

Cultivating Global Competence for English (Teacher Education) Majors in Contemporary China and for the World: A Review and Path Exploration

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of China's 15th Five-Year Plan and the 2026 White Paper on global governance, global competence has emerged as a strategic priority for higher education. This paper argues that the English (Teacher Education) Major, while structurally positioned to cultivate such competence, remains constrained by a narrow language-skills paradigm that limits graduates' professional scope across all specialisations. Drawing on analysis of related documents, employment data, and three institutional case studies: Beijing Foreign Studies University, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, and East China Normal University — it reviews the theoretical dimensions of global competence and proposes reform pathways through the "English plus" interdisciplinary model, encompassing curriculum reconstruction, pedagogical innovation, and multi-dimensional assessment. The paper concludes that global competence should be treated not as a curricular add-on but as the organising purpose of English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes, connecting individual professional development to China's commitments in global governance.

Keywords: Global Competence; English Majors; Pre-Service Teacher Education; "English Plus" Model; Intercultural Competence; Global Governance

1. Introduction

As of 2026, the process of globalisation continues to deepen amid growing geopolitical complexity, and the international order is undergoing structural reconfiguration. China, as a major power committed to building a community with a shared future for mankind, faces an increasingly urgent demand for citizens who can engage with global governance, navigate intercultural environments,

and communicate China's perspectives to the world. In this context, "global competence" has moved from the margins of educational discourse to the centre of national talent cultivation strategy. Yet this shift has exposed a structural tension that higher education in China has yet to resolve: the English major — the discipline most naturally positioned to lead global competence cultivation — has in many institutions remained confined to a narrow language-skills paradigm, producing graduates whose professional scope is insufficient for the demands of the era. This paper argues that global competence is not a supplementary goal for students specialising in English education, nor is it the exclusive concern of that track; it is a foundational professional requirement for English majors across all orientations. The following review systematically examines the theoretical connotations of global competence, analyses the distinctive advantages and structural constraints of English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes, and proposes integrated curricular and pedagogical paths toward more systematic cultivation — with the aim of contributing both conceptual clarity and practical guidance to ongoing reform efforts.

2. Global Competence: The Call of the Times and the Mission of Education

As China enters the opening years of the "15th Five-Year Plan" period in 2026, the country is at a decisive stage in realising national rejuvenation and in constructing itself as a leading global education centre. The Plan sets out a commitment to build a high-quality education system by 2030 and explicitly calls for the launch of "excellent talent internationalisation training programmes," the deepening of cooperation with universities in Europe, North America, neighbouring countries, and the Global South, and greater

Chinese participation in – and leadership of – global education governance mechanisms, including multilateral platforms under UNESCO, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Regionally, the Plan designates the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei corridor, the Yangtze River Delta, and the Greater Bay Area as priority zones for building world-class higher education clusters. These provisions collectively signal that internationalisation is no longer a peripheral aspiration for China's universities but a structural component of the national education agenda. For the discipline of English, and for the teacher education track within it, this policy context places new and higher requirements on how institutions define their cultivation objectives, design their curricula, and measure the outcomes they produce.

2.1 Macro Guidance from National Strategies

China's engagement with global governance has deepened substantially over the past decade, anchored in the concept of "building a community with a shared future for mankind," which has been embedded in the country's major development frameworks. This orientation carries direct implications for talent cultivation: meaningful participation in global governance requires citizens who can navigate intercultural environments, engage substantively with international institutions, and represent Chinese perspectives in multilateral settings. The strategic coherence of this vision was most comprehensively articulated in June 2026, when China released the White Paper *More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions*. The document explicitly foregrounds a "people-centred approach" – calling for the strengthening of "cultural and personnel exchanges" to promote mutual understanding, and asserting that "civilizations become colourful through exchanges and are enriched through mutual learning," while "countries should let cultural exchanges prevail over estrangement, mutual learning over clashes, and inclusiveness over superiority." These formulations are not merely diplomatic; they constitute a direct specification of the capacities that the education system is expected to produce: citizens who can engage across cultures, interpret global challenges from multiple perspectives, and contribute to collective problem-solving rather than parochial interests. These demands have been reflected in authoritative policy statements over the preceding decade, during which the cultivation of globally competent talent was formally elevated

to a national education priority. The cumulative effect of this policy trajectory – culminating in the 2026 White Paper – has been to elevate global competence from a peripheral educational aspiration to a core component of China's national talent cultivation strategy, making clear that higher education must equip graduates for active, critical participation in international affairs rather than mere linguistic proficiency.

2.2 Latest Trends in Education Reform in China

China's higher education sector, as guided by national strategies, has undergone a series of profound reforms in recent years, in which global competence has been placed in an increasingly prominent position. The advancement of "New Liberal Arts" construction emphasises interdisciplinary integration, aiming to break down the barriers between traditional liberal arts disciplines and cultivate interdisciplinary talent with broader knowledge structures – an orientation directly aligned with the interdisciplinary problem-solving capacity that global competence demands. The comprehensive integration of moral education across courses not only requires students to establish firm cultural confidence – a grounded understanding of and identification with Chinese cultural heritage – but also encourages them to develop a dialectical and inclusive international perspective through comparative engagement with Chinese and other cultures [1]. At the policy level, the trajectory has moved from aspiration to action. The deliberations of the Ministry of Education's Expert Advisory Committee on Teacher Workforce Development in late 2025 explicitly identified the enhancement of teachers' global competence as a strategic priority for the "15th Five-Year Plan" period, calling for "a tiered and categorised overseas training mechanism" and the establishment of a "Global Teacher Development Institute" to systematically advance the internationalisation of China's teacher education [2]. These developments signal that the systematic integration of global competence into talent cultivation is no longer a predicted trend, but an active policy commitment [3]. Institutional pilots at leading universities [4] and sustained academic debate [5] have contributed significantly to shaping

this policy moment.

3. Definition of the Connotation and Core Elements of Global Competence

A rigorous understanding of global competence is prerequisite to any discussion of its cultivation. The term does not name a single skill but a multi-layered system of knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, and values that equips individuals to function critically and responsibly in interconnected contexts.

3.1 Multi-Dimensional Framework of Global Competence

The definition of global competence by international organisations and the academic community is now well established. Among them, the framework proposed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is the most influential [6]. The OECD PISA 2018 framework defines global competence as “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues; to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others; to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” [7]. This four-part definition – examining, understanding, engaging, and acting – captures both the cognitive and behavioural dimensions that distinguish global competence from purely linguistic or cultural awareness. Earlier empirical work by Hunter et al. [8] offers a complementary perspective: a “globally competent” person is characterised by sufficient cross-cultural knowledge and experience to “recognise what is universally human and what is culturally conditioned,” so as to function effectively and ethically in diverse international contexts. This international framework finds a normative echo in China’s 2026 White Paper on global governance, which calls for nations to “let cultural exchanges prevail over estrangement, mutual learning over clashes, and inclusiveness over superiority.” Combined with existing studies, the academic community generally holds that global competence comprises four core dimensions [9]:

Knowledge and Understanding: It requires students to have sufficient knowledge reserves and in-depth understanding of global affairs and cross-cultural issues, including not only specific issues such as global climate change, public health, and

uneven economic development, but also the cognition of the history, culture, values and political systems of different countries and regions.

Skills: At the skill level, global competence requires students to have cognitive, communication and social abilities, including the ability to analyse information and situations in a critical and multi-angle manner [10], the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds [11], language proficiency, and the ability to cooperate in solving problems.

Attitudes: It refers to the internal tendency towards different cultures and others. Core attitudes include openness to cultural differences, respect for different viewpoints, empathy, and flexibility in adapting to uncertain environments [8].

Values: Values are reflected in the basic beliefs held by individuals, including cherishing human dignity and cultural diversity, and the sense of responsibility that links one’s own actions to global well-being.

In addition, based on the above ability framework, some studies further emphasize the “ability to take action” [12], which is to transform local or global issues into opportunities and actions for improving collective well-being and promoting sustainable development, thereby transforming global competence from a static literacy into a dynamic practical ability.

3.2 Global Competence Goals for English (Teacher Education) Majors

For English (Teacher Education) Majors, the composition of their global competence must not only follow the above general framework, but also reflect their professional characteristics. Specifically, it should be focused on the following aspects:

Knowledge Level: In addition to general knowledge of global issues, students need to have substantive knowledge of the social and cultural conditions of English-speaking countries and other major world regions, understand the cultural logic and values embedded in language use, and engage in critical cross-cultural comparison.

Skill Level: The language skills of English (Teacher Education) Majors must extend beyond fluent communication to encompass

English-medium critical thinking, academic discourse, and professional teaching practice. Their cross-cultural communication skills [13] are not only personal capacities but also core instructional content that they will be required to develop in primary and secondary school students. Attitude and Value Level: As future teachers, they need to hold cultural openness and respect as personal dispositions and simultaneously cultivate a “critical cultural awareness” [14] – the capacity to evaluate both their own and other cultures from a position of firm cultural confidence, and to guide students toward a reflective global awareness and a sense of shared social responsibility [15].

4. Advantages of English (Teacher Education) Majors and the “English Plus” Path

In terms of cultivating global competence, English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes hold inherent and distinctive advantages over other degree programmes. Identifying and deepening these advantages is central to improving cultivation outcomes.

4.1 Majoring in English: A Bridge to the World

Language is not only a carrier of culture but a tool for understanding the world. As the most widely used global language, English opens a channel for English (Teacher Education) Majors to access international knowledge directly – in its original form, without the interpretive distortion that secondary translation inevitably introduces. Unlike

students in other degree programmes, English (Teacher Education) Majors follow an intensive, discipline-structured curriculum that uses English as both subject and medium of instruction, affording sustained engagement with Anglophone scholarship, cross-cultural texts, and international discourse communities. This positions them to perceive cultural subtleties more directly, and – crucially – to articulate China’s perspectives to international audiences in the language those audiences use, rather than through intermediary translation [16].

4.2 Educational Orientation: Sustainability of Global Competence Cultivation

The educational track of the English major carries a distinctive structural weight in China’s basic education system. As recent employment data confirm, the teaching profession remains the dominant destination for English major graduates: according to the 2024 China Undergraduate Employment Report, approximately 39.8% of English major graduates from the 2023 cohort entered the education sector – the highest proportion of any single industry – while the work-to-major relevance rate stood at 70%, slightly below the national undergraduate average of 72%. Figure 1 illustrates this distribution and the relevance-rate gap:

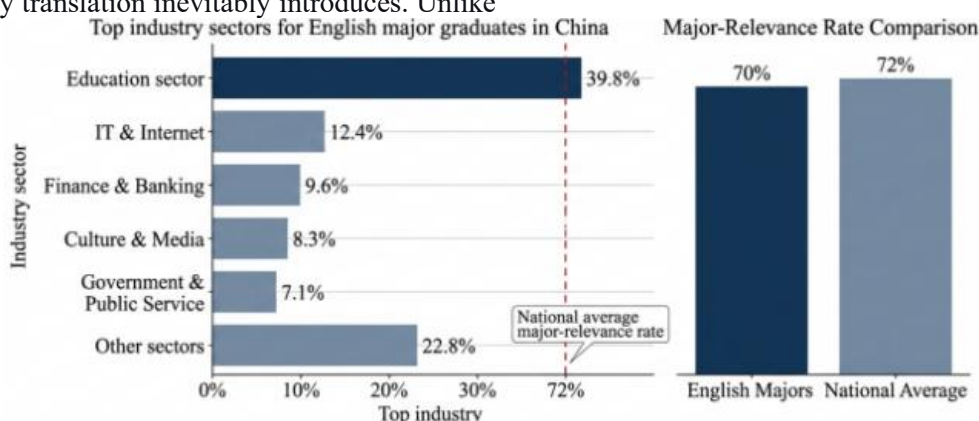


Figure 1. Employment Sector Distribution of English Major Graduates (2023 cohort) and Major-Relevance Rate Comparison. Source: MyCOS Research Institute (2024)

These figures underscore an important pedagogical responsibility: the global competence cultivated in English (Teacher Education) Majors is not contained within their own careers; it is transmitted onward to millions of primary and secondary students they will subsequently teach. In this sense, every pre-service English teacher who develops intercultural awareness and a

critically informed global perspective becomes a “pioneer of cross-cultural awareness” [11]. Yet these same data reveal a structural constraint that this paper regards as its central concern. The high concentration of graduates in a single profession – teaching – reflects not only vocational aptitude but also a narrowness of professional preparation. When nearly 40%

of graduates default to one sector, and when average starting salaries remain below the national mean, the signal is clear: the traditional English major curriculum, focused predominantly on linguistic competence, has not equipped students with the cross-disciplinary depth and global professional adaptability demanded by contemporary labour markets or by the country's ambitions in global governance. This problem extends well beyond the education track. Regardless of whether students specialise in English (Teacher Education), translation, linguistics, or business English, a curriculum that confines itself to language skills produces graduates who are linguistically proficient but professionally narrow. Global competence – the capacity to analyse global issues, engage across cultures, and act with a sense of shared responsibility – must be established as a foundational professional literacy across all English major orientations, not treated as a supplementary add-on for the teacher education track alone.

The question for curriculum reform, therefore, is not whether English (Teacher Education) Majors need global competence cultivation, but how to make it systematic, visible, and transferable across all trajectories. From the perspective of institutional development, sustained reform of English major curricula – from college English to English for Specific Purposes to specialist degree programmes – builds the international talent base that simultaneously drives the internationalisation of Chinese higher education itself [17].

4.3 International Perspective: Inherent Requirement of Professional Learning

The curriculum of English (Teacher Education) Majors – spanning British and American literature, linguistics, translation, and cross-cultural communication – traverses multiple national contexts and engages diverse cultural systems, providing a naturally rich foundation for developing an international perspective. As students encounter different values, modes of reasoning, and social arrangements through their coursework, they are already undergoing a form of implicit global competence formation. The current task is to make this implicit formation explicit and purposive: to convert what happens incidentally through content exposure into a conscious, goal-directed process of literacy cultivation [18].

4.4 Path of Implementation: “English plus”

Integration and Innovation

The “English plus” integration model offers four compound specialisation pathways through which global competence can be systematically developed in English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes, addressing the professional narrowness that a language-skills-only curriculum produces.

The foundational pairing is “English plus Education and Psychology.” This track deepens the disciplinary base of English (Teacher Education) Majors by integrating theories of pedagogy, learning psychology, and global competence instruction [19]. Students graduating through this path do not merely possess global competence; they understand how to design curricula and classroom activities that transmit intercultural awareness and global perspectives to primary and secondary school students – making their global competence professionally generative rather than personally contained.

A second track, “English plus Regional Studies,” cultivates area-specific expertise alongside language proficiency. Students develop in-depth analytical knowledge of the politics, economics, and culture of a particular country or world region, equipping them to contribute to national initiatives such as the Belt and Road and to produce the country-specific expertise that general-purpose language graduates cannot. For teacher educators, engagement with regional studies provides content-rich material for the global issues dimension of classroom teaching.

“English plus Global Governance and International Relations” addresses the structural dimension of global engagement. By pairing language study with analysis of global challenges – climate governance, public health systems, cybersecurity frameworks, multilateral institutions – students develop the conceptual vocabulary and analytical literacy needed to participate in international dialogue and to contribute to collective problem-solving rather than merely reporting on it [10].

Finally, “English plus Information Technology” responds to the technological transformation of both language use and language education. Fluency with AI-powered language tools, digital content creation, and virtual communication platforms is increasingly a baseline professional expectation for language graduates. For English (Teacher Education)

Majors in particular, command of technology-mediated pedagogy – including cross-cultural simulation environments and collaborative online platforms – extends the reach of global competence cultivation beyond what physical exchange programmes alone can provide [20].

Taken together, these pathways reframe the cultivation goal of English (Teacher Education) Majors: graduates are not simply language instructors but integrators of knowledge, mediators across cultures, and facilitators of the global awareness that their future students will need.

5. Teaching Practice and Evaluation for Enhancing the Global Competence of English (Teacher Education) Majors

The preceding chapters have established both the theoretical dimensions of global competence and the structural advantages that English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes bring to its cultivation. This chapter addresses the translation of those frameworks into practice. For English (Teacher Education) Majors, global competence cultivation carries a dual professional character: students must internalise intercultural knowledge and critical awareness as personal competencies, and simultaneously develop the pedagogical capacity to transmit these capacities to primary and secondary school students. Accordingly, this chapter examines teaching practice strategies – from curriculum integration to experiential learning – and then turns to the construction of a multi-dimensional assessment framework, addressing the persistent challenge of evaluating competencies that span knowledge, disposition, and action.

5.1 Reconstruction and Innovation of the Curriculum System

The traditional curriculum system of English majors needs to be systematically reconstructed. First, “global competence” can be taken as a main thread and run through all core courses. For example, instructors can add text analysis and discussion of global issues in the “Comprehensive English” course [21], guide students to conduct critical interpretation from the perspectives of cross-cultural and post-colonial theories in the “British and American Literature” course, and shift from theoretical teaching to more scenario simulation and case analysis in the “Cross-Cultural Communication” course. Second, special global competence-oriented courses can be offered, such as “Special Topics on Global Governance,”

“International Organizations and Discourse Practice”, and “International Communication of Chinese Culture”, to provide students with focused knowledge input and ability training [22]. Finally, promote the construction of interdisciplinary courses to truly realise the curriculum implementation of “English +” [3]. For example, co-offering “International Law and English” with the Law School, and “International News Compilation and Reporting” with the Journalism School, breaking down the barriers between colleges, and cultivating students’ compound knowledge structure.

5.2 Reform and Practice of Teaching Methods

In terms of teaching methods, the shift should be made from teacher-centered knowledge imparting to student-centered ability construction. Studies have shown that practical teaching methods such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), inquiry-based learning, and case teaching [23] are highly effective in cultivating students’ critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. For example, students can be organised to collect transnational materials, conduct group research on a global issue (such as “plastic pollution governance”), and finally form a solution report or a simulated United Nations proposal. At the same time, information technology should be fully utilized to actively carry out Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects. By cooperating with foreign universities, students can complete course projects together in real cross-cultural teams, and improve their communication, coordination and cooperation abilities in practice. When resources are limited, this approach offers an effective means of creating an immersive cross-cultural environment [24].

5.3 Institutional Practices: Programme Frameworks and Case Studies

Theoretical frameworks carry weight only when they are translated into verifiable institutional practice. The following three cases – representing specialist foreign language universities and a comprehensive teacher education institution – illustrate how the “English plus” path operates at scale and how global competence can be structurally

embedded in programme requirements rather than left to individual elective choice.

Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU): the “Language-Specialism-International” Integrated Model

BFSU frames its overall cultivation objective as “strengthening students’ global competence” and pursues it through a three-pronged strategy: “English as the gateway, multilingualism as the follow-up, and disciplinary depth as the consolidation.” At the programme level, the university builds compound-major tracks pairing non-widely-taught languages with law, commerce, education, diplomacy, and communication. Cross-national comparative research, fieldwork in target countries, and global and regional issue studies are designated as mandatory practicum components. At the structural level, BFSU embeds global competence cultivation within its “One Body, Two Wings, Four Targets” internationalisation strategy, in which one of the four targets explicitly includes raising students’ global competence alongside strengthening the institution’s capacity to serve national global strategies [25]. The 2022 national undergraduate teaching award recognised BFSU’s model under the title “The BFSU Model for Cultivating Global Competence among Multi-Language Talent” with a First Prize – the highest category among the 2022 undergraduate awards – signalling the national-level validation of this integrated approach [26]. In November 2025, BFSU inaugurated its “Global Competence Lecture Series,” with the inaugural lecture delivered by former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, centering on the urgency of critical thinking, cross-domain collaboration, and intercultural understanding in higher education – precisely the dimensions that English teacher education programmes need to internalise most deeply. The BFSU model demonstrates that global competence cultivation can be realised systematically when it is treated as an institutional design principle rather than a supplementary programme offering.

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS): the Full-Chain International Governance Talent Model

GDUFS has established the College of International Governance Innovation – the first of its kind in Chinese universities – and built a full “bachelor–master–doctoral” pipeline for international organisation talent. Since 2016, the programme has trained more than 660 international governance specialists; among

graduates from overseas partner institutions, over 70% have secured internships or employment at international organisations including the UN headquarters in New York and the Geneva office, with 20% formally employed in UN positions [27]. The university simultaneously deploys four complementary mechanisms: “Asian Campus” and “Eurasian Campus” cross-border mobility schemes, the RCEP Talent Development Plan, 19 dual-bachelor-degree tracks (including “Business English + Law”), and the “Foreign Language Plus” graduate innovation cohorts. The curriculum requirement for English (Teacher Education) Majors students within this framework includes dedicated modules on international governance and area studies, with cross-cultural practicum hours forming a measurable component of degree assessment. The 70% international-organisation placement rate provides quantitative evidence that a well-designed “English plus governance/area studies” curriculum can convert language advantage into genuine global participation capacity [28]. For English (Teacher Education) Majors specifically, the GDUFS experience confirms that equipping future teachers with exposure to international governance structures directly enriches the global-issues literacy they subsequently transmit in classrooms.

East China Normal University (ECNU): the “New Youth Global Competence Programme” and Teacher Education Integration Model

As one of China’s leading comprehensive teacher education universities, ECNU offers a case that is particularly instructive for English (Teacher Education) Majors because it directly bridges global competence cultivation with teacher preparation. ECNU is one of more than ten institutions that have established a “New Youth Global Competence Cultivation and Development Training Base” under the national “New Youth Global Competence Programme,” a scheme jointly designed by the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and participating universities. The programme operates on a “course plus practice” model structured as a “3×9”: nine elective courses totalling approximately 160 contact hours, organised across three modules – “Contemporary China,” “International Understanding,” and “Intercultural Communication”; nine thematic

lecture series aligned with the course modules; and nine categories of domestic and international practice activities including fieldwork, immersive visits, United Nations internship placements, Model UN simulations, and international volunteer programmes. The ECNU base is one of 165 participating institutions (including 69 “Double First-Class” universities), and the programme has supported more than 1,200 student participants in overseas practice and exchange activities to date. Crucially for teacher education, ECNU has integrated global competence not only as a co-curricular enrichment track but as a research agenda: in 2025, ECNU and CEAIE jointly launched the “Special Action Research on University Students’ Global Competence,” whose findings were submitted for expert review in May 2026, producing evidence-based guidance for embedding global competence into formal training plans for pre-service teachers. The practical outcome for students in ECNU’s English (Teacher Education) programme – one of 16 teacher education specialisations designated as national first-class undergraduate programme construction sites – is a graduation profile that combines disciplinary rigour in English linguistics and literature with documented intercultural practice experience, measurable global issues knowledge, and a reflective understanding of how to transmit these capacities to future students. The ECNU model illustrates that the integration of global competence into teacher education is most effective when it has both curricular expression (specific courses and assessed competencies) and structured experiential pathways (overseas practice, simulation, and action research), rather than relying solely on the implicit internationalisation effects of language study. At the same time, Shanghai Normal University has published the teaching programme document for its 2024 English undergraduate curriculum, in which graduate requirement 7 explicitly states: “students shall possess a broad international perspective and internationally oriented capabilities, keep informed of international developments, attend to current global issues, and understand and respect the differences and diversity of world cultures.” This curricular standard – expressed as a formal graduation requirement rather than an aspirational descriptor – represents the direction toward which the field as a whole is moving.

Taken together, the BFSU, GDUFS, and ECNU cases confirm four replicable principles for English (Teacher Education) Majors programme

reform. First, institutional commitment must be structural: global competence goals need to be embedded in programme-level graduation requirements, not left to individual elective choices. Second, interdisciplinary compound tracks – whether through dual degrees, co-taught courses, or specialisation minors – are the primary vehicle for converting language skills into domain-specific global competence. Third, real-world international exposure (internships, exchange programmes, COIL projects, and UN simulation activities) functions as the irreplaceable capstone experience that closes the loop between classroom cultivation and actual global engagement. Fourth, and specific to teacher education, the integration of global competence must have a pedagogical dimension: future teachers need not only to possess global competence themselves but to understand how to cultivate it in primary and secondary school students, requiring that teacher education programmes build explicit links between global competence frameworks and subject-level teaching methodology.

5.4 Construction and Challenges of the Evaluation System

Evaluation is the final step of teaching. The evaluation of global competence must go beyond traditional knowledge-based examinations and move towards diversification and process orientation. A comprehensive evaluation system can be constructed by combining quantitative and qualitative methods [29].

Evaluation Tools: Internationally mature global competence scales or global perspective scales can be used for self-evaluation or pre-test and post-test comparison [30] to track students’ changes in a quantitative way. At the same time, more Portfolio Assessment should be adopted to record students’ achievements and reflections in project research, social practice and international exchanges; scenario simulation and role-playing should be used to evaluate students’ adaptability and communication skills in specific cross-cultural scenarios.

Evaluation Criteria: Clear descriptions of ability levels should be formulated [31]. For example, global competence can be divided into “basic, intermediate and advanced” levels, and specific descriptions of the knowledge,

skills and behavioural performance that should be possessed at each level should be made to provide a clear basis for evaluation.

Challenges Faced: It must be acknowledged that implicit elements such as attitudes and values in global competence are difficult to quantify accurately, and there is a certain subjectivity in the evaluation process. How to ensure the reliability and validity of evaluation is a topic requiring sustained research [32].

6. Current Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the clear direction and significance of enhancing the global competence of English (Teacher Education) Majors, implementation continues to face substantial challenges.

6.1 Main Challenges Faced

Insufficient Systematic Policy Support: As noted in Section 1.2, there is still a lack of systematic and programmatic policy documents at the national level for the cultivation of global competence for pre-service teachers, leading to situations such as inconsistent standards, insufficient support, and fragmented efforts among various colleges and universities in practice [33].

Constraints on the Ability of the Teaching Staff: To cultivate students with global competence, teachers who possess such competence are first needed. However, many teachers in current colleges and universities still have insufficient international experience, cross-cultural teaching ability and relevant disciplinary expertise, and the relevant teacher training system needs to be improved [34].

Shortage and Uneven Distribution of Practical Resources: High-quality practical activities such as international exchanges, overseas internships, and Model United Nations are important ways to cultivate global competence, but these resources are often costly and limited in quantity [35], and are unevenly distributed among different colleges and universities and regions, making it difficult to benefit all students.

Urgent Need to Deepen Educational Concepts: Among some educators and students, the understanding of global competence still stays at the superficial level of “good foreign language skills plus some international knowledge”, and there is insufficient understanding of its underlying core connotations such as critical thinking, empathy, and value reshaping, with the result that the cultivation process risks becoming superficial [36].

6.2 Future Development Prospects

Looking ahead, the conditions for sustained progress are more favourable than at any previous point. At the national policy level, the “15th Five-Year Plan” period has opened with clear institutional signals. As noted in Section 1.2, the Ministry of Education’s Expert Advisory Committee called in late 2025 for a tiered overseas training mechanism and a Global Teacher Development Institute, formally positioning teacher global competence as a system-level priority rather than an institutional experiment [2]. This policy momentum is reinforced by international urgency: UNESCO’s 2024 Global Report on Teachers projects a deficit of 44 million primary and secondary teachers worldwide by 2030, with professional development and global readiness identified as central to any viable solution. The implication for China is twofold – the country faces its own teacher quality imperatives while simultaneously being positioned, through its expanding international education footprint, as a contributor to the global teacher development agenda. At the university level, more institutions are embedding global competence as a core cultivation objective rather than an elective enrichment activity. The practical experience of leading institutions such as BFSU [25], GDUFS [27], and ECNU provides replicable models that mid-tier institutions can adapt to their own resource conditions. At the technological level, the rapid development of artificial intelligence and immersive digital environments is substantially lowering the cost of cross-cultural experiential learning. AI-powered adaptive language environments and VR-based scenario simulation can extend meaningful intercultural exposure to students in institutions with limited international exchange infrastructure [20], making equitable global competence cultivation a practical possibility rather than a resource-constrained aspiration.

The longer-term significance of this reform trajectory extends beyond individual graduate outcomes. English (Teacher Education) Majors who develop substantive global competence during their undergraduate preparation enter classrooms not only as language instructors but as practising

exemplars of the intercultural and critical capacities they are expected to cultivate. Their students – the primary and secondary school cohorts of the coming decade – will inherit an international environment more complex and interdependent than the present one. An education system that equips its English teachers with deep cultural confidence, command of international communication, and reflective global awareness is, in effect, investing in the global readiness of that next generation. This is the institutional logic that makes the systematic cultivation of global competence in English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes a matter of educational policy rather than curricular preference.

7. Concluding Remarks

This paper has argued that cultivating global competence among students in English (Teacher Education) Majors programmes is at once a pressing institutional challenge and a strategic imperative for Chinese higher education. Three conclusions emerge from the analysis.

First, the English major faces a structural problem that goes beyond any single curricular track. The concentration of graduates in the teaching profession – approaching 40% of the 2023 cohort – and their below-average starting salaries are symptoms of a curriculum that has historically prioritised linguistic proficiency over the broader professional and intercultural capacities that contemporary roles demand. Global competence is the minimum professional baseline for all English major graduates across orientations, not a specialisation confined to the teacher education track. Reform efforts that treat it as supplementary rather than constitutive of the programme's design will remain structurally insufficient.

Second, the “English plus” integration model examined in Chapters 4 and 5 – anchored in interdisciplinary curriculum design, student-centred pedagogy, and diversified assessment – offers a practically replicable pathway. The institutional cases of BFSU, GDUFS, and ECNU demonstrate that structural commitment at the programme level, rather than supplementary co-curricular programming, is what converts language advantage into demonstrable global competence. Regional and mid-tier institutions can adapt these models to their own resource and mission contexts, particularly through the lower-cost COIL and AI-mediated experiential pathways discussed in Section 5.2.

Third, the preconditions for systematic reform are

in place. Growing consensus around advancing teacher professionalism, emerging from 2025 national expert panel dialogues and the country on education and core teacher development priorities set out in the long-range educational development blueprint, creates consistent alignment with institutional reform initiatives and accessible educational technologies, which is also reflected in China's strategic planning in the next 5 years. At the highest level, the 2026 white paper on China's global governance articulates the principle of “extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits” as the foundation of multilateral engagement – a formulation that makes the cultivation of globally competent citizens a governance-level requirement rather than a curricular preference. The argument from necessity is equally clear: UNESCO's 2030 teacher shortage projections underscore that globally competent teacher preparation is not a premium aspiration but a baseline systemic requirement.

This review is constrained by its data sources: the analysis is built largely on archival materials and institutional program profiles, lacking longitudinal empirical evidence that traces the impact of tailored curriculum frameworks on students' post-graduation trajectories. Future research should prioritise controlled comparative studies of global competence development across different “English plus” tracks, the validation of measurement instruments adapted to the Chinese higher education context, and follow-up evidence on whether pre-service global competence cultivation translates into classroom practice in primary and secondary settings. These are the empirical foundations without which the reform agenda risks remaining aspirational. The reconceptualisation proposed here – of the English (Teacher Education) Major not as a narrowly defined language-teacher preparation programme but as a site for cultivating globally capable educator-citizens – depends on that evidence base being built.

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