language education into account in the 1960s. More than 400 foreign language schools, colleges and universities were established in China since then. And some universities, like Shanghai International Studies University, began to explore new modes of cultivating cross-disciplinary talents in foreign language education in the 1980s.

## **2.7 Evolution of organizations of consultation and guidance for foreign language education**

The 1992 development of the Steering Committee of Foreign Language Teaching in Higher education, was based upon the State Committee of Textbook Compilation in 1980. The Steering Committee was in charge of inquiry, consultation, direction, and service provisions, etc., in the foreign language education regarding China's higher education system. Thus, two teaching syllabuses for English majors at basic level in higher education were completed by the Committee and authorized by the Higher education Department of the State Education Commission to implement in China's colleges and universities in succession in 1989 and 1990. Additionally, teaching syllabuses related to French, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, German, etc., were also issued.

A new line of thinking came into being following the suggestions and reforms laid forth regarding undergraduate foreign language education in the twenty-first century, issued by the Ministry of Education in 1998. The 1998 guidelines and reforms would serve as the basis of foreign language education in the new era. As part of these guidelines, teaching syllabuses related to Spanish (1998), English (2000), Russian (2002), German (2006), etc. were issued, focusing on exploring the cultivation of compound talents in foreign languages and cultures.

## **2.8 Unbalanced development of general and non-general language education in China**

In the history of foreign language education in China, policies and planning mainly covered the general foreign languages that usually referred to the working languages after the establishment of the United Nations. Compared with English, Chinese, Spanish, etc., with many speakers, non-general language education was placed less emphasis or even ignored to some extent. Just some of the languages were taught for political or historical or diplomatic reasons. For example, the *Seven-year Planning in Foreign Language Education* issued in 1964 was overshadowed by the “Cultural Revolution” of the time, mentioned above. In the 1970s, a few official documents were issued usually for general languages only.

It is generally accepted that foreign language policy is not merely a matter of education. Foreign language policy is a compound system closely linked to politics, economics, diplomacy, trade, technology, etc. Seen in this light, an imbalanced development of general and non-general foreign languages got in the way of the rapid development of China.

## **2.9 FLEPP, the “Going globally” and the “Belt and road” initiative**

In the 17th national congress report of the Communist Party of China, the ex-president Hu Jintao said as follow:

*Adhering to the basic state policy of opening up, we will integrate our “in” and “going globally” strategies better, expand the areas of opening up, optimize its structure, raise its quality, and turn our open economy into one in which domestic development and opening to the outside world interact and Chinese businesses and their foreign counterparts engage in win-win cooperation, and one that features security and efficiency, in order to gain new advantages for China in international economic cooperation and competition amid economic globalization.*

It predicted the “win-win” strategies through “in” and “going-globally” strategies. Policy Coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial Integration, and the People-to-People Bond (also “Connections among the people”) are the five cooperative priorities of the “Belt and Road Initiative“ issued by Chinese government.

One goes globally only if one knows the language(s) of the different nations of the world. Foreign language education is the most efficient and direct approach to the “People-to-People Bond” (also “Connections among the people”). In other words, foreign language education policies and planning have become part of key strategies in the political, economic, and social development of China in the new era.

## **2.10 China's Standards of English Language Ability**

### **2.10.1 Background**

More than 300 million Chinese people learned English as a foreign language. It was high time to design *China's Standards of English Language Ability*, similar to *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, abbreviated in English as CEFR or CEF or CEFRL, used as a guideline to describe benchmark achievements of foreign language education across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries.

The work of designing *China's Standards of English Language Ability* was based upon the *Directions on Deepening the Reform of Examination and Enrolment Systems* issued by China's State Council on September 4, 2014. It was the first time for the central government to put forward the state English language proficiency scales in an important official national document in China.

### **2.10.2 National Test and Assessment System of *China's Standards of English Language Ability***

In the official document mentioned above, it called for strengthening China's Standards of English Language Ability, reforming the form and content of examinations, establishing the "overpass" for lifelong education which links education at all levels, and recognizing achievement in diverse settings of foreign language teaching and learning.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the official document *China's Standards of English Language Ability* (abbreviated as CSELA) was issued on April 12, 2018 by the Ministry of Education and State Language Commission of PRC. In the framework, the language abilities of China's English language learners and users are divided into nine levels

from the basic to advanced, which consists of the elementary level (levels one to three), the intermediate level (levels four to six), and the proficient level (levels seven to nine), as follows.

***China’s Standards of English Language Ability (CSELA)***

Stages of Abilities	Proficiency level
Proficient (Advanced learners and users)	Nine
	Eight
	Seven
Intermediate (Intermediate Learners and users)	Six
	Five
	Four
Elementary (Beginning learners and users)	Three
	Two
	One

**2.10.3 Goals of China’s Standards of English Language Ability**

Based on China’s national needs, *China’s Standards of English Language Ability* aimed to guarantee fair and scientific selection of talent and to promote reform in foreign language teaching and examination/assessment. The aim was to develop an internationally recognized foreign language proficiency test and assessment system of common standards and multiple functions, which provided scales and methods for assessing foreign language proficiency in education at all levels - scientifically recognizing the outcomes and levels in foreign language learning (developing norms, etc.).

#### **2.10.4 The test and assessment for China's Standards of English Language Ability**

The test and assessment for China's Standards of English Language Ability sponsored by China's National Education Examinations Authority, covered the essential domains of comprehensive language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, and education ranging from primary school to university/tertiary levels, and learning, teaching, test and assessment in foreign language education.

#### **2.10.5 Criteria of China's Standards of English Language Ability**

The document, *China's Standards of English Language Ability* needed adoption by “a unified standard” in which education at all levels, from kindergarten to higher education, develops in the same direction, so that English teaching and learning was conducted without interruption. Another criterion was that “the same scales” completely and explicitly define and describe language proficiency so that China's English learning, teaching and assessment were integrated. With the common language proficiency scales, achievement level would be internationally recognized.

Based on the common language proficiency scales, China would initiate National English Proficiency Examinations covering the education at all levels from young children to adults and would assess comprehensive language proficiency to meet the multiple demands of graduation, continued learning, employment, going abroad, and so on.

## **2.10.6 Major similarities and differences between CEFR and CSELA**

### **2.10.6.1 Similarities**

CEFR and CSELA are both the guidelines of the benchmark achievements of foreign language teaching and learning in their own contexts by educators and scholars. And both of them are comprehensive, transparent and coherent frameworks for reference.

CEFR aims to serve the realistic demands of the member countries in the European Union. And CSELA also serves the development of China with the largest population of English language learners and with the largest number of ethnic groups. Both offer feasible language ability standards or proficiency scales for assessment at certain levels. And both of them may examine the language abilities of foreign language learners and users from different dimensions.

The CEFR covers general competences in knowledge, skills, and existential competence with particular communicative competences in linguistics, sociolinguistics competence, and pragmatics.

CSELA divides the abilities of English language learners and users into language ability, linguistic knowledge, language use strategy, topic, language activity, language comprehension ability, language production ability, organizational competence, pragmatic ability, and translation and interpretation ability.

Interestingly, “can do” rather than “cannot do” statements are used to assess the abilities and competences in both CEFR and CSELA, which would help to relieve the pressure and motivate language learners and users in their learning and examinations.

### **2.10.6.2 Differences**

CEFR is intended to apply to any of the languages spoken in the member countries of the European Union. It was translated in many languages. However, from the name of CSELA itself, it applies only to English language most widely taught and learned in China.

In CEFR, it is suggested that an action-orientated or action-based approach be used in foreign language teaching and learning. Users and learners of a language primarily are “social agents” in the action-oriented approach. It is a new term used in an instructional approach. It means that users and learners of a language are originally members of a certain society in which they need to achieve their own tasks (not limited to the language field) in a given situation, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. The social context, cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of specific abilities are all emphasized in this approach.

In CSELA, no instructional approach is proscribed. However, it does not ignore the importance of instructional approaches. On the contrary, it tries to avoid the bias and wrong directions in the selection of instructional approaches. CSELA is open to any appropriate instructional approach that may help English language learners and users to achieve the abilities.

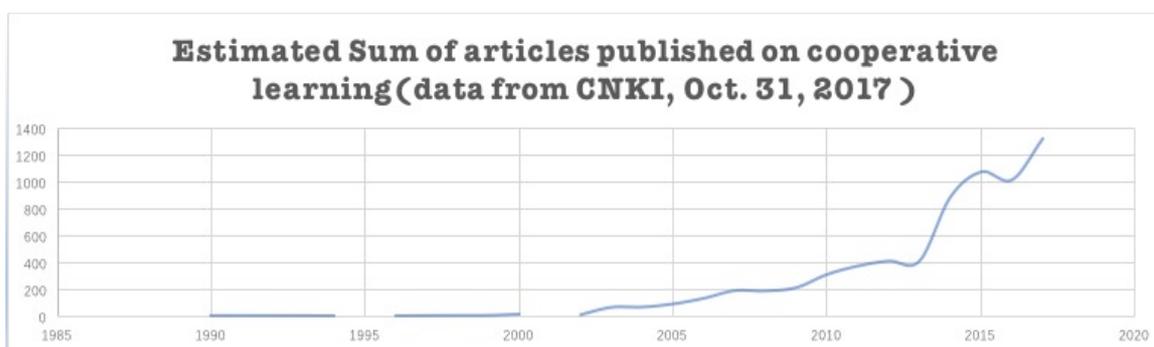
This research then moved to a focus on cooperative learning in China after the review of China’s foreign language education history and policies.

## 2.11 Cooperative learning in China

### 2.11.1 Introduction

Cooperative learning is “familiar” and “unfamiliar” to most educators, researchers, instructors and foreign language education planning and policy makers in China. Liu and Guo (2011) argued that the use of the cooperative learning approaches was far from satisfactory since introduction to China in the 1980s. They also argued that the domestic research of cooperative learning usually focused on the maximized efforts of learning and helping the students learn together more efficiently.

Cooperative learning seemed to be a good approach to foreign language teaching and learning in China. Searching the literature for “cooperative learning”, it is found that most of the researches in the field mainly focused on theoretical rather than empirical studies. It was far from a popular approach in China. In the China National Knowledge Infrastructure it indicated (2017) that there were only 2,802 articles about the application of cooperative learning in primary education, secondary and vocational education, 1,886 articles in the basic studies (social sciences), and 391 articles related to higher education respectively.



From the XY scatter plot, it suggested more and more researchers, educators and instructors showed greater interest in the academic contributions of cooperative learning in China’s EFL and ESL classroom settings. Surprisingly, more than eighty percent of studies

focused on theoretical researches. Among these, most placed much emphasis on group learning only, which suggested that many instructors took for granted that cooperative learning was equivalent to group learning.

Strictly speaking, the development of cooperative learning is far from satisfactory in China's educational contexts.

First, instructors hold different understandings of cooperative learning. They tried to create a "group learning" atmosphere to motivate students. However, most of their teaching activities were still based on traditional group learning in which there were even no teaching plans, goals, duties of group members, inner assessment among group members. This would be called "pseudo" or "fake" cooperative learning because not all core elements of cooperative approach existed in their classroom contexts. Cooperative learning was not approach to make their classroom designing seemingly "magnificent".

Secondly, not every instructor was able to adopt the cooperative learning approach. A questionnaire suggested that no more than 60% in-service instructors knew about the definition and connotations of the cooperative learning approach exactly. In this approach, instructors needed to know well the students in their classes including their religion, family background, personal characteristics, and so on, so that the students could be divided into small groups scientifically and efficiently. Instructors also needed to spend time on the designing and preparation for their courses before class.

Thirdly, the lack of the theoretical basis in China was the most obvious barrier to cooperative learning originated in the West. Compared to other traditional approaches, cooperative learning is a more open pedagogy. In the long history of China, Chinese students tended to be accustomed to the rote education where the instructor imparted knowledge and thought "women are inferior to men", "respect one's instructor(s) and honour truth" and "IQ was usually higher than EQ", and so on. So most students were unwilling or unable to

communicate with the instructors and peers effectively so they would not have self-awareness or social awareness especially of the importance of the spirit of teamwork.

The following section reviewed the responses and research findings from several questionnaires regarding approaches instruction in EFL and ESL classroom contexts conducted in two senior middle schools, a vocational college and a comprehensive university. The surveys cover the teaching the detailed information of the participants.

### **2.11.2 Cooperation and Competition**

Cooperation and competition always co-existed in EFL and ESL classroom settings. Students were required but not “encouraged” to cooperate and compete while they started learning English as a foreign language at the first semester in the third academic year of China’s primary schools.

It was surprisingly found that cooperative learning tended to be less used as students entered at higher educational levels. Typically, pupils in primary school were usually divided into smaller groups for a structured academic goal directed by the instructor for practice in EFL and ESL classes. For example, the class were divided into small groups with some members. They acted as leader, timer, checker, encourager, recorder, reporter, keeper, provoker, summarizer, elaborator, flatterer, safeguard, peacekeeper, saboteur, silencer, contactor, observer, wildcard, etc., respectively so as to make everyone achieved a lot in academic grounds.

Through cooperative learning, all members would make certain progress especially in positive goal interdependence. In the group, members shared some common goal and the participation of all members ensured the success of the group.

And cooperative learning promoted individual accountability as each member has their own duty. Moreover, group members would give teammate the necessary assistance, i.e.

encouragement and support for the common assignments of the entire group. Thus, much interactive experience virtually in social contexts was attained through the activities.

Instructors employed the cooperative learning approach more often in EFL and ESL contexts at the lower levels of education until the examination-oriented period of education (the entrance examination for junior middle school, senior school, and college or university education). At higher levels, they spent more time on the preparation for the examinations and the EFL and ESL classroom settings tended to be overwhelmed by fierce competition and the pressure of examinations.

## **2.12 Main approaches in EFL and ESL contexts in China's higher education**

### **2.12.1 Introduction**

Higher education is at the very top of the education pyramid as it has not only a bearing on the innovations of a political state but also affects its ideological awareness, cultural accomplishment, and spiritual qualities very profoundly. In the realization of China's rejuvenation", higher institutions would place more emphasis on fostering the Essence-Jing, Energy Flow-Chi and Spiritual-Shen so that awareness, confidence, and undertaking in Chinese culture would match the national rejuvenation.

The "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), sponsored by Chinese President Xi Jinping upon visiting Central and South East Asia in 2013, was a great undertaking or program for people throughout the world. Due to the long cycle, the priority was given to the development of education so as to lay a solid foundation for other projects. In BRI, five areas were given priorities including Policy coordination, Facilities connectivity, Unimpeded trade, Financial

integration, and the People-to-people bond (or Connecting the people). The People-to-people bond would be the key of implementing the Belt and Road Initiative. The bilateral and multilateral cooperation included but not limited to cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges, volunteer service, and so on. Language was one of the biggest obstacles among different nations in exchange and cooperation. The Belt and Road Initiative highlighted the importance of foreign language education more than ever before in China's higher education. Thus arises a "new normal" that cooperation and competition coexist among different countries. In this atmosphere, completely independent learning became less important and cooperative learning became more and more popular.

### **2.12.2 Main approaches in EFL and ESL contexts**

EFL and ESL instructors in China's higher institutions placed much emphasis on pedagogies especially in the twenty-first century, such as the Audio-lingual Approach, Task-based Language Teaching, Internet-based Learning, Communicative Language Approach (CLA), Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA), and Production-oriented Approach (POA).

#### **2.12.2.1 Audio-lingual approach**

The audio-lingual approach was usually used in listening and pronunciation courses for foreign language majors. Colleges and universities are equipped with a certain number of language laboratories with multi-media systems.

The language laboratories included three types that are audio-passive, audio-active, and audio-visual. In this kind of approach, the instructor acted as the centre and students are required to do what the instructor asks. In other words, students are inferior to the instructor

for the roles in classroom settings. Students always felt nervous and depressed especially when they attended the examinations in the language laboratories.

The audio-lingual approach was widely used in listening and pronunciation classes for foreign language education, especially for those majoring in foreign language and culture because each of them needed to learn this kind of compulsory courses.

### **2.12.2.2 Task-based language teaching**

Just as its name implies, Task-based language teaching focused on the language use and the completion of the situational tasks in the target language. The students were required to complete various tasks in the situations such as shopping, making appointments, calling, ordering meals, taking a taxi, etc. In this approach, communicative proficiency was given priority instead of linguistic accuracy. Students were usually divided into pairs or small groups to conduct “face to face” dialogues though some were not “face to face” communication like calling in the real world. It was a branch of communicative language teaching prevailing in the early twenty-first century in China’s foreign language education. Some foreign language instructors even claimed that foreign language education would not exist without communication. Exactly, most foreign language instructors especially in the 1980s and 1990s were taught through this kind of approach. That’s why they had better communicative proficiency in foreign languages.

### **2.12.2.3 Internet-based learning**

Computers have changed the world and the internet has changed the distance between people. With the rapid development of information and internet technology, foreign language education is faced with not only new opportunities, but also new challenges.

The Ministry of Education of China has been encouraging internet-based distance education. China's internet-based education was originated from the Demonstration project of Educational Research Network in 1994. It was believed that internet-based education would facilitate and maximize learners' autonomy and initiatives. Students could achieve their goals via individual or cooperative learning as needed. In September 1998, the Ministry of Education approved Tsinghua University, Beijing University, Zhejiang University and Hunan University as the first batch of pilot universities for Modern Distance Education in China. At present, there are 67 universities offering bachelor or master degree programs for students though the degrees attained from the distance education by universities.

Cooperative Learning could be achieved through internet-based learning, for example when some activities were completed in pairs or groups on an internet-based learning platform.

Universities and colleges were equipped with a large number of teaching and training centres or laboratories for students to complete their extracurricular exercises and listening practice for their foreign language course throughout China.

Regarding internet-based learning, the term Massive Open Online Courses (hereafter referred to as "MOOC"), was coined by Dave Cormier from the University of Prince Edward Island in 2008. In MOOC, collaborative tools such as blog posts, threaded discussions, etc., are widely used. Online students would study offline with peer students nearby. Up to now, it is conservatively estimated that more than 650000 students have utilized MOOC. Cooperative learning and independent learning are both options for the students in MOOC. Strictly speaking, MOOC is the product of sharing and cooperation globally in the educational world.

#### **2.12.2.4 Communicative language approach**

Dell Hymes (1966) proposed the concept of communicative competence. Communicative competence redefined what it meant to “know” a language; in addition to speakers having mastery over the structural elements of language, they would be able to use those structural elements appropriately in a variety of contexts. According to the Communicative Language Approach, the goal of language education was the communicative competence that could best serve the needs of the learners in the target language. And instructors were facilitators instead of instructors in other approaches. This approach placed more emphasis on sound or oral skills than reading and writing.

As one of the dominant techniques, the Communicative Language Approach was widely used in China’s foreign language education in the twenty-first century.

The philosophy of Communicative Language Approach prevailed and reflected profoundly on new English teaching syllabuses and new teaching materials in China’s entry into the new century, e.g., in *the College English Teaching Program for English Majors (revised in 2000)* and *the Requirements of College English Teaching*, issued by the Ministry of Education on September 26, 2007.

#### **2.12.2.5 Language and intercultural critical thinking integrated approach**

Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (hereafter as “LICTIA”) was proposed by Professor Sun Youzhong, vice-president of Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2017. On the basis of Four Needs (the needs of national, national standards, global, and the people) Professor Sun (January 2017 Unipus) clarified that LICITIA focused on the integration of the language and its contents; meanwhile, language abilities, critical thinking abilities, intercultural competences and humanistic accomplishments were

improved simultaneously. The above-mentioned needs of the social development were integrated in foreign language education for the first time.

### **2.12.2.6 The production-oriented approach**

As mentioned above, evolving from “output-driven hypothesis” (Wen, 2008:5-9), and “output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis” (2014), the Production-oriented Approach (hereafter as “POA”) was proposed by professor Wen (2015) in the post-method era (Prabhu, 1990; Allwright, 1991; Freeman, 1991, 1996; Richards, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2012; Qi & Zhang, 2017). In this theoretical system, Wen (2015) stated that POA consisted of a teaching philosophy where there was a “instructor-as-intermediary” process. It highlighted the “Learning-centred Principle”, “Learning-using Integrated Principle” and “Whole-person Education Principle” in POA. Selective learning hypothesis was included in the output-driven hypothesis and input-enabled hypothesis. The teaching processes included motivating, enabling and assessing.

Wen proposed a learning-centred principle, which presented a big challenge to the prevailing student-centred principle in many approaches, especially to cooperative learning. POA advocated that all activities in classroom settings served effective learning. The student-centred idea was introduced into China late last century and early this century (Huang & Gu, 1996). After all, cooperative learning changed the tendency of previous instructor-centred approaches that ignored the needs of students and focused solely on the teaching procedure. In the student-centred classroom settings, the instructor shifted from the centre or the commander to a facilitator or a consultant and students acted as the centre of the classroom activities. It was believed that the student-centred approach weakened the role of

instructors. The most serious consequence was that teaching goals became less essential in this context. Professor Wen (2015) noticed this and then proposed the principle that the instructor held the “leading role” and students as the “body” in education. Comparatively speaking, this learning-centred principle predicted a return to the essence of education, which meant that both goals and effective learning needed to be achieved in teaching activities. Time for teaching and learning of English as foreign language thus was reduced to some extent in most colleges or universities in China.

Secondly, POA advocated a “Learning-using Integrated Principle”. In this principle, “learning” referred to the input provided from learning activities such as listening and reading. While the term “using” referred to the outputs including speaking, writing, translating and interpreting. This principle went against other existing extremes such the textbook-centred or “textbook first”, “separation of learning and using” in foreign language education. In the Learning-using Integrated Principle, POA advocated the integration of learning and using synchronously, in which all students could speak, read, listen, write, and translate or interpret.

Lastly, the Whole-person Education Principle believed that human beings were whom language education was for. This approach focused on human development overall. In this approach, both foreign language proficiency and humanistic literacy were the goals of foreign language education. Wen (2014a) believed that both goals could be achieved through appropriate selection of production-oriented topics and teaching materials along with optimizing the design of class activities such as in cooperative learning.

### **2.12.2.7 Cooperative learning**

The term “cooperative learning” would exist alone without the modifiers like “approach” or “strategy”. It was a bit difficult to find an instructor employed cooperative learning as only

approach in China's EFL and ESL classroom settings. Then is cooperative learning not popular anymore in China? The answer is obvious not. It was noticed that cooperative learning has become one strategy rather than an approach selectively used by EFL and ESL instructors in China.

## **2.13 New trends in China's foreign language education in the new era**

New trends in foreign language education in China resulted in the development of policy and planning in the new era. The Chinese Ministry of Education issued an experimental curriculum within the compulsory education program in which English was required to be taught from first semester in the third year of primary education and to take up six to eight percent of the total academic hours from the third year through to the completion of junior middle school.

In addition to primary and secondary education policy, there were developments in higher education (undergraduate, College/University), too. For example, the *Declaration of Top-tier Undergraduate Education* (also called as "*The Declaration of Chengdu*") called for advancement in English Language Education to promote the development of modern China.

The author was the first translator of the whole official document from Chinese to English (proof-read by Dr. Rita Rodriguez, San Francisco State University in the United States). During the conference of "*National Undergraduate Education in the New Era*", sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the P.R. China, June, 2018 in Chengdu, Sichuan, 150 higher education institutions jointly released the "*Declaration of the Top-tier Undergraduate Education*". In this document, these higher institutions proposed cultivating top-tier talent and building up a top-tier undergraduate education system. It emphasized the

importance of higher education in the social development of a nation. It was the first time that undergraduate education was defined as the basis of China's higher education. The key points of this official document were as follow (Hou, 2018):

*A. We believe in the cultivation of talent for rejuvenation of the nation as a core mission of higher education. ...It is the mission of higher education to cultivate the talent, ability, and integrity of the individual. Socialism in China has entered a new era with a scientific, technological and industrial revolution is occurring in China and in the world. China's higher education is facing a unique historical opportunity and challenge. The mission of higher education institutions aims to educate and develop a large number of qualified professionals with leadership ability, character, and the skills to provide a solid foundation for the rejuvenation of the nation.*

Now the competition between countries tended to be the competition of talents that were the cornerstones of a nation.

*B. We abide by the principles of "undergraduate education as the foundation" and "Four Returns" (the return of the common sense [thinking/reasoning and problem solving abilities], the return of the original intentions [core cultural values], the return of duties [individual character and values], and the return of dreams [motivation]) in the new round of reform of higher institutions.... It is the basic structure for teaching and learning in a developed nation and will provide the leading position of the development of education in the new era. We will speed the process of top-tier undergraduate education to lay a solid foundation for China's higher education. We will return to common sense, our original position*

*and core values, original intentions and dreams as the basic criterion for the reform and the development of colleges and universities. We will encourage students to study hard and develop their characters and values. And, we will guide instructors to educate people, to cultivate the socialist builders and successors of the comprehensive development of moral and intellectual beauty, and to build up a powerful country of higher education. Therefore, we adhere to the “Four Returns” however higher institutions evolve.*

Thus, there was a strong call for the return to the essence of education throughout China as people came to realize that a focus on high quality teaching and learning activities were critical to the mission of education itself.

*C. We will promote the establishment of high moral values and the quality of personnel cultivation as the fundamental criterion for the effectiveness for all higher education’s work. We will adhere to the direction of socialist education, and highlight Marx doctrines as the “bright background” in the socialist higher institutions with Chinese characteristics. Higher institutions promote the integration of professional knowledge, as well as ideological and political education, to develop quality education, and to deepen educational reform focusing on motivating students’ interests and potentials, and to improve students’ overall sense of social responsibility, creativity and practical abilities, which offers students the “golden key” to the door of the future, so that they can discern the future acutely, and embrace and lead the future with confidence.*

It was believed that education usually serves the needs of authority, and society, since that had been the “unspoken” ideological and political mission throughout history (e.g. as described by Marx).

*D. We are committed to imparting knowledge and educating people. We will make great efforts to cultivate instructors to ensure they are highly qualified as well as ethical individuals. And, we see this as the first criterion in the evaluation of instructors’ qualities as this will ensure the talents of future generations. We will guide instructors to teach positivity and moral integrity and the virtues that make them good role models for their students. Instructor training, promotion, incentives, evaluation, and happiness within the profession will be taken into consideration.*

This statement was also about the essence of education—the promotion of highly qualified instructors. The very important mission of instructors was to impart knowledge and to educate people and this important role required support and consideration. With regard to this mission, Han Yu, a well-known author in Tang Dynasty in Ancient China said in the *Collections of Mister Changli* (Han, probably before 1369): “... instructors are those who want to learn and would seek out an instructor, ones who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts.”

*E. We are committed to improving the connotation of higher education. We will focus on setting up high-level teaching and learning systems that will enhance the development of the disciplines and subjects to face the future, meet social needs, and lead development. ...We will also update the content of courses and curriculum in higher education and promote new achievement and progress in*

*textbooks in terms of current research, experience and social promotion. Moreover, we will promote a classroom revolution so that it will be an interactive space for developing ideas and inspiring the wisdom of students instead of the traditional lecture and “duck-feeding” classroom. We will promote student-centred and production-oriented classrooms led by motivated and trained instructors to develop and support continuous improvement in self-examination, self-discipline, and self-correction. The aim is for the quality of class activities and education to be internalized as common values and common consciousness among both the instructors and students.*

In this section of the Declaration, the focus was on the elements of classroom instruction. As for instructional approaches, the new-emerging national document mentioned only the student-centred and production-oriented approaches (see Chapter 6) the importance of which had been outlined by Professor Wen in her approach. The communicative teaching approach (see Chapter 2) was mentioned in China’s national documents on foreign language education such as *The National Syllabus for English Language Learners in Higher education* issued by the National Foreign Language Education Committee early in the twenty-first century. It suggested a shift in the goals in education from communicative competences to whole-person education.

*F. We are committed to leading by example. We must adapt to the new requirements of technologies, industries, professions and models for the training of talents in the new era.... We will continue to deepen educational reform through innovation and entrepreneurship to cultivate a great number of youth who will be committed to innovation and entrepreneurship. We should strive to build up world-tier*

*higher institutions with our confidence and the important Chinese characteristics of the new socialist era.*

It was time for China's higher education to adjust their goals based upon the needs of social development. On September 21, 2017, China's Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and National Development and Reform Commission jointly released a selected list of excellent universities, which could participate in the country's construction plan of world-tier universities and top-tier disciplines. The plan, also known as the "Double-top-tier" initiative, aimed to ultimately build a number of world-tier universities and disciplines by the end of 2050, in an effort to make China with an international higher education power.

*G. We are committed to "track overtaking". We will deepen "the Internet plus higher education", break the time and space boundaries of traditional education and school walls, and achieve the "track overtaking" (a metaphor) of higher education through the profound reform of education and teaching modes. We will make great efforts in the application of modern information technology, such as intelligent classrooms, laboratories, and campuses. And, we will explore the implementation of network, digital, intelligent and personalized education, and remold these new forms of teaching and learning. We will develop massive open online courses (abbreviated as MOOC), especially highly-qualified MOOC courses so that instructors make full use of digital course resources, which helps to the co-build-up and co-sharing of qualified teaching and learning resources among different areas and institutions.*

In this section, much emphasis was placed upon the application of modern technologies in education. Internet-based education was an irreversible trend in current society.

*H. We are committed to fairness and coordination. We will integrate the development and planning of higher institutions very closely with the layout of the economic belt, urban agglomeration and industrial chains based on the national function layout.*

Here, higher education was combined with regional economic and social development, offering a practical attitude towards the mission of higher education.

*I. We are committed to open collaboration. ... We hope to achieve collaboration in the running, education, employment and development of our higher education systems. We should expand international exchange and cooperation, and serve the “one belt and one road” initiative of the Chinese government, promote the branding of “Study in China”, and collaborate with foreign institutions for producing talents with a broad, international vision for this new era.*

In this section, there was a move to the vision of the modern higher education for the new era. Modern higher education would not make great progress without support from home and abroad.

*J. We are committed to innovation. Reform is the first driving force and innovation is the first engine...we will speed up innovations in the ideology, conceptualization, methodology, technology and models of higher education and move forward our vision for a top-tier, top-tier undergraduate education. We move forward, together, and hand-in-hand as colleges and universities committed to this vision of higher education.*

Innovation made world-tier universities and top-tier disciplines. Innovation would be the foundation of existence for universities and colleges. The declaration was the common voice of China’s higher institutions in the new era.

This research would move to review the empirical studies conducted as part of this research (having reviewed the qualitative aspects in the sections which have just preceded-observation and a qualitative analysis of *The Declaration of Chengdu document*).

The sections which follow would focus on the methodology used in this research, including collection of primary and secondary data via literature review, face-to-face and on-line interviews, questionnaires, group and peer discussions/interviews, observations and reflections, texts and resource documents, etc. The research would also focus on the hypothesis that cooperative learning evolving from an approach to a strategy would facilitate China's EFL and ESL classroom settings.

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESIS**

This chapter describes how research on the instructional approaches employed in EFL and ESL settings in China's educational systems was conducted. It includes methodology used, research purpose, sample selection, critical discourse and content analysis, research questions, and so on.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

There are four main methods in research, namely, census, sample survey, experiment and observation study. In order to know about the application and development of instructional approaches, several sample surveys, experiments, and observational studies on the cooperative learning approach were conducted respectively in this research.

Sample surveys were conducted at the design stage of this research. Questionnaires were designed to focus on the general impression(s) of instructional approaches for students in EFL and ESL contexts. Sample surveys were conducted in kindergarten, primary, secondary, and tertiary/University settings respectively. Fifty university students were asked to complete the sample survey including the three questions that follow:

Question 1: Have you ever known some instructional approaches in your English class?

Question 2: Do you think a certain instructional approach is needed in EFL and ESL classes?

Question 3: Did your English instructors tell you or your instructors know what cooperative learning is?

This sample survey was done via internet with the assistance of English instructors in these institutions. The students were asked to complete the online questions voluntarily. Through these sample surveys, basic information regarding the application of instructional approaches was obtained. This beginning analysis allowed for the further development of questionnaires with more specific, directed questions.

Observational study was also conducted as part of this research. Through close observation of EFL and ESL classroom settings, an analysis of the application of cooperative learning teaching methods was obtained. Of course, observational study is not a controlled methodology.

In the academic year 2017/2018, observational studies on instructional approaches from the kindergarten to higher education in China were carried out by this current research. In each institution, observational studies of two classes were carried out respectively and the results follow below.

### **Kindergarten observations**

During this observation of a kindergarten classroom at Xikeda, the instructor was observed to teach the students English language Do's and Don'ts. The instructor was observed to put the language rules in a simple jingling rhyme in English. First, she divided the students into four small groups of three. Among the groups of three, the instructor was observed to let the members of each group determine the roles of: recorder (who kept the group on task), actor (who sang the jingling rhymes), and reporter (who shared the rules of their part of the rhymes with the whole class). In these cooperative learning groups, the three students were given enough time to switch roles and thus to have turns in various roles. From

the observations, it could be seen each of the students seemed to know well the rules or Do's and Don'ts.

In a second observation, another class was observed. Instruction on this day involved teaching older kindergarten students to make cards for the mothers' Day. The instructor gave instructions first including what information should be covered in the card (address, greetings, signature, etc.). And then she asked the kids to draw a picture on their cards with very little direction given as to what the picture should be (free choice). The students were observed to draw a duck, a pig, a cat, a dog, etc. Anne employed a traditional passive approach and most of the kids failed to achieve the set goal of this class-preparing cards for the mothers' Day.

## **Primary school observations**

### **Grade Five observation**

In a primary school, two English classes were observed (Grades Three and Five) and the first observation is reviewed here. It should be noted that English is a required, compulsory course in the third academic year within China's primary education plan. In the observed English class, the topic of instruction was, "occupations". The instructor was observed to first ask the students their parents' occupation. The students were observed to respond both willingly and unwillingly. It should be noted that occupation can still be seen as a sensitive topic in Chinese communications due to implications. Some students were very glad to share because they would have felt proud of their parents' occupations while others would have hesitated to respond to the instructors' question because their parents were jobless or had a "lower status" job. As a result of this warm-up question, the instructor had to be the centre in this class. The students were thus observed to follow the instructor's directions and what was asked of them.

### **Grade Three observation**

In another Third Grade English class, the instructor was observed to employ a cooperative learning approach to the course curriculum, “Seasons and months”. The instructor began by dividing the class into four groups. Four colour cards in green, red, yellow, white respectively were given to each group. The students were then required to work in pairs. They were instructed to develop a conversation/dialogue related to four seasons with the cards. All groups were observed to make presentations sometimes facilitated by the instructor and the objectives of the lesson appeared to be met in that the student’s were observed to meet the expectations the instructor outlined at the beginning of the lesson. In this case, it would appear that cooperative learning helped the students/instructor achieve the goals of the lesson.

### **Secondary school observations**

#### **Observation One**

Observations of EFL and ESL classes in Nanshan Bilingual School (Senior School) were also made. This school consists of primary, junior and senior schools. Observations of two classes within the Senior school were made including the topic of “Cultural relics”. The students were asked to conduct cooperative-group-based activities from pre-class to after-class assignments. In the pre-class activity, students were divided into eight groups. Each group consisted of five members who each played an individual role as monitor, recorder, player A, player B, and reporter. The students were also encouraged to take turns switching roles. The instructor worked as a facilitator to achieve the shared goals. In the class, most groups made presentations in class. Through this lesson, they were observed to share a lot of information about cultural relics including the basic information, historical background, specific details, and the means and importance of protecting these relics. In this observation,

the five essential elements defined by Johnson & Johnson (1989) could be observed to be carefully structured into the lesson (including positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, promotion of interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing). It is likely that the goals of the lesson would not be achieved with the lack of any of the element's mentioned above.

### **Observation Two**

During this observation, the English instructor was observed to speak to the class involving analysis and commentary on a previous exam. The instructor was observed to review the previous exams questions one after another without seeming regard for whether a review of each question was necessary (for example, not all students would have required review/correction). This type of instruction doesn't represent cooperative learning at all. It is a traditional passive approach.

## **Higher education observations**

### **Observation One**

Observations were also conducted of two lessons in EFL and ESL contexts at the Southwest University of Science and Technology. For the first observation, the instructor was observed to teach an ESL lesson entitled "Entertainment" utilizing a multi-media presentation format. As noted previously, with the rapid development and application of information technology, foreign language education can be conducted in a very modern multi-media classroom, different from the old-fashioned types of instruction. The instructor utilized a PowerPoint presentation in this lesson. The lesson was observed to cover the three parts of watching, speaking and listening relating it back to the topic of entertainment. The listening and speaking exercises between the instructor and students were all based on the use of video

clips. The students were observed to be very engaged in the lesson likely due, at least in-part, to the well-designed PowerPoint presentation utilized by the instructor. Of course, such a teaching approach provides both an opportunity for instructors as well as a challenge to create engaging, interactive, multi-media presentations. The application of technology has pros and cons. On the one hand, new technologies make foreign language teaching and learning more “fashionable” and accessible to students. On the other, the interaction among students and instructors would be more limited in scope because of the time and attention given to technology such as computers and other digital devices which are required in this approach.

### **Observation Two**

In the second observation of an ESL lesson, the topic of the lesson observed was “Never Give In, Never, Never”. The students were divided into several groups with the following pre-reading questions provided:

*Do you know how, when, and why World War II broke out? What else do you know about it? What do you know about Winston Churchill?*

The groups were provided two days to conduct research and prepare a group presentation for the class. The instructor designed cooperative-group-based activities to achieve the shared goals of this lesson. Through the activities, all students were observed to more or less achieve goals of positive interdependence and individual and group accountability, interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing. The classroom was observed to be flexible in physical design in that table and chairs could be moved freely, facilitating group-based interactions, etc.

## **Summary of observations**

Through the observational studies conducted for the current researches from kindergarten to higher education, it is found that the application of cooperative learning, either the number of EFL and ESL instructors who master the cooperative learning approach or the efficiency of EFL and ESL teaching and learning is far from satisfactory. Just a very small number of them know how to apply it exactly. And some of them think large classes have limited the application of any group-based approach including cooperative learning.

The research also involved an experimental methodology. This experimental methodology was designed to examine the effects of cooperative learning on group achievement.

It is known that each method of data collection has its own pros and cons. Sample surveys offer convenience in light of large and diverse samples (from a population of kindergarten, primary/secondary, and college and university settings). For example, there were approximately three hundred enrolled students in the researched kindergarten. Observational studies were designed in the present study to offer the reader a “panorama” of the application of instructional approaches in EFL and ESL classroom settings. However, a limitation of this type of research is that it doesn’t offer random selection and the results of the research can therefore not be necessarily generalized to a larger population. For this reason, a mixed approach was utilized that also considers empirical data.

To investigate the relationship between cooperative learning and the achievement of foreign language teaching and learning, an experimental methodology was also employed. Generalizability of the findings from the researched groups with a larger population offers a

logical and appropriate form of research since generalizability requires random selection of the students and instructors in EFL and ESL classroom settings.

### **3.2 Research purpose**

This research focuses on instructional approaches and the evolutions of China's foreign language education policy and planning so as to predict the development of cooperative learning, one of the mainstream approaches in China's higher education.

### **3.3 Sample selection**

This research previews the history of Foreign Language Education Policy and Planning (abbreviated as FLEPP) since it began, which was divided into the following three stages:

- FLEPP before 1949 (from late Qing Dynasty to 1949),
- FLEPP since the founding of PR China, and
- FLEPP since the reform and "opening up" of China.

Due to the limitation of time and space, more emphasis is placed on the last stage as this is the current and critical period for China's foreign language education. Again, samples were selected from the kindergarten, primary, secondary, and university levels respectively in China's Science and Technology City (Mianyang) which offers a good example of the diversity of China's modern education system (though generalizability to other areas of China wouldnot be offered).

### **3.4 Critical discourse and content analysis**

Despite as a student, instructor, researcher, or dean of a department in the school of a university, the author has been showing great interest in cooperative learning approaches. The author taught intensively and extensively in the areas of speaking, listening, and reading for English and non-English majors over the past seventeen years. As an instructor, the author tried to encourage students to interact in EFL and ESL contexts especially while noticing some connections with communicative competence of English language learners in China. Based on the teaching and learning experience, the author began to use cooperative learning as a very good approach in accomplishing the teaching goals of EFL and ESL classroom activities.

### **3.5 Research questions**

In order to conduct this research, the following, critical questions were incorporated:

1. Do you think there is any instructional approach that can be applied in all EFL and ESL contexts?
2. How will cooperative learning be defined in the new era? Is it an approach, model or a strategy?
3. Are there any similarities and differences between European and China's foreign language education contexts?
4. The comparison and contrast of instructional approaches in EFL and ESL contexts.
5. The instructional approaches applied in EFL and ESL contexts in China's educational systems.

6. The relationship between the instructional approaches and the evolution of China's foreign language education policy and planning.
7. What are the voices of China's foreign language scholars, researchers and instructors in instructional approaches?
8. Why is cooperative learning described as a strategy in China's EFL and ESL contexts?

The answers to the above questions can be found in relevant chapters in this research. It will help people know more about the instructional approaches in EFL AND ESL classrooms and China's foreign language education policy and planning. With the close observations and reflections of China's foreign language education, we believe we will be able to push forward and make greater progress in the reform and development in the foreign language education throughout the world.

### **3.6 Hypothesis**

In this research it hypothesized that cooperative learning evolving from an approach to a strategy would facilitate foreign language teaching and learning in China's EFL and ESL settings. With the shift from simple pursuit of scale development to the efficiency and quality, strong voices of China were noticed in foreign language education, especially of the new emerging instructional approaches initiated by well-known foreign language educators in China.

It will focus on the data collection in the next chapter. Data collection is a very important but challenging task in this research because EFL and ESL is conducted in a very complex context with a span of long time and large space, the largest population, and different regions inhabited by various ethnic groups throughout China.

## **4. DATA COLLECTION, DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS**

### **4.1 Data collection**

Data collection is a very important but challenging task in this research. The EFL and ESL contexts are a unique existence with a span of long time and large space, the largest population, and different regions inhabited by Han, the majority and fifty-five minority ethnic groups throughout China, which is more complex than that in the European contexts.

#### **4.1.1 A span of long time**

China's foreign language education dated back to late Qing Dynasty when Yan Fu (1904) published a book entitled *English Grammar (Explained in Chinese)*. China's foreign language teaching was originated in mission schools by Protestant missionaries who came to China in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ding, 2008).

During the well-known "Self-strengthening Movement" by the Westernization part of the feudal landlord class, they had to advance technologies for beating someone by playing his games on better. During this process, foreign language learning was the basic means. Robert Morrison set up Anglo-Chinese College in 1818 in Macau; Wanstall and Samuel Robbins Brown co-established Morrison School on November 4, 1839, in Macau. English language was taught as a subject in the schooling system. It was understood that at that moment English teaching was just to meet the needs of missionary work and train translators or interpreters for the fertilization of foreign cultures and their pillaging purposes in the trade business with Chinese people. In other words, the authority did not express their support or opposition to foreign language teaching clearly in Old China. Foreign language teaching and learning developed on its own way at that moment, which was the origin of foreign language

education in China. China's foreign language education policy and planning (hereafter abbreviated as "FLEPP") develop in the following stages: FLEPP before 1949 (from Late Qing Dynasty to 1949), FLEPP since the founding of PR China, FLEPP since the Reform and Opening up in China. It is a big challenge to collect the data for the research. I have collected data from national, provincial and university libraries, and large publishing groups for assistance.

### **4.1.2 A span of large space and the largest population**

Research on China's educational system cannot begin to cover all aspects as this would be too vast. Therefore, this research work, provides examples taken from some schools, colleges and universities in China's Science & Technology City (Mianyang). The 2017 statistical report of Mianyang city, related to economic and social development, showed that there were 1402 academic institutions (excluding higher education, technical schools and vocational training institutions) with 690,000 students and 52,600 instructors including 43,700 full-time instructors. There are also 409 primary schools with 271,100 students, 219 junior and senior schools with 78,200 students, 23 vocational school with 46,000 students, and 145,600 pre-school kids. And there are 141,900 full-time students and 7,646 instructors in 14 colleges or universities.

### **4.1.3 Ethnic groups**

There are fifty-six nationalities in China, offering more diversity than any other nation in the world. In this research, participants in the questionnaires and surveys consist of Han—the majority, and ethnic groups of Qiang and Tibetan—the minority in this area.

#### **4.1.4 The methods for data collection**

There are different ways through which we can collect data depending, for example, upon whether it is primary or secondary data or whether it is quantitative or qualitative data.

The methods for data collection in this research include questionnaires (e-mail or face to face), interviews (online or face to face), focus groups, tests, observation, secondary data (e.g. personal experience, official or unofficial documents, archived research data).

##### **4.1.4.1 Qualitative data collection**

Qualitative data collection is the major methodology utilized in the current research. I have collected the data and resources needed in various ways, including face-to-face interviews, group or peer discussion, observation and reflections, texts and pictures, documents, etc. We integrate, analyze and present the data to readers for validity, reliability and professionalism.

In the research, we take foreign language education in one comprehensive university and several junior and senior middle schools for example. We conduct face-to-face interview, group or peer discussion, observation and reflections in these schools and the university.

##### **4.1.4.2 Quantitative data collection**

Quantitative data collection is used for more reliability in the research. The data was collected from the experimental schools and university.

##### **4.1.4.3 The combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection**

The methodology is employed for high professionalism and integrity of the research, which is widely used in research, especially in social sciences.

#### **4.1.4.4 Survey**

In the research, I conducted surveys as the measure of opinions and past experience about instructional approaches, through the asking of questions, of certain groups of instructors and students in some schools and universities.

#### **4.1.4.5 Questionnaire**

Moreover, I conducted some questionnaires with a choice of answers to know what methodologies instructors use and students know in their EFL and ESL and FSL classroom settings as follows:

##### **4.1.4.5.1 The Questionnaire on Instructional Approaches in EFL and ESL Contexts in China (for Students' Use Only)**

### **Questionnaires on Instructional Approaches in EFL and ESL Contexts in China**

#### **(for Students' Use Only)**

Directions: In this questionnaire, please choose the most appropriate answer or answers that you think in each question.

Question 1: Your gender: male female confidential

Question 2: Where are you studying?

- Primary school
- Junior middle school
- Senior middle school
- vocational middle school
- Vocational college
- College or university

Question 3: What is the final degree that you have attained?

- None
- Bachelor
- Master
- Ph.D.

Question 4: The length of your learning of English:

- less than one year
- one to five years
- six to ten years
- more than ten years

Question 5: Which approach(es) in EFL and ESL have you known about?

- Direct Method
- Translation Method
- Audio-lingual Method
- Cognitive Approach
- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method
- Communicative Approach
- Total Physical Response
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach
- Production-oriented Approach
- Cooperative Learning Approach
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach
- No idea

Question 6: Have your English instructor(s) ever employed the approaches mentioned in Question 5?

Question 7: Have your English instructor ever introduced the approach(es) he/she used to you?

Question 8: Do you think any approach(es) impressed you most?

Question 9: Have you ever known about the Cooperative Learning Approach?

Question 10: Have you ever known about cooperative learning and group learning?

Yes  No  the same  Uncertain

Question 11: Have you ever known about The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

Yes  No  Uncertain

Question 12: Have you ever known about China's Standards of English Language Ability?

Yes  No  Uncertain

**Thanks for your support.**

#### 4.1.4.5.2 The questionnaire on Instructional Approaches in EFL and ESL Contexts in China (for Instructors' Use Only)

##### The questionnaire on Instructional Approaches in EFL and ESL Contexts in China (for Instructors' Use Only)

Directions: In this questionnaire, please choose the most appropriate answer or answers that you think in each question.

Question 1: Your gender:  male  female  confidential

Question 2: Where are you teaching?

Question 3: What is the final degree that you have attained?

None  Bachelor  Master  Ph.D.

Question 4: The length of your teaching of English:

less than one year  one to five years  
 six to ten years  more than ten years

Question 5: Which approach(es) in EFL and ESL have you known about?

- Direct Method (11%)
- Translation Method (95%)
- Audio-lingual Method (92%)
- Cognitive Approach (83%)

- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method (78%)
- Communicative Approach) (91%)
- Total Physical Response (68%)
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach (73%)
- Production-oriented Approach (62%)
- Cooperative Learning Approach (93%)
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (55%)
- No idea. (0%)

Question 6: Have you ever employed the approaches mentioned in Question 5?

- Yes    No    Uncertain

Question 7: Have you ever taught the students the approach(es) used in detail?

- Yes    No    Uncertain

Question 8: Do you think any approach(es) impressed you most?

- Yes, e.g. \_\_\_\_\_ (100%)
- None
- Uncertain

Question 9: Have you ever known about the Cooperative Learning Approach?

- Yes    No    Uncertain

Question 10: Have you ever known about cooperative learning and group learning?

- Yes    No (5%)    the same    Uncertain

Question 11: Have you ever known about The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

Question 12: Have you ever known about China's Standards of English Language Ability?

**Thanks for your support.**

## **4.2 Data description**

In this section, the results of the study (including the research questions) will be described.

### **4.2.1 Research findings for questions in the sample surveys**

In Question 1, students and instructors were asked to answer if they had even known any instructional approaches in English classes.

To our surprise, most of students (90%) could not define an approach correctly. Some students said the instructors ever used a so-called “Tingshuo (Chinese Pinyin) method”. In Chinese, Tingshuo means listening and speaking. The “Tingshuo method” was not related to the Audio-lingual method at all as they thought. In the Audio-lingual method, students are required to pay much attention to the basic drills and grammatical structures. The investigated students and instructors held different understanding of “Audio-lingual method”. They thought that it places much emphasis on listening and speaking activities in their own understanding of the “Audio-lingual method”.

It suggests that the awareness of instructional approaches has been a weakness in EFL and ESL classroom settings in China.

In Question 2, the students and instructors were asked about the necessity of a certain instructional approach in EFL and ESL classes.

From the survey, we find that most students (75%) do not care what approaches are actually used in the classroom, and even more than half (58%) of the students think it the matter of their instructors.

Question 3: Did your English instructors tell you or your instructors what cooperative learning is?

From the survey, we know that almost no student can define or describe cooperative learning approach precisely even though they mentioned “interaction” frequently. And young EFL and ESL instructors know more about the cooperative learning approach than the old ones because it is much easier for young people to accept and implement new ideas in their teaching activities.

## **4.2.2 Research findings from questionnaires**

### **4.2.2.1 The analysis of questionnaires on approaches in EFL and ESL contexts in China (for students’ use only)**

#### **4.2.2.1.1 Introduction**

The questionnaires were conducted to investigate how much Chinese students knew about the approaches, especially the cooperative learning approach, in their foreign language classrooms.

This questionnaire was carried out in one kindergarten, one primary, one junior, one senior middle school, one vocational college and one comprehensive university. 800 students were in each unit participated in these questionnaires in 2017. Eventually valid questionnaires were collected back, 743 from Nanshan Bilingual Middle School (hereinafter “Group A”), 695 from MY Vocational College (“Group B”) and 769 from Southwest University of Science and Technology (“Group C”) in China Science and Technology City (Mianyang), Sichuan, China.

#### 4.2.2.1.2 Analysis

In this questionnaire, there are twelve questions total.

Question 1: Your gender:  male  female  confidential

In Group A,  male (426)  female (317)  confidential (None)

57.3% of the students are boys and the rest are girls.

In Group B,  male (493)  female (192)  confidential (10)

70.9% are males, 27.7% are females. 10 participants were unwilling to mention the sensitive issue.

In Group C,  male (532)  female (208)  confidential (29)

69.2% are males, 27.0% are females. 29 participants were unwilling to mention the sensitive issue.

We notice that in traditional educational systems in China, much younger students feel less sensitive to their privacy.

Question 2: Where are you studying?

Primary school  Junior middle school  Senior middle school (743)

vocational middle school Vocational college (695) College or university (769)

In each school, college or university, 800 questionnaires were passed to students but not all were submitted or valid, with the effective questionnaire ratio of 92.9%, 86.9% and 96.1% respectively.

Question 3: What is the final degree that you have attained?

All of the Respondents chose “none” as the answer because students could be granted the degree while completing the bachelor’s degree program.

Question 4: The length of your learning of English:

In Group A, 100% of them had learned English for more than ten years. Exactly, English course was offered even in China’s kindergartens. And students are usually required to attend official examinations since the third year in primary schools.

Question 5: Which approach(es) in EFL and ESL have you known about?

Answers by Group A:

- Direct Method (37; 5%)
- Translation Method (720; 96.9%)
- Audio-lingual Method (363; 48.9%)
- Cognitive Approach (89; 12%)
- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method (351; 47.2%)
- Communicative Approach (572; 76%)
- Total Physical Response (77; 10.4%)
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach (117; 15.7%)
- Production-oriented Approach (9; 1.2%)

- Cooperative Learning Approach (432; 58.1%)
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (13; 1.7%)
- No idea (18; 2.4%)

Answers by Group B:

- Direct Method (51; 7.3%)
- Translation Method (420; 60.4%)
- Audio-lingual Method (319; 45.9%)
- Cognitive Approach (123; 17.7%)
- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method (313; 46.5%)
- Communicative Approach (520; 74.8%)
- Total Physical Response (52; 7.5%)
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach (159; 22.9%)
- Production-oriented Approach (75; 10.8%)
- Cooperative Learning Approach (498; 71.7%)
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (45; 6.5%)
- No idea. (10; 1.4%)

Group C:

- Direct Method (62; 8.1%)
- Translation Method (537; 69.8%)
- Audio-lingual Method (386; 50.2%)
- Cognitive Approach (252; 32.8%)
- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method (421; 54.7%)
- Communicative Approach (577; 75.0%)

- Total Physical Response (82; 10.7%)
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach (201; 26.3%)
- Production-oriented Approach (174; 22.6%)
- Cooperative Learning Approach (549; 71.4%)
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (133; 17.3%)
- No idea. (3; 0.40%)

From the responses of Group A students, it was noticed that most of them are very familiar with the Translation Method - the most widely used traditional approach, especially before the twenty-first century. And they think their instructors have not placed enough emphasis on the explanations of approaches in foreign language education. Few instructors have explained the new approaches, e.g., Production-oriented Approach and Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach, to their students. Students tend to learn more about approaches that their instructors use in foreign language education as they grow up.

Question 6: Have your English instructor(s) ever employed the approaches mentioned in Question 5?

In Group A, 32.5% of the students recognized the approaches used by their instructors in the middle school.

In Group B, 67.8% of the students recognized the approaches used by their instructors in the vocational college.

In Group B, 85.6% of the students recognized the approaches used by their instructors in the university.

Question 7: Have your English instructor ever introduced the approach(es) he/she used to you?

In Group A, 42.9% of the students thought their instructors introduced the approaches used in the middle school.

In Group B, 83.7% of the students thought their instructors introduced the approaches used in the vocational school.

In Group B, 95.3% of the students thought their instructors introduced the approaches used in the university.

Question 8: Do you think any approach(es) impressed you most?

In Group A, 22.1% of the students recalled the most impressive approach, i.e., Translation Method. In Group B, 42.8% of the students recalled the most impressive Communicative Approach. And in the last group, 83% of the students gave positive response and the same answer with Group B.

Question 9: Have you ever known about Cooperative Learning Approach?

To this question, more than half of each group gave a positive answer, which indicated that this approach played an important role in the foreign language classes at all levels.

Question 10: Have you ever known about cooperative learning and group learning?

Yes    No    the same    Uncertain

Surprisingly, only roughly twenty per cent of the students gave the positive answer and more than 50% of them choose “the same”. Obviously, most of them mixed the two terms.

Question 11: Have you ever known about The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

Yes    No    Uncertain

This question is to check whether the students are concerned with foreign language education in other countries. Less than 15% of the students generally have known this.

Question 12: Have you ever known about China's Standards of English Language Ability ?

Yes    No    Uncertain

This is about what the foreign language researchers, and policy and planning makers are doing in China at present. The official document of *China's Standards of English Language Ability* was issued in 2017. Unfortunately, only 37% of the students have known about it. Until to now, it is far from satisfactory because students focused a lot on traditional examination-oriented EFL and ESL contexts in China.

#### **4.2.2.2 Analysis of questionnaires on approaches in EFL and ESL contexts in China (instructors use only)**

##### **4.2.2.2.1 Introduction**

The questionnaires are used to investigate how much instructors understand the approaches, especially the cooperative learning approach, in their foreign language classrooms in China.

These questionnaires were conducted in two senior middle schools, one vocational college and one comprehensive university in 2017.

128 English instructors (hereinafter “Group A”) from Nanshan Bilingual School and Mianyang Experimental School, 53 English instructors (hereinafter “Group B”) from MY Vocational College, and 129 foreign language instructors(hereinafter “Group C”) from Southwest University of Science and Technology, Sichuan, China.

303 valid questionnaires (122 samples in Group A, 61 samples in Group B, and 120 samples in Group C) were collected back.

#### **4.2.2.2.2 Analysis**

In this questionnaire, there are twelve questions. Please choose the most appropriate answer or answers that you think in each question.

Question 1: Your gender: male female confidential

In the three groups, there were 303 foreign language instructors including 54 males and 249 females, which suggested the gender ratio in foreign language learners, esp. foreign language instructors in China.

Question 2: Where are you teaching?

122 samples in Group A, 61 samples in Group B, and 120 samples in Group C.

Question 3: What is the final degree that you have attained?

In Group A,  none (8%)  bachelor’s degree (90%)

master’s degree (7%)  Ph.D. (0%)

In Group B,  none (0%)  bachelor’s degree (67%)

master’s degree (30%)  Ph.D. (3%)

In Group C,  none (0%)  bachelor's degree (10%)  master's degree (85%)  Ph.D. (5%)

From the educational structures, there is a large demand of foreign language instructors with much higher degrees when students move to another level of study.

Question 4: The length of your teaching of English:

- less than one year
- one to five years
- six to ten years
- more than ten years

All of the instructors in three groups have studied English for more than ten years. For example, the youngest instructors with bachelor's degree, who were born in 1990s, have already learned English as a foreign language at least 14 years since they started to learn English in the third year in primary schools.

Question 5: Which approach(es) in EFL and ESL have you known about?

- Direct Method (11%)
- Translation Method (95%)
- Audio-lingual Method (92%)
- Cognitive Approach (83%)
- Situational Method or Audio-visual Method (78%)
- Communicative Approach (91%)
- Total Physical Response (68%)
- Task-based Language Teaching Approach (73%)
- Production-oriented Approach (62%)
- Cooperative Learning Approach (93%)
- Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (55%)

- No idea. (0%)

This question relates to professional qualities. Based upon the regulations for professional training, all foreign language instructors, either pre-service or in-service, must receive a period of professional training, covering professional qualities, proficiency, occupation planning, etc. So they need to have known something about the historical development of approaches. The exciting thing is that all the instructors in the surveys have known about some of the approaches mentioned above. These instructors have known more about Translation Method (95%), Cooperative Learning Approach (93%) , Audio-lingual Method (92%) and Communicative Approach) (91%) than other approaches.

Question 6: Have you ever employed the approaches mentioned in Question 5?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

The instructors in the surveys have predictably given the positive answer to this question.

Question 7: Have you ever taught the students the approach(es) used in details?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

Surprisingly, less than half of the instructors (37%) taught their students the approaches used in the classrooms. In other words, those instructors tend to use approaches consciously or unconsciously and they feel it unnecessary to explain in detail.

Question 8: Do you think any approach(es) impressed you most?

- Yes, e.g. \_\_\_\_\_ (100%)
- None
- Uncertain

To this question, all of them gave positive answer and more than half of them mentioned Translation Method (60%), Cooperative Learning Approach (77%) , Audio-lingual Method (58%) and Communicative Approach (82%) instead of other approaches.

Question 9: Have you ever known about Cooperative Learning Approach?

Yes (73%)     No (15%)     Uncertain (12%)

This question is specially designed for investigating how much instructors know about and employ the cooperative learning approach in EFL and ESL contexts. Most of foreign language instructors have known about this approach. It is the important foundation of the application of this approach.

Question 10: Have you ever known about cooperative learning and group learning?

Yes (20%)     No (5%)     the same (45%)     Uncertain (30%)

This is a specially designed question, too. Especially, it does not indicate the similarities and differences so that respondents to the questionnaire can answer freely. Unbelievably, 45% of them defended that cooperative learning is the same as group learning.

Question 11: Have you ever known about The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

Group A:  Yes (25%)     No (45%)     Uncertain (30%)

Group B:  Yes (45%)     No (30%)     Uncertain (25%)

Group C:  Yes (88%)     No (10%)     Uncertain (2%)

Foreign language instructors, especially those in Chinese universities, tend to place much more emphasis on the studies of approaches and standards originated from the West and European regions.

Question 12: Have you ever known about China's Standards of English Language Ability?

Group A:  Yes (53%)  No (35%)  Uncertain (12%)

Group B:  Yes (37%)  No (22%)  Uncertain (41%)

Group C:  Yes (57%)  No (18%)  Uncertain (25%)

This is exactly a matter of common sense. To design *China's Standards of English Language Ability* is a grand event in China's educational world. However, foreign language instructors have not shown enough interest in it yet.

### **4.2.3 Research findings for observational studies**

To investigate the relationship between cooperative learning approaches and achievement of foreign language teaching and learning in EFL and ESL classrooms, observational studies were conducted as described. Through comparison and contrast, we conclude that the cooperative learning approach would maximize the group efforts in EFL and ESL contexts.

### 4.3 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

It is known that *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, abbreviated in English as CEFR or CEF or CERL, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries as the official document by the Council of Europe (2001:1) stated in the publication.

To help Chinese English language learners and users to know more about CEFR explicitly, an application of a project by the author was funded by Sichuan Provincial Social Science Office in 2016.

This project was titled “*A new interpretation of CEFR and its impact on China’s foreign language education*”. In the project, the author interpreted the core concepts and ideas in CEFR and made some comments on ILR (FSI), ACTFL, ISLPR, ALTE, Canadian Language Benchmarks. In CEFR, proficiency in languages is divided into six levels from the elementary to the advanced, namely, A1 and A2 for the beginners and elementary, B1 and B2 for the intermediate and upper intermediate, C1 to C2 for the advanced and proficient language learners and users.

Most importantly, the present research examines the new, emerging Standards of English Language Ability within China that includes scale, language ability, linguistic knowledge, language use strategy, topic, language activity, language comprehension ability, language production ability, organizational competence, pragmatic ability and text.

The official document *China’s Standards of English Language Ability* (abbreviated as CSELA) was issued on April 12, 2018 by Ministry of Education and State Language Commission of PRC. In China’s Standards of English Language Ability, the language ability

of China's English language learners and users is divided into nine levels from the basic to advanced, which consists of the elementary level (one to three), the intermediate level (four to six), and the proficient level (seven to nine).

Moreover, new instructional approaches by Chinese scholars were introduced and analysed in this project.

This research will focus on the results and interpretation in next chapter, including the evolution of foreign language education policy and planning, and organizations of consultation and guidance for foreign language education, unbalanced development of general and non-general language education, FLEPP, the "Going globally" and the "Belt and Road" initiative, China's Standards of English Language Ability and other important and timely issues in the development of cooperative learning in China. The following chapter will consider, reflect and make suggestions for foreign language education. It is believed that foreign language instructors, especially pre-service English instructors, would benefit from the dialogue regarding instructional approaches presented in the current research.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The overall findings of the study show that cooperative learning evolves to be a strategy instead of an instructional approach, which will facilitate EFL and ESL in China's educational system however the foreign language policy and planning develops.

### **5.1 Localization of instructional approaches**

No single instructional approach can be applied to all foreign language teaching and learning settings. There are the similarities that the instructional approaches applied in all teaching and learning activities are usually determined by the goals, instructors, students, and real contextual situations. The localization of instructional approaches in China's EFL and ESL contexts has been a hot issue that researchers, educators and instructors have been concerned about since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The key elements of cooperative learning approach are goals, the roles of instructors and students, the qualification and competences of instructors, the specific social context, which need to be placed much emphasis on.

Firstly, instructional approaches designed by instructors are goal-oriented in a EFL and ESL teaching and learning. Based on the linguistic functions, a foreign language course would focus on listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating competences.

Take listening comprehension course for example. Listening is the main input of students in EFL and ESL courses at all levels in Chinese educational system. Therefore, students are required to do listening comprehension practice again and again whatever the theme or topic is in the exercises. The goal is to help the students to know real English conversation, talks, debates, reports and so on.

It is important to keep in mind that the goal of listening comprehension courses is to get the general or specific information. A certain approach is selected for the set goal. Here we do not discuss specific approaches in this section.

And speaking is the most difficult and challenging part for non-native speakers. The goal of an oral English course is certainly to encourage and motivate students to open their mouths and hold the desire to communicate with peers at the beginning. Oral English courses are usually divided into three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced. The approaches need to be adjusted based on different levels, group age, contexts of use, etc.

It is found that almost every non-English native speaker does like reading in EFL and ESL setting whether actively or passively because of the traditional spoon-feed education in China.

Secondly, the roles of instructors and students have been the hot issues in EFL and ESL classrooms. In ancient China, those who wanted to learn would seek out an instructor, one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts. Exactly, the relationship between instructors and students has not changed until the twenty-first century. With the introduction of communicative approach into China's EFL and ESL classrooms, people began to focus on the relationship between the students and instructors. The instructor has become a facilitator rather than an instructor. And students start to shift the role from passive learners to the centre of classroom activities. And then some EFL and ESL instructors began to show their interest in cooperative learning approach.

Thirdly, there is a large and urgent demand of EFL and ESL instructors with qualifications and competences in cooperative learning in China. This research shows that the lack of EFL and ESL instructors with qualifications and competences has affected the application of cooperative learning. Instructional approaches need to be part of occupational

training for Pre-service EFL and ESL instructors so that they are able to master and employ the appropriate instructional methods in their classroom situations.

Finally, any instructional approach needs to be localized to meet the specific social contexts, which is the basis of its survival in educational reforms. In China's EFL and ESL contexts, cooperative learning tends to be a very useful strategy that would lessen the psychological pressure and facilitate interaction among instructors and students from various ethnic groups.

## **5.2 China's voice in instructional approaches**

There is a long way to go even though Chinese scholars and researchers have made an enormous contribution to EFL and ESL theories and practice (Wen, 2008; Wen, 2014a; Wen, 2015; Sun, 2011; Sun, 2015). We are very glad to see that equal attention has been paid to the introduction and innovation of instructional approaches in China's foreign language education. The Production-Oriented Approach by Wen Qiufang and Language and Intercultural Critical Thinking Integrated Approach (LICTIA) by Sun Youzhong are the two mainstream approaches that have been employed and researched by more and more EFL and ESL instructors and scholars in China. Professor Wen and Professor Sun have sponsored or co-sponsored a large number of national and international seminars and conferences on their own approaches.

For example, the University of Vienna, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Professor Wen Qiufang and her team co-sponsored the second international conference on "Innovative Foreign Language Education in China, POA in Different Cultural Contexts" in the University of Vienna, Austria. In this conference, Professor Wen and her team presented POA explicitly, which drew much attention from foreign experts and researchers in instructional approaches. Moreover, Beijing Foreign Studies University established the Production-Oriented Approach

Fund to support European scholars to conduct relevant studies in European contexts. Thus, instructional approaches with China's characteristics will be well recognized by the foreign language education world.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research**

This study would be improved by means of a horizontal comparative study of various instructional approaches from ancient to the new era so that EFL and ESL instructors would easily find the appropriate approaches for their own teaching activities in the list of approaches with the origin, theoretical base, definition, the basic and core elements, contexts for the application, pros and cons, etc. A guidebook of instructional approaches is needed to all EFL and ESL instructors, whether they are pre-service or in-service instructors. We strongly suggest the instructional approaches be part of qualification and occupational training for EFL and ESL instructors.

In addition, scholars and educators would focus on the selection of appropriate instructional approaches at different levels in China's educational system. We found it very difficult to cover the study of instructional approaches in EFL and ESL contexts at all levels from kindergarten to higher education. If possible, we could initiate a municipal research institute or Centre and funds for Foreign Language Education Approaches. Instructional approaches home and abroad can be researched based upon the local contexts, which would lay a solid foundation for the globalization and localization of instructional approaches.

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